

# Stanton Community Primary School

*Nurture, Enjoy, Aspire, Achieve*



## Charging and Remissions Policy

Date of Governor Approval:	January 2024	Date for Next Review:	January 2025
Signed by:	K Sewell (Chair of Governors)		

### Policy on charging for and remissions for school activities

Stanton Community Primary School believes that all our pupils should have an equal opportunity to benefit from school activities and visits (curricular and extra-curricular) independent of their parents' 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 minimise the financial barriers which may prevent some pupils taking full advantage of the opportunities.

The 1996 Education Act requires all schools to have a policy on charging and remissions for school activities, which will be kept under regular review. The review date for this policy is recorded on the front of the document.

This policy will identify activities for which:

- charges will not be made.
- charges will be made
- charges may be waived

### No charges will be made for:

1. Education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment); \*
2. Education provided outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education;
3. Instrumental or vocal tuition, for pupils learning individually or in groups, unless the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent. No charge may be made for this in respect of a pupil who is looked after by a local authority
4. Education provided on any trip that takes place during school hours;
5. Supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential trip.

\*The Governing Body may charge for materials or require them to be provided if parents have indicated in advance that they wish to own any finished product produced in school e.g. Design Technology Products.

It remains the parent's responsibility to supply school uniform including P.E. Kit (see School Uniform policy).

### **Optional extras**

Charges may be made for some activities that are known as 'optional extras'. Where an optional extra is 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; or
  - b) 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 optional extras an amount may be included in relation to:

- any materials, books, instruments, or equipment provided in connection with the optional extra;
- teaching staff engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra, this includes supply 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, or vocal tuition, where the tuition is an optional extra.

Any charge made in respect of individual pupils will not exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating. It will also not 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.

Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement will be a necessary prerequisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

### **After school club**

The school reserves the right to charge parents if their child accesses the after-school facilities due to late collection without prior booking. There is also a £10 charge per 15 minutes for parents that do not collect at 6pm when after school club finishes.

### **Voluntary contributions**

Separately from the matter of charging, the school may also seek voluntary contributions in order to offer a wide variety of experiences to pupils. All requests for voluntary contributions will emphasise their voluntary nature and the fact that pupils of parents who do not make such contributions will be treated no differently from those who have.

- If an activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions will inform parents of this from the onset
- No child will be excluded from an activity because parents are unable to pay.
- Parents will be made aware that if insufficient contributions are raised, the trip of 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.

### **Residential Visits**

For residential trips deemed to take place during school time, no charges may be made for any part of the trip other than for board and lodging costs of that trip.

For residential trips deemed to take place outside school time, charges may be made (other than for the reasons stated above).

### **Is a residential trip in or out of school time?**

- If 50% or more of the time spent on the activity occurs during school hours, it is deemed to take place during school hours. Time spent on travel counts in this calculation if the travel itself occurs during school hours. School hours do not include the break in the middle of the day.
- Where less than 50% of the time spent on an activity falls during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside school hours. For example, an excursion might require pupils to leave school an hour before the school day ends, but the activity does not end until late in the evening.

When the school informs parents about a forthcoming visit, they will make it clear that parents who can prove they are in receipt of certain benefits will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging.

The list of benefits to which this applies is below in the remissions section.

### **General**

The cost of repairing damage and replacing equipment (lost, defaced or damaged) remains the responsibility of the parents when this damage or loss is the result of their child's behaviour or negligence.

The Governing Body may from time to time, amend the categories of activity for which a charge may be made.

## **Remissions**

The Governing Body may from time to time decide to remit all or part of the cost of activities involving particular pupils. This will be at the Governors' discretion. In other circumstances, there may be cases of family hardship, which make it difficult for pupils to take part in particular activities for which a charge is made. When arranging a chargeable activity, the Governing Body will invite parents to apply in confidence for the remission of charges in part or in full.

Authorisation of remission will be made by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher on behalf of the Governors. All parents, however, will have the right of appeal to the Governing Body, normally represented by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Governors.

### **Families qualifying for remission or help with charges.**

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of 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 - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

### **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:

- A system for parents to pay in instalments
- When an opportunity for a trip arises at short notice it will be possible to arrange to pay by instalments beyond the date of the trip
- 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 where possible.

## **School Meals Debt**

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

There will occasionally be the decision to be made about whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. However, the school meals service is no different than any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone.

Parents should be able to relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying. Yet a minority of parents in the school expect us to provide food for their children without paying for it. On the odd occasion a child requires a meal which has not been paid for then the school kitchen will provide a pic n mix meal. The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals, there should be no excuses.

Children will get free school meals if parents receive any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income based Job Seeker's Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit but no element of Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenues & Customs) that does not exceed £16,190
- If they are supported under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Working Tax Credit during the four-week period immediately after employment finishes or after they start to work less hours per week
- Universal Credit (provided they have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400 (£616.67 per month), as assessed by earnings from up to three of their most recent assessment periods).

It is very time consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for money - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

The governors at Stanton Community Primary School feel that a system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach. We understand that it may seem a very hard stance as there has been a culture of debt tolerance and that this will be tough to implement. However, it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for. Our Sims.net dinner money system highlights debt immediately so keeping track will be easy.

The school will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- Reminders on Class Dojo
- The school brochure
- The school website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This will be done at least once each year, more often when it is first introduced.

All parents will be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school. The letter to parents is attached as Appendix 1.

### Key Information

1. All parents are signposted to this policy when they join the school.
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
3. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
4. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch

### Debt policy implementation

Level 1 Indicator: A child's account goes into debt

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1:

Send a 'Gentle debt reminder'

Level 2 Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to either bring the money into school or bring sandwiches in before lunchtime

Level 3 Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send strong debt letter

The head teacher will send a final letter.

Level 4 Indicator: The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 4: bring in outside agencies

LA to advise, small claims court, social services

## Appendix 1

Dear Parents/Carers School

Unfortunately, due to a number of school meals that were not being paid for regularly Stanton Community Primary School has adopted a NO DEBT policy relating to school meals.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for any unpaid meals. I am sure everybody will agree that this is unacceptable and we hope that all parents give this policy their full support. As we all know nobody takes their child to a restaurant and expects them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school.

If you believe that you may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact the school office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.

School lunches must be paid for in advance using the school gateway payment system, click on the link below:

<https://login.schoolgateway.com>

If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one meal. However, this debt must be paid the next day and future meals must be paid for in advanced before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the office will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money or provide sandwiches before lunch time.

If payment of the debt is not received by the next day, the Headteacher reserves the right to inform the Chair of the Governors Finance Committee who may decide to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Social services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

By implementing this debt policy, we hope we are able to help parents manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all the money that is for children's learning is available. If you have any concerns please don't hesitate to contact me; or if you would like to see a copy of the full policy please come to the office.

Yours sincerely  
Mrs E J Bonnelykke  
Head Teacher