



Charging and Remissions Policy

**Agreed by the Governing Body
23rd September 2021**

**Review date: September
2025**

**Next review: September
2026**

Purpose

We believe that all our pupils should have an equal opportunity to benefit from school activities and visits (curricular and extra-curricular) independent of their parents/carers' financial means. This charging and remissions policy describes how we will do our best to ensure a good range of visits and activities is offered and, at the same time, try to minimize the financial barriers that may prevent some pupils from taking full advantage of the opportunities.

The 1996 Education Act requires all schools to have a policy on Charging and Remissions which is kept under regular review.

Roles and Responsibilities of Head Teacher, staff and Governors

The Head Teacher, staff and Governors will ensure the following applies:

No charges will be made for

- Education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books or other equipment);
- Admission applications
- Education provided outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education;
- Tuition for pupils learning to play musical instruments (or singing) if the tuition is required as part of the National Curriculum;
- Education provided on any trip that takes place during school hours;
- Education provided on any trip that takes place outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education;
- Supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential trip;
- Transport provided in connection with an educational visit
- Examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school

Optional Extras

Charges may be made for some activities that are known as 'optional extras.' In the event of optional extra activities 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.
- Transport (other than transport that is 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);
- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit;
- Extended day services offered to pupils (for example breakfast club, after-school clubs, tea and supervised homework sessions).

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

- Any materials, books, instruments, or equipment provided in connection with the optional extra;
- The cost of buildings and accommodation;
- Non-teaching staff;
- Teaching staff engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra, including teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra; and
- The cost, or an appropriate proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, vocal tuition, 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. Charges will not exceed the actual predicted cost (per pupil) of provision as the school does not aim to profit from any activity. In the event of a profit being accidentally made, a refund will be offered if the profit is greater than 5% of the overall cost. (See refunds section).

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.

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.

2. Activities for which charges will be made

a) Activities outside of school hours

Non-residential activities (other than those listed in 1 above) that take place outside school hours, but only if the majority of time spent on that activity takes place outside school hours (time spent on travel counts in this calculation if the travel itself occurs during school hours).

b) Residential activities

Board, lodgings, and transport costs of residential trips deemed to take place during school time. However, pupils whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits (see point 6 below) may not be charged for board and lodging costs.

Residential trips deemed to take place outside school time (other than for those activities listed in 1 above).

c) School meals (for children in years 3-6 not entitled to receive Free School Meals).

d) School Milk. (for children who turn 5 during the term in which the milk is ordered and are not in receipt of Free School Meals).

3. Voluntary Contributions

Parents/carers can be asked for a voluntary contribution towards the cost of:

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

The contribution must be voluntary and the pupils of parents/carers who are unable or unwilling to contribute will not be discriminated against. Where there are not enough voluntary contributions to make the activity possible, and there is no way to make up the shortfall, then the activity may be cancelled.

The school's preferred option is for parents to make payments electronically via School Comms rather than cash or cheques.

4. Music Tuition

Although the law states that in general, all education provided during school hours must be free, instrumental and vocal music tuition is an exception to that rule. The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007 set out the circumstances in which charges can be made for tuition in playing a musical instrument, including vocal tuition.

Charges may be made for vocal or instrumental tuition provided either individually, or to groups of any size, provided that the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent/carer. Charges will not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff who provide the tuition.

Charging may not be made if the teaching is either an essential part of the national curriculum, or is provided under the first access to the key stage 2 Instrumental and Vocal Tuition Programme. No charge may be made in respect of a pupil who is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

Lessons are payable termly in advance and cannot commence if payment has not been received. Half a term notice is required for the termination of lessons.

5. 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 premises where the governing body or local 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.

Examples of charges and remissions are given below:

Activity or thing which will or may be charged for	Notes	Remitted or help available
Charges will/may be made for any material, books, instruments, or equipment where a parent wishes their child to own them	For example, a clay model – a charge to cover the cost of the clay	None
Charges for lost books – Nominal £5 per book	Library, readers	None
Charges for deliberate damage to school property	Replacement cost of the item	None
Charges will be made for music tuition	The cost, or a proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument or singing, where the tuition is an optional extra for an individual or groups of up to four pupils	Remission for category A (see 6 below)
Charges will be made for the board and lodging component of residential trips	The charge will not exceed the actual cost	Remission for category A (see 6 below)

6. Families qualifying for remission or help with charges

In order to remove financial barriers for disadvantaged pupils, the Governing Body has agreed that some activities and visits where charges can legally be made will be offered at no charge or a reduced charge to parents in particular circumstances.

Category A

Parents in receipt of:

- Income Support;
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- 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 (as long as you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 a year)
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit (with annual earned income of no more than £7,400 after tax and not including any benefits you get).

Some categories of parents may claim help with some costs in some circumstances.

Remission of music tuition fees may be available for families on certain benefits through application to the Hertfordshire Music Service via the free school meals system.

7. Additional Considerations

The Governing Body recognises its responsibility to ensure that the offer of activities and educational visits does not place an unnecessary burden on family finances. To this end, we will try to adhere to the following guidelines:

- We acknowledge that offering opportunities on a “first pay, first served” basis discriminates against pupils from families on lower incomes and we will avoid that method of selection if circumstances permit.
- We have established a system for parents to pay in installments
- When an opportunity for a trip arises at short notice, typically within one month, it will be possible to arrange to pay in installments beyond the date of the trip.

Refunds

Where a planned trip does not take place, parents will be refunded in full, with the exception of when a parent has reserved a place for their child on a trip and the school has secured this place with the company concerned, payment will not be refunded to the parent unless the school is able to cover its related costs.

A refund will not normally be given if a child is absent for a trip through illness. However, if a child misses a residential trip due to an accident or illness, the parent/carer may claim under the insurance policy.

Milk: milk has to be pre-ordered and no refunds are made for children who are absent from school or do not take their milk for whatever reason.

School meals: where parents/carers have paid in advance for their child’s school meal and the child is then absent from school, the amount will be credited to that child’s account.

Debt Recovery

All payments to the school must be settled by the due published dates as set out in letters to parents from the school. Should any parent/carer fail to pay by the due published date the school may take recovery action as laid down by Herts County Council Financial Guidelines.

Any parent/carer who has failed to make the necessary payments to the school by the due published payment dates and has failed to meet the expected recovery costs will be deemed to be in debt to the school.

In severe circumstances where parents or carers owe the school money and have made no attempt to repay the outstanding amount, despite being requested to do so in writing on more than one occasion, the school will seek legal advice and may refer the debt to the legal department at HCC.

In cases of proven hardship, the Governing Body may negotiate repayment terms and or extension of settlement periods.

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Parents/carers who feel they are being harshly treated have the right to appeal to the Full Governing Body via The Chair of Governors.

Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluation

The Governing Body will monitor the impact of this policy by receiving on a termly basis a financial report on those activities that resulted in charges being levied, the subsidies awarded (without giving names), and the source of those subsidies.

It will seek to evaluate the impact of the school's extended services on those children most in need of additional support. Due to time constraints, it may be necessary to review these financial reports the term after the activity has taken place.

Payment for School Meals and Debt Procedures

As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of a dinner money debt, the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result, the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered, thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

Provision of School Meals

Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria (see Section 6 Category A above). Information about applying for Free School Meals can be found on Hertfordshire County Council's website: <http://www.hertsdirect.org/>

If a child's entitlement to Free School Meals ends a packed lunch should be provided or payment in advance for a school meal.

Costs of School Meals

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a legal duty on all state-funded schools in England to offer a free school lunch to all pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 from 2014. Therefore, school meals are free of charge for children in Reception and KS1.

School meals are available to children in KS2 at the charge advertised by the school or at no charge to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals must be paid for in advance.

Payment for School Meals

Payment for school meals can be made on Arbor, this is the school's preferred method of payment. School meals should be paid for in advance.

The school must ensure that all dinner money collected is banked in a timely manner in accordance with the school's financial procedures.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure the school budget is not adversely affected by the cost of the school meal debt, the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is a Zero tolerance approach.

Parents will be advised of any outstanding dinner balances on a regular basis by the school office. Once a debt has reached £25.00 a formal letter will be sent asking for payment. If no payment is made a second letter will be sent detailing the date for payment with a possibility of the debt being referred to Herts Catering Limited for collection.

If no payment is received by the requested date the debt will be passed to Herts Catering Ltd for collection. The parent/carer will be asked to provide a packed lunch for their child until the debt has been cleared and the school reserves the right not to feed the child.

Where a child continues to request a school meal the parent will be invited to apply for Free School Meals or speak confidentially with a member of the Senior Leadership Team.