

# Western Springs Primary School



## Charges, Remissions & Debt Collection Policy

Approved by:	Marie Smith	Date: 24/10/2019
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## **INTRODUCTION**

This Charging and Remissions Policy complies with statutory requirements, has regard to the Authority's Policy Statements on charging and is reviewed on an annual basis by the school Governing Board.

We recognise the valuable contribution that the wide range of additional activities, including trips, clubs and residential experiences can make towards pupils' education. We aim to promote and provide such activities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum for the pupils of the school and as additional optional activities.

In addition, we provide a range of extended services (chargeable) for parents, including wrap around for part time younger pupils and before school care. It is our aim to provide parents with a clear understanding of their responsibilities in terms of ensuring timely payment is made for additional, chargeable services.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The aims of this Policy are to:

- Set out what the school will not charge for, what it will make a charge for or request a voluntary contribution towards, from parents/guardians.

## **Activities without charge**

There will be no charge for the following activities

- Education provided wholly or mostly during school hours. This includes the supply of any materials, books, instruments, and other equipment.
- Education provided outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination, which the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education.
- Instrumental and vocal music tuition, which is part of the National Curriculum
- Entry for a prescribed public examination including re-sits provided that a pupil has been prepared for it at the school.

## **Voluntary contributions**

The school will ask for voluntary contributions towards the cost of school-time activities such as trips off site or on site educational activities to assist with funding, subject to the following conditions:

- Any children of parents who do not wish to contribute will not be treated any differently.
- Where there are insufficient voluntary contributions raised to fund a trip or activity, or the school cannot fund it from some other source it may be cancelled.

## **Chargeable activities**

The school will recover the full costs of the following, which may be provided directly or through commissioned services:

- Educational or other activities provided wholly or mainly outside school hours, which are not:
  - (a) Part of the National Curriculum
  - (b) Part of a syllabus for prescribed public examination, which the pupil is being prepared for at school.
- Board and lodgings on residential visits (subject to remission arrangements).
- Cost of entering a pupil for a public examination not prescribed in regulations, and for the cost of preparing a pupil for that examination outside school hours.
- Cost of entering a pupil for a prescribed public examination including re-sits where no preparations have been provided by the school.
- Provision of instrumental and vocal tuition, which takes place during the school day and which has been requested by parents/guardians.

- Provision of materials/ingredients for subjects such as Art & Design or Food Technology, where pupils take home a finished product.
- Provision of resources used exclusively by a child during the school day which has been requested by parent/guardians such as musical instruments, protective clothing etc where pupils will take home the resource once the activity is complete.
- Extended childcare day services
- Damage to property caused wilfully or negligently by children, parents may be asked to contribute towards the whole or part cost of repairing or replacing damaged, defaced or lost school property.
- Services used at the school by community groups and individuals, we will seek to recover the actual cost e.g. Photocopying, laminating etc
- School lunches (optional)

### **Details of charges**

Charges for individual pupils will not exceed the actual cost of providing the activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating. Charges do not include any subsidies for any other pupils wishing to participate in the activity whose parents are unwilling to pay the full charge. Where remissions have been agreed these will be met through alternative funding sources.

### **Remissions**

In order to remove financial barriers from disadvantaged pupils, the governing board has agreed that some activities and visits where charges can legally be made may be offered at no charge or a reduced charge to parents/carers in particular circumstances. Criteria for qualification for circumstances in which charges may be waived are given below.

- Children in care
- Parents/carers in receipt of
  - (a) Income Support
  - (b) Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
  - (c) Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
  - (d) Child Tax Credit, provided that Working Tax Credit is not also received and the family's income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs) does not exceed the sum given in the Revenue and Customs rules
  - (e) Guaranteed State Pension
  - (f) Pupil Premium entitlement

The governing body may remit charges in cases of hardship in full or in part on application from parents/carers, in strictest confidence. The Headteacher will authorise remission on behalf of Governors in consultation with the Chair of Governors or his/her representative.

### **Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation**

The Governing Board will monitor the impact of this policy by receiving on a yearly basis a financial report on those activities that resulted in charges being levied, the subsidies awarded (without providing names) and the source of those subsidies. It will seek to evaluate the impact of those subsidies on the children in need of additional support.

## **Debt Recovery**

Western Springs Primary School will take all reasonable measures to rigorously collect debts as part of its management of public funds. Western Springs Primary School's debt recovery procedures will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the Financial Handbook for Schools (Staffordshire County Council) and any other legal requirements. In particular:

- The Governing Board will not write-off any debt belonging to the school which exceeds £500. Any sums above this will be referred to the County Treasurer for approval. (If any debtor has a number of debts which together exceed the write-off limit then these will be treated as a total amount)
- A formal record of any debts written off will be maintained and this will be retained for 7 years.
- The School will not initiate any legal action to recover debts, but will refer any debts which it has not been able to collect (unless a decision to write-off the debt is demonstrably a reasonable course of action) to the Director of Corporate Services to consider taking legal or other action to recover the debt.
- The School will NOT write-off any debt belonging to the County Council or another party. If in doubt as to the appropriate action to collect any such debts, the School will seek advice promptly from officers of the County Council

## **Procedures**

All payable items/services will be loaded onto a child's Parentpay account. Parents will be provided with an initial login letter for Parentpay, and will then be expected to use the system for the payment of all items and services. Where a parent is unable to access the internet in order to use Parentpay, they will be offered the chance to use a school device for this purpose. Alternatively, they will be provided with a printed barcode letter, enabling them to pay for items/services via Pay Point in local shops.

## **School lunch charges**

School lunches should be paid for either in advance, or on the day on which the lunch is taken via Parentpay. There should be no 'debt' on a child's dinner money. If a debt does build up, the school may remove the provision of school lunches until the debt is cleared. It is the responsibility of the parent to apply for their child to receive free school meals through Staffordshire County Council, although the school may offer support in this process on behalf of the family.

Where parents use childcare vouchers, we appreciate there may appear a debt on the account, we will monitor these accounts to ensure that voucher payments are adequate to clear charges made within the period.

## **Additional Nursery 'wrap around' charges**

Additional Nursery 'wrap around' session charges should be paid in advance via invoice from Staffordshire County Council. There should be no 'debt' on a child's additional Nursery 'wrap around' charges. If a debt does build up, the school may remove the use of these sessions until the debt is cleared.

*Funded sessions – please note that it is the parent's responsibility to ensure that eligibility codes for funding of Nursery sessions are passed to the Finance Office within the correct timeframe, loss of funding for failure to provide these codes will result in charges being made to parents for the sessions.*

## **Pre-School Charges**

Pre-School session charges should be paid in advance via invoice from Staffordshire County Council. There should be no 'debt' on a child's Pre--School charges. If a debt does build up, the school may remove the use of these sessions until the debt is cleared.

*Funded sessions – please note that it is the parent's responsibility to ensure that eligibility codes for funding of Pre-School sessions are passed to the Finance Office within the correct timeframe, loss of funding for failure to provide these codes will result in charges being made to parents for the sessions.*

\*Other chargeable items such as trips, activities, events, revision books may also be offered. Where a charge from parents is required, this will be clearly illustrated. These type of charges will also be loaded onto the Parentpay system for payment. Payment may be required before items are released (details and expectations for individual payments of this nature will be clearly laid out at the time of original notification to parents).

## **Reminders**

Parentpay will send an automatic reminder to parents via email where a debt is present. This should prompt immediate payment. This is a weekly reminder.

Where a debt remains, parents will be contacted via text with a further reminder, along with a phone call to discuss the outstanding fees.

At the discretion of the Governors' Finance Committee the debtor may be advised that they will be required to pay in advance for all future services and supplies or the services and supplies will no longer be available to them. This decision and its basis will be recorded.

## **Negotiation of repayment terms**

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue reminder'. If a debtor asks for 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Headteacher unless the debt is £500 or more whereby negotiation will be at the discretion of the Governors. A record of all such agreements will be kept.

A letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

The Headteacher/Governors will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further 'credit' and will be required to pay in advance in future.

## **Reporting of outstanding debt levels**

The Finance Officer will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is known or can be determined at any time.

The Governors will review the level of outstanding debts every term to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective.

## **Bad debts**

Bad debts of over £100 will be reported to the Governors.

A record of the write-off, of sums over £500, the reason for it and the approval for it, will be retained for 7 years. Any debt belonging to the County Council will be referred to the appropriate officer for consideration/action without delay once the School has taken reasonable measures to collect the debt (i.e. has followed the reminder notification procedures set out above).