



Charging & Remissions Policy

The Livingstone Road Primary Federation adopts the principles and procedures of this Policy for both Sylvan Infant School and Branksome Heath Junior School

Status & Review Cycle: Annually

Last Review Date: 15th May 2018

Review Group/Reviewer: Resources Committee

Next Review Date: May 2019

Signed.....

Policy Statement

The Governing Body recognises that it is important to provide every pupil with access to a wide range of additional activities including clubs, trips, music tuition and residential experiences. These activities make a valuable contribution to a pupil's personal and social development. The Governing Body will promote and provide these activities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils and also as additional optional activities.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is clarity over those items or activities which the Federation will provide free of charge and those for which there may be a charge.

This policy is based upon the Education Act 1996 section 449-462 which sets out the law on charging for school activities and the Department of Education guidance dated October 2014, 'Charging for School Activities'.

Why the School May Need to Charge or Ask for a Voluntary Contribution

Education provided during the school day, which includes all activities that are a necessary part of the National Curriculum, is free of charge under Education Act 1996 section 449-462.

Parents may be invited to make voluntary contributions to support any part of the school's work. Where optional activities take place wholly or mainly outside the school day a charge may be made to cover costs. The principles of best value will be applied when planning any activity that incurs a cost to the school and/or charges to parents, and any charge made will not exceed the cost per pupil of providing the activity.

Income received from pupils will be outside the scope of VAT and the amount the Federation charges pupils will be the 'net value' because the Federation will reclaim the VAT.

Whilst we aim to make the minimum number of requests for money from parents/carers, further details of how our charging policy relates to specific areas of provision are set out below.

Educational Visits

Each visit is carefully planned to support the delivery of the National Curriculum, but school trips are not a statutory requirement and therefore the school receives no delegated funding specifically to pay for this provision. It is the Federation's policy that voluntary contributions will be sought from parents, to cover the cost of the activity and transport. For each trip a letter will be sent home detailing the educational purpose of the trip and the estimated cost per pupil, and parents will be invited to return a permission slip indicating willingness or otherwise to make a voluntary contribution of any amount up to the full cost. It is explained in the letter that if sufficient funds cannot be raised the trip may have to be cancelled.

Assuming that the trip does go ahead, no pupil will be excluded on the grounds that their parents have not contributed.

Residential Visits

At Branksome Heath Junior School residential visits are considered beneficial for the pupils but are often very expensive and the Federation cannot fund these visits. The costs of residential visits contain two elements:

- The cost of food and accommodation – from which some parents/carers receiving certain benefits can claim exemption;
- The cost of transport and/or provision of activities – for which voluntary contributions will be sought.

Parents in receipt of Free School Meals may claim a discount on the cost of the residential trip and individual parents will be contacted to confirm the discount offered.

Visitors/Special Events in School

From time to time the schools may invite a non-school based organisation (such as a visiting theatre group) to arrange an activity during the school day. Where the activity does not form a necessary part of the National Curriculum, schools do have the right to make a charge provided that parents are given the option of withdrawing their child from the activity. However it is the policy of the Federation that no pupil should be excluded on grounds of cost, and so parents are therefore asked only for voluntary contributions.

Materials and Equipment

The Federation will normally provide free of charge any materials, equipment and transport required in order to deliver the National Curriculum. However, voluntary contributions, in the form of money or materials such as ingredients, may occasionally be sought from parents for activities where the end product is to be taken home (e.g. craftwork, design technology, food technology).

Responsibility for School Property and Library Books

The Federation recognises that accidental damage can occur. The Federation may seek to recover from parents the costs of repairing or replacing any item of the Federation property which has been wilfully damaged or lost. If books borrowed from either school library are lost while on loan parents may either agree either to replace it themselves or pay £5 to the school for the cost of replacement.

Extra-Curricular (Out of School Hours) Activities

Every effort will be made to provide extra-curricular activities free of charge whenever possible. However, the Federation is not permitted to subsidise extra-curricular activities from delegated government funding, and so must make a charge for some optional activities where costs are incurred. This policy draws a distinction between two types of extra-curricular provision: activities run by the school, and those run by external providers who use the school premises.

In the case of school-run activities, any charge will be kept to a minimum and will be made only to cover costs where these are incurred. To minimise administration time and costs, payment of charges may be requested in advance as a termly or half-termly amount depending on the number of weeks for which a pupil signs up to participate.

Either way, payment must be received in advance of the session(s) and is non-refundable except in exceptional circumstances (see refund policy below).

In the case of clubs run by external providers, these providers are independent of the Federation's charging policy and are permitted to set their own rates which they charge directly to parents, however the Federation will always seek to negotiate the best value arrangement on behalf of pupils. Furthermore, it is the Federation's policy that any income from letting either school's premises to these providers may be used to subsidise provision of school-led activities and to support the Federation's remissions policy.

Remissions Policy

The Federation will always endeavour to provide activities free of charge whenever possible, and to set charges to minimum levels so as not to preclude pupils from accessing provision. However, in cases where a charge must be made, the school has a remissions policy which aims, within the limitations outlined below, to offer assistance to some pupils.

If families are experiencing financial hardship which may prevent a pupil's participation in a particular activity, and are in receipt of means-tested state benefits including entitlement to free school meals, they are invited to approach the Federation in confidence, through their child's teacher, Head of School or School Business Manager, to find out whether they may be able to apply for some remission of charges.

All such applications will be treated with the utmost discretion and every effort will be made to assist parents in need. However, the Federation's ability to remit charges will be limited: firstly by the number of eligible families who apply in each case, priority being given to pupils who have not previously had the opportunity to attend an activity so far during the year, and secondly by the extent of available funds allocated for this purpose from the particular school's own income generation activities, as it is not permitted to use delegated government funding for this purpose.

This policy applies to all school-led activities. However we regret that it is not possible to consider remission of charges for activities out of school hours which are run by external providers.

Payment

Payments should be given directly to either school office and be placed in a clearly marked envelope. Whenever possible we ask for exact cash payments as both schools regularly bank money and it is often difficult to provide change. Cheques are accepted made payable to the specific school, and BHJS operates an online payment system.

Refund Policy

Parents may ask for a refund of voluntary contributions if their child misses a school trip due to illness or unforeseen circumstances. However, in cases where the school has already incurred a direct and non-recoverable cost in including the pupil on the trip (for example, purchase of a ticket which cannot be returned) then any such refund will be discretionary.

This refund policy does not apply to charges made for out-of-hours or optional activities, which are non-refundable except in the event of cancellation by the Federation. Where a pupil drops out of a school-led club or extra-curricular activity which has been paid for in advance, a discretionary refund may be considered for the unattended sessions only in exceptional circumstances and/or if the cost may be recovered by offering the place to another pupil.

Fundraising Activities

Each school may hold events such as sponsor days during the year as a means of raising extra funds to support areas of provision not covered by the delegated budget, such as school trips and school-led extra-curricular activities. Funds raised in this way may also be used to support the school's remissions policy. All pupils will participate in these activities which take place during school hours, but sponsorship is of course voluntary.

The Livingstone Road Primary Federation Parents, Teachers & Friends Association (PTFA) may also organise events throughout the year which parents are invited voluntarily to support.