

Charging and Debt Recovery Policy

The Governing Body recognises the valuable contribution that the wide range of additional activities, including clubs and visits, can make towards a pupils education. The Governing Body aims to promote and provide such activities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum for the pupils of the academy and as additional optional activities.

The relevant statutory provisions are contained in Chapter III of Pt VI of the Education Act 1996. This requires the Governing Body to determine and keep under review a Charging and Remissions Policy. Parents have a right to ask for this information and a summary can be found on the academy website. There are two types of financial contributions for which parents can be asked in relation to educational activities:

Voluntary Contributions
Permitted Charges

They have different limitations as set out below.

Voluntary Contributions

There is no limit to the level of voluntary contribution that may be asked for or any restriction on the way in which it is used. Voluntary contributions therefore can be used to subsidize parents of pupils who are unwilling or unable to pay the charges made and to pay the travel and accommodation costs of accompanying teachers or adults.

Letters requesting a voluntary contribution for an activity must indicate that there is no obligation to contribute and that pupils will not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents have made any contribution in response to the request or invitation.

Permitted Charges

Permitted charges are a direct request to cover certain costs involved with an academy activity or visit. No charge can be made in respect of education provided during academy hours (which excludes the midday break). Furthermore, no charge can be made for any education provided outside of academy hours if this forms part of the syllabus for a public exam, or a part of National Curriculum or religious education (non-chargeable education). A charge may be made however for board and lodgings on any residential educational visit (subject to the provisions of the academy's remissions policy).

1. Material & Textbooks

Where a pupil or parent wishes to retain items produced as a result of art, craft and design, or design and technology, a charge may be levied for the cost of the materials used.

2. Damage/Loss to Property

A charge will be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of academy property (including premises, furniture, equipment, books or materials), the charge to be the cost of replacement or repair, or such lower costs as the Principal may decide.

3. Lettings

The academy will make its facilities available to outside users at a charge of at least the cost of providing the facilities. The scale of charges will be determined annually by the Finance Committee and approved by the Governing Body.

4. Other charges

The Principal, Finance Committee or Governing Body may levy charges for miscellaneous services up to the cost of providing such services eg. for providing a copy of an OFSTED report.

5. Academy Meals

Payment for school meals must be paid on the Monday of the week the child is receiving that meal or further in advance. No pupil is permitted to take a lunch without payment.. If a pupil arrives without payment for a meal that has been requested the parent may receive a telephone call to request payment for the school meal or to bring a packed lunch into the academy by 12 noon that day. If a call is not made on the day and payment is still not received the following day then contact home will be made at this time.

6. Debt Policy

If debts are incurred, then the academy budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

Where possible, income due will be collected before or at the time the relevant sale or service is provided.

Uniform must be paid for at the point of sale, or goods can be held in the academy office for collection on payment of the full amount.

7. Debt reminders – Academy Meals

1st reminder: are made in person or by phone/text and notes made of the conversation/call and outcome.

2nd reminder: a letter will be sent out through pupil post.

3rd reminder: if a debt is outstanding after 14 days the parent is given an appointment to meet with the principal or business manager to agree how and when the debt will be cleared.

Throughout this process our intention is that the situation is discussed amicably and the payment made without causing distress on either side.

8. Persistent Debt

The academy purchases Legal Support from the local Authority which includes debt recovery. The academy has the option to involve the Legal Services Department who will write to the parents/carers and expect payment within 7 days. Legal Services have the ability to issue legal proceedings should the family fail to pay by the deadline.

9. Writing off Debt

If after every effort has been made to collect the debt and legal action is considered impractical or has been unsuccessful, individual bad (irrecoverable) debts may be written off in accordance with the following procedures:

Those up to a value of £500 to be approved by the Principal and reported to the next meeting of the Governors Finance Committee.

Those exceeding £500 to be referred to the Governors Finance Committee for approval.

Where non-chargeable education is provided during a residential visit, then the parents of a pupil who is eligible for free school meals shall receive a complete remission of any charges that would otherwise be payable in respect of board or lodgings.

Under current regulations children whose parents receive the following support payments may be eligible for free school meals:

- 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 (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit

Where charges are to be made by the governing body for optional extras, parents may receive a remission for the whole or part of the charge as set out in the academy's remissions policy.

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Principal, staff and governors.