Income Policy (inc. Charging and Remissions)

Reviewed: May 2026

Next Review: May 2027

Fairfields School

Inspiring everyone to shine

Approved by Governors

Fairfields School

Income Policy

Incorporating WNC Charging and Remissions Policy for School Activities

Introduction

The Governing Body of Fairfields School is committed to ensuring that the resources available to the school are used effectively in order to realise the school's aims and objectives. An important aspect of the work is the efficient management of all income due to the school. The policy is based on advice from the Department of Education (DFE) on charging school activities and the Education Act 1996, sections 449-462 of which set out the law on charging for school activities in maintained schools in England.

Schools must ensure that they inform parents on low incomes and in receipt of the benefits of the support available to them when being asked for contributions towards the cost of school visits.

Aims of the policy

The aims of this policy are:

- To provide a clear framework within which all school income is administered and monitored.
- To make clear the lines of accountability with regard to the administration of income and to ensure that appropriate checks and safeguards are in place.
- To ensure that the school's management and administration of income complies with LA Financial Regulations. For further guidance reference should be made, as necessary, to LA and other documentation.
- To work alongside the Lettings Policy

Definitions

- Remission: the cancellation of a charge which would normally be payable
- A Charge: a fee payable for specifically defined activities

Delegated Responsibilities

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for all matters of income, but can delegate this to a committee, an individual governor or the headteacher.

A - The Supporting School Structures Committee will be responsible for:

- The setting and annual review of the Income policy incorporating charging and remissions.
- Receiving reports to ensure that income is dealt with in accordance with school's policy and LA regulations.

B - The Headteacher will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the work of the School Business Manager, and so ensuring that all income generated is received in line with school's policy and LA regulations.
- Ensuring that there is an adequate division of responsibility for the collection and banking of income.
- Ensuring that teaching staff are made aware of and follow correct procedures with regard to collection of income from pupils.
- Ensuring staff are familiar with the charging and remission policy and that it is being applied consistently.

C - The School Business Manager will be responsible for:

- Overseeing the raising of invoices in line with agreed policy.
- Ensuring income is collected promptly and banked.
- Properly recording all income received.

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- Regularly reporting to the Headteacher and Supporting School Structures Committee with regard to income and debtors.
- Issuing receipts to school debtors.

Where charges cannot be made

Education

School governing bodies and local authorities **cannot** charge for:

- An admission application to any maintained school;
- Education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment)
- Education provided outside school hours if it is part of:
  - the National Curriculum
  - a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
  - religious education

  (Where an activity takes place partly during and partly outside school hours, there is a basis for determining whether it is deemed to take place either inside or outside school hours- See 10)
- Tuition for pupils learning to play musical instruments if the tuition is required as part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- Entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school; and examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school

Transport

Schools **cannot** charge for:

- Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the local education authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport;
- Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing body or local education authority has arranged for pupils to be educated;
- Transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when he has been prepared for that examination at the school; and
- Transport provided in connection with an educational visit.

Residential Visits

Schools **cannot** charge for:

- Education provided on any visit that takes place during school hours;
- Education provided on any visit that takes place outside school hours if it is part of:
  - National Curriculum
  - A syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
  - Religious education
  - Supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential visit.

Where charges can be made

Education

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Schools and local authorities **can** charge for:

- Any materials, books, instruments, or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him to own them;
- Optional extras (see below); and
- Music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances (see below).

Optional Extras

Charges may be made for some activities that are known as "optional extras". Where an optional extra is being provided, a charge **can** be made for providing materials, books, instruments, or equipment. **Optional extras are**:

- Education provided outside of school time that is not:

  a) Part of the National Curriculum;
  b) Part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school; or
  c) Part of religious education.

- Examination entry fee(s) if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school;
- Transport that is not required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the local authority/governing body have arranged for the pupil to be provided with education; and
- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit.

When calculating the cost of optional extras an amount may be included in relation to:

- Any materials, books, instruments, or equipment provided in connection with the optional extra;
- Non-teaching staff;
- Teaching staff engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra, this includes supply teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra; and
- The cost, or a proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, where the tuition is an optional extra.

Any charge made in respect of individual pupils must not exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating. It must not therefore include an element of subsidy for any other pupils wishing to participate in the activity whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge.

Furthermore, in cases where a small proportion of the activity takes place during school hours the charge cannot include the cost of alternative provision for those pupils who do not wish to participate. Therefore no charge can be made for supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential visit.

Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

Music Tuition

Although the law states that all education provided during school hours must be free, music lessons are an

exception to this rule.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a regulation-making power which allowed the Department for Children, Schools and Families to specify circumstances where charging can be made for music tuition. The new Regulations, which came into force in September 2007, provide pupils with greater access to vocal and instrumental tuition.

Charges may now be made for teaching either an individual pupil or groups of any appropriate size (provided that the size of the group is based on sound pedagogical principles) to play a musical instrument or to sing. Charges may only be made if the teaching is not an essential part of either the National Curriculum or a public examination syllabus being followed by the pupil(s), or the first access to the Key Stage 2 Instrumental and Vocal Tuition Programme (Wider Opportunities).

Residential visits

- Board and lodging on residential visits but the charge must not exceed the actual cost.

Voluntary Contributions

Nothing in legislation prevents a school governing body or local authority from asking for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any school activities. However, if the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, the governing body or head teacher should make this clear to parents at the outset. The governing body or head teacher **must** also make it clear to parents that there is no obligation to make any contribution.

It is important to note that no child should be excluded from an activity simply because his or her parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund a visit, then it must be cancelled. Schools must make sure that they make this clear to parents. If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child must still be given an equal chance to go on the visit. Schools should make it clear to parents at the outset what their policy for allocating places on school visits will be.

When making requests for voluntary contributions to the school funds, parents must not be made to feel pressurised into paying as it is voluntary and **not compulsory**. Schools should avoid sending colour coded letters to parents as a reminder to make payments into the school or maintenance funds. Schools should also ensure that direct debit or standing order mandates are not sent to parents when requesting for contributions.

School Charging and Remissions Policies

No charges can be made unless the governing body of the school or local authority has drawn up a charging policy giving details of the optional extras or board and lodging that they intend to charge for, and a remissions policy.

The governing body's policy may be more or less generous than the LA's, as long as it meets the requirements of the law. A policy statement will take account of each type of activity that can be charged for and explain when charges will be made.

If a charge is to be made for a particular type of activity, for example optional extras, parents need to know how the charge will be worked out and who might qualify for help with the cost (or even get it free). This information should be made available to parents.

The remissions policy must set out any circumstances in which the school or local authority propose to remit (wholly or partly) any charge which would otherwise be payable to them in accordance with their charging policy. For example, a school may decide to provide an Italian language evening class as an optional extra. The governing body may decide to reduce the cost for those children whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits.

Remissions for residential visits

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Parents who can provide evidence that they are in receipt of the following benefits will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging for residential visits:

- Income Support (IS);
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA);
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Universal Credit

Activities partly in school hours and partly out of school hours

Non-residential activities

If 50% or more of the time spent on the activity occurs during school hours, it is deemed to take place during school hours. Time spent on travel counts in this calculation if the travel itself occurs during school hours. School hours do not include the break in the middle of the day.
Where less than 50% of the time spent on an activity falls during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside school hours. For example, an excursion might require pupils to leave school an hour before the school day ends, but the activity does not end until late in the evening.

Residential visits

If the number of school sessions taken up by the visit is equal to or greater than 50% of the number of half days spent on the visit, it is deemed to have taken place during school hours (even if some activities take place late in the evening). Whatever the starting and finishing times of the school day, Regulations require that the school day is divided into 2 sessions. A "half day" means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day.

- **Example 1: Visit during school hours**
  Pupils are away from noon on Wednesday to 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 9 half days including 5 school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place during school hours.

- **Example 2: Visit outside school hours**
  Pupils are away from school from noon on Thursday until 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 7 half days including 3 school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place outside school hours.

Credit Terms

The credit terms available to school debtors will be 28 days net from the date of invoice. Where debts are outstanding beyond 28 days from the date of invoice the following procedure will be adopted:

- A first request for payment will be sent by the School Business Manager after 28 days from the date of invoice
- A second request for payment will be sent by the School Business Manager 7 days later if no response is received
- If a positive response is not made to the above requests within a further 7 days, the School Business Manager will contact debtors by telephone
- If a positive response is not received, a further letter will be sent by the Chair of the Supporting School Structures Committee to the debtor after 60 days from date of invoice, advising them that legal action may be implemented.

Bad Debts

Where debts are still outstanding beyond 74 days from date of invoice, the following procedure will be

adopted:

Bad debts will be reported as follows:

- £50 or less - The Headteacher
- £50 - £250 - Supporting School Structures Committee
- Over £250 - Full Governing Body
- Bad debts values of £50 or less could be written off after 6 months
- Any debt of £50 or over legal action may be sought
- Previous bad debtors will only be supported with goods or services if paid for in advance.

Monitoring Information

An 'Aged Debtors' report, will be submitted to the Supporting School Structures Committee and also made available for Governor review within shared drive.

Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Supporting School Structures Committee.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. **What is a charging policy?**

A. Under the charging provisions set out in legislation, governing bodies and local authorities of maintained schools may choose to charge for certain defined activities, but only if they have first drawn-up charging and remissions policies. These policies should be made available to parents on request.

Q. **A visit involving staying overnight has been arranged for children at my school. Can the school charge for this?**

A. Where a school activity requires pupils to spend nights away from home the school is allowed to make a charge for board and lodging. This is with the exception of pupils whose parents are receiving: Income Support; Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; or Child Tax Credit (providing that they do not also receive Working Tax Credit and have an annual income, assessed by the Inland Revenue that does not exceed £15,575 FY 08/09) and an income related employment and support allowance. Since April 2003 the eligibility criteria that entitle families to an exemption from paying for the cost of board and lodging on residential visits have been aligned with free school meals eligibility criteria. The head teacher must inform all parents of the right to claim free board and lodging if they are receiving these benefits.

Q. **With regard to the remission of board & lodging payments, can you please explain who pays for the expense, would it come out of the school budget or is there a grant available to claim?**

A. Although the criteria for being eligible for the remission of charges for board and lodgings is the same as free school meals, that is where the similarity ends. The costs involved in the remission of board and lodgings are to be borne by the school from their contingency funds. There is no return to be completed to re-claim the money back.

Q. **Our school has a large number of pupils eligible for free school meals, this means that they would also receive remission for board and lodgings expenses for residential school visits. How can the school fund/organize residential visits?**

A. The government provides funding for schools to each local authority according to a formula which recognises the different needs of each area. The same basic funding is provided for all comparable pupils across the country. This is then topped up according to local needs.

One of these top-ups reflects the numbers of pupils in a certain area living in deprived circumstances, as these pupils need extra help if they are to have an equal opportunity in life. The amount that individual schools receive from the local authority reflects their relative need compared with other local schools, through the locally agreed funding formula. All local authorities' funding formulae are required to include an element to reflect the needs of deprived pupils. It is for head teachers and school governing bodies to decide how to spend their available resources.

Schools cannot exclude children from taking part in an activity that is part of the National Curriculum purely on the grounds that the parent or carer, cannot make, or refuses to make, a contribution. This can clearly place schools in some difficulty on occasions where a number of parents/carers might be in such a position. The school

then has to decide whether they can cover the costs of such activity from within the budget or by fundraising, or whether the activity has to be cancelled.

If there is a residential activity taking place largely during school time, or which meets the requirements of the syllabus for a public examination, or is to do with the National Curriculum or religious education, no charge may be made either for the education or for the cost of travel.

Q. **Can governing bodies charge for educating children in maintained schools?**

A. The local authority or governing body cannot charge for education that takes place in school hours. Nor can they charge for activities that take place outside school hours if these are part of the National Curriculum, necessary as part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education. They can charge for permitted 'optional extras', provided they have drawn up a statement of general policy on charging and given details of 'optional extras' they intend to charge for. The governing body's policy does not have to be the same as the local authority's policy, as long as it meets the requirements of the law.

Q. **Can a school charge for an activity that takes place out of school hours?**

A. This kind of activity is often referred to as an 'optional extra'. Where an optional extra is being provided, a charge can be made for providing materials, books, instruments, or equipment. See guidance on optional extras.

The actual charge for the optional extra cannot exceed the actual cost of the provision. Schools cannot and must not make a profit from charging for optional extras. Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

Q. **Can a school ask parents for voluntary contributions?**

A. Schools may invite parents and others to make voluntary contributions to make school funds go further. All requests to parents for voluntary contributions must make it quite clear that the contributions would be voluntary. It should be remembered that education provided during school hours must be free. This includes materials, equipment, and transport provided in school hours by the local authority or by the school to carry pupils between the school and an activity. Governing bodies should also clearly explain that children of parents who do not contribute will not be treated any differently, and that the activity might be cancelled if insufficient contributions are received.

Q. **The school has sent letters out to parents asking for contributions towards a school visit, do parents have to pay?**

A. Head teachers or governing bodies may ask parents for voluntary contributions towards the cost of:

- any activity which takes place during school hours;
- school equipment; and
- school funds generally.

Children of parents who are unable, or unwilling, to contribute may not be

discriminated against. However, if insufficient voluntary contributions are received to cover the cost of the visit, or activity, and there is no alternative method to make up the shortfall, then the school should cancel the activity/visit. It would be advisable to make parents aware of a possible cancellation to the activity/visit if insufficient voluntary contributions are received from the outset.

Q. **What happens if the school is not able to raise enough voluntary contributions to cover costs?**

A. Where there are not enough voluntary contributions, and there is no way to make up the shortfall, for example school funds and/or fundraising activities, then it must be cancelled. The possibility of the activity/visit being cancelled due to a shortfall in contributions should be made clear in the information sent to parents.

Q. **What if a parent is unable, or unwilling to make a voluntary contribution? How does this affect their child(ren)?**

A. The school cannot exclude a child from taking part in an activity that is part of the National Curriculum purely on the grounds that you, the parent or carer, cannot make, or refuses to make a contribution. This can clearly place schools in some difficulty on occasions where a number of parents/carers might be in such a position. The school then has to decide whether they can cover the costs of such activity from within the budget or by fundraising, or whether the activity has to be cancelled.

Q. **What support can a school offer a parent/carer who has difficulty making a financial contribution?**

A. Schools must ensure that parents in receipt of Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190). Some schools also have funds available to enable families in financial difficulty to send their children on visits/activities. Parents should be encouraged to speak to the head teacher in order to establish if such funding arrangements exist.

No charge may be made if there is a residential activity taking place largely during school time, or which meets the requirements of the syllabus for a public examination. In addition, if the activity is to do with the National Curriculum or religious education, no charge may be made either for the education or for the cost of travel for any pupil, not just those whose parents are in receipt of benefits.

Q. **What about charges for transport during school hours?**

A. Any transport provided by the school in school hours will be provided free of charge (though a voluntary contribution could be requested).

Q. **Can the school charge for something like cooking ingredients or materials needed for a technology lesson?**

A. The school can make a charge to cover the costs of materials/ingredients for subjects such as design or food technology where parents have indicated in advance that they would like their child to bring home the finished product.

Q. **Can the school charge entry fees for examinations?**

A. An examination entry fee may be charged to parents if:

- the examination is on the set list, but the pupil was not prepared for it at the school;
- the examination is not on the set list but the school arranges for the pupil to take it; and
- a pupil fails without good reason to complete the requirements of any public examination where the governing body or LA originally paid or agreed to pay the entry fee.

Q. **Can a school make a charge to pay for the administration required as part of the admission process?**

A. Para 1.82 of the current School Admissions Code and para 1.93 of the revised School Admissions Code (which comes into force in February 2009) rules out practices that can lead to covert selection, such as asking parents for a financial contribution as a condition of entry. We are clear that schools cannot ask for a voluntary contribution as part of the admissions process and where this is found, we will not tolerate it. Legislation prevents maintained schools from charging fees for admission or for providing education during school hours.

Q. **Can a school ask for a direct debit to the school fund?**

A. No. A school may ask for voluntary contributions, as long as it is clear that they are voluntary, but we are clear that state education should be free and we have no intention of changing this policy. We will not tolerate this when it is brought to our notice. No contributions may be sought as part of the admissions process.

Any further queries regarding this policy should be made to WNC Schools Finance.