

Charging Policy

Meadowdale Primary School



The charging and remissions policies adopted by each local governing body ensures that statutory requirements are met and is intended to reflect the general principles of the Education Act which identifies activities for which:

- 1) Charges will not be made
- 2) Charges will be made
- 3) Charges may be waived

Voluntary contributions

Each academy will seek voluntary contributions for any activity in order to benefit the academy or support academy activity whether during or outside academy hours, residential or non-residential and including inviting parents to pay for materials or ingredients where they wish to own the finished product. However all requests for voluntary contributions will emphasise their voluntary nature and the fact that children of parents who do not make such contributions will be treated no differently from those who have. Such contributions will be genuinely voluntary.

There is no limit to the level of voluntary contributions which parents or others can make to academy activities, nor is there any restriction placed on the use which can be made of such contributions, provided they are used for the purpose specified in the request for them. They could, for example, be used to subsidise children from low-income families, or the cost of travel for accompanying teachers.

The Law says that:

- If the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions the parents will be notified of this from the outset.
- No child will be excluded from an activity because the parents are unable to pay.
- If insufficient contributions are raised the trip or activity may have to be cancelled.
- If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay their child will be given an equal chance to go on the visit.

Education Provided Within Academy Hours

Education provided by any academy for its registered children should be free of charge if it takes place wholly or mainly during academy hours, academy hours being those hours when an academy is actually in session and not including the break in the middle of the day. This means that neither the child nor his or her parents or guardian may be required to pay for, or to supply, any materials, books, instruments or other equipment for use in connection with education provided during academy hours.

Education Provided Out of Academy Hours

Where education is provided out of academy hours, charging is permitted, except where the education is provided:

- a) to fulfil any requirements specified in the syllabus for a prescribed Public examination;
or
- b) specifically to fulfil statutory duties relating to the National Curriculum:
- c) to fulfil duties relating to Religious Education.

In these cases the only charge that may be made is for board and lodging or for residential trips.

Music Tuition

The main exception to the principle of free education, which the law allows is that a charge may be made in respect of individual tuition in playing any musical instrument, even if such tuition takes place during academy hours. Parental agreement must be obtained before a child is given that tuition.

Activities run by a Third Party

The Act permits an organisation other than the Governing Body to levy a charge directly on parents for activities organised in academy hours by a non-academy organisation.

Where children are granted leave of absence to attend these activities it would be for parents and any staff members similarly released to satisfy themselves about the adequacy of the arrangements made by the third party to secure the safety and welfare of the children.

Charging Policy

If a charge is made for each child it should not exceed the actual cost. If further funds are needed for additional costs e.g. to help hardship cases this must be by voluntary contributions or general fund raising.

Board and Lodging on Residential Visits

Board & lodging on residential visits may be charged for whether or not the visit takes place within academy time and whether or not the activity is provided to fulfil the requirements of

- the syllabus of a prescribed public examination; or
- of the National Curriculum; or
- to fulfil statutory duties relating to religious education.

Charges for board and lodging must not exceed the actual cost to the pupil. They must not, for example, include any element representing a share of the costs of staff accompanying the visit. (This may, however, be covered by voluntary contributions.)

Governors will, as a statutory minimum, remit any charges for board and lodging in the case of children whose parents are in receipt of Income Support or Child Tax Credit etc. where the activity is deemed to take place in academy hours. Governors may wish to consider whether to remit charges in other circumstances.

School Meals

Parents will be charged for school meals at the current rate agreed by the Finance and Commercial Committee with the exception of those children receiving Free School Meals.

All school meals should be paid for in advance.

If a child's record shows a dinner debt, initially a 'gentle debt reminder' letter will be sent by the academy to the parent, if payment is not received within the next few days a text reminder will be sent. If this debt is not paid within three weeks, a full debt letter will be sent asking parents to ensure their child has sandwiches until the debt has been paid. If the debt remains unpaid, an administration staff member will phone the parents to talk to them about the debt and arrange a payment plan. Information about qualifying for Free School Meals will be included in both debt letters although Free School Meals cannot be claim retrospectively therefore the existing debt should still be paid.

Unpaid debts for children who have left the academy - a full debt letter will be sent to their home address in September. If the debt remains outstanding it will be taken to the Finance and Commercial for agreement to be written off.

'Optional extra' Activities

'Optional extra' activities are those which take place wholly or mainly outside academy hours, but which are not provided as part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination and are not required in order to fulfil statutory duties relating to the national curriculum or to religious education.

Participation will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet such charges as are made. Any charge made in respect of individual children may include an appropriate element for the following: a child's travel costs; a child's board and lodging; materials, books, instruments and other equipment; non-teaching staff costs; entrance fees to museums, theatres etc.; insurance costs.

It should be noted that any charge for an 'optional extra' activity, as distinct from a request for a voluntary contribution, should not exceed the actual cost of providing that activity, divided equally by the number of children willing to participate. It may not, therefore, include an element of subsidy for any other children wishing to participate in the activity whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge.

The costs of teaching staff involved in optional extra activities may only be passed on through charges if:-

- they are engaged specifically by the Governors for the purpose of providing the activity;
- they are employed by the Governors to provide instrumental music tuition; or
- they are teachers already employed by the Governors, who have been engaged on a separate contract for services to provide the optional extra.

Charging in Kind

The cost of ingredients, materials, equipment etc. needed for practical subjects such as craft or food technology, must be budgeted for and borne by the academy. Parents who are willing to contribute in cash or kind can however be encouraged to do so on a voluntary basis.

Children must not be treated differently according to whether or not materials are being provided by their parents. The governors' charging policy should make their policy on this clear. It should be recognised that much of the practical work in craft or food technology is of an investigative nature and will not necessarily result in a "finished product"; however this is an essential part of the learning process.

Breakages and Fines

There is nothing to prevent academies from asking parents to pay for the cost of replacing a broken window or defaced, damaged or lost textbook where this is the result of a child's behaviour. Parents cannot, however, be taken to court for this money.

Any change in policy requires the approval of the Finance and Commercial Committee.