

Oliver Goldsmith Primary School

Charging And Remission Policy

Introduction

At Oliver Goldsmith Primary School we believe the children benefit from outside visits, journeys, visitors and extra-curricular activities in sport and the creative arts. We follow government regulations on charging. When an event takes place during school time, we ask families of children benefiting to share the cost. Legally, we are requesting voluntary contributions, but if we do not receive enough to cover the cost, plans may be cancelled.

Remission of Charges

No child is barred from attending because his/her parents/guardians have not contributed. Families that the headteacher determines are having financial hardship, are not expected to pay. We keep such information confidential and handle situations discretely. Each situation is considered independently. Trips can be cancelled if parents/carers are not able to contribute towards the cost.

Activities Covered

Activities in school time, or partially in school time, e.g. in Year 6 children go on School Journey. [Usually, they spend 3 nights away and the majority of this is not in school time, but if it were, this would have charging implications - see Background and Guidance below].

Also, if a child's parent wishes him/her to buy materials, books, instruments or materials used at school, then an appropriate charge will be made.

Payment

All payments, including dinner money, should go into an envelope with the child's name, year group and what the money is for. For dinner money, the pupil should take the envelope to the School Office first thing in the morning; for trips etc. the teacher sends the unopened envelopes to the School Office.

Queries

If you have a query about a charge, members of the office staff are available between 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. to answer queries.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body.

BACKGROUND AND GUIDANCE TO A CHARGING AND REMISSION POLICY

Reviewed and updated: February 2018

Next review: February 2020

Introduction

The education provided by any maintained school must be free and this includes materials, equipment and any transport that is needed to take pupils from the school to the activity such as to the local swimming pool for swimming lessons. Under the charging provisions of the Education Act 1996, governing bodies of maintained schools may choose to charge for certain defined activities, but can only do this if they have first drawn up a statement of their charging and remissions policy.

If they choose to charge parents for the board and lodging costs of a residential visit, and if the education provided on that visit must otherwise be provided free under the terms of the Education Act 1996, they must, as a minimum, remit the board and lodging cost for pupils whose parents are in receipt of income support, family credit, or disability working allowance. For example, if the work done on a field trip were part of the GCSE examination syllabus, parents on income support would not have to pay the board and lodging cost for their children. Otherwise, remission, like charging, is at the discretion of the Governors. However, it is likely that any reduction in remission beyond that which the LA would pay would be seen as unfair.

In respect of charges for music tuition, the Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007 came into effect on 1st September 2007.

Charging Policies

The governing body may not charge for anything unless it has drawn up a statement of general policy on charging. The governing body's policy may be more or less generous than that of the LA, as long as it meets the requirements of the law. A policy statement will take account of each type of activity that can be charged for, and explain when charges will be made. If a charge is to be made for a particular type of activity - for example 'optional extras' - parents need to know how the charge will be worked out and who might qualify for help with the cost (or even get it free). Parents have a right to ask for this information, and a summary must be included in the prospectus published by the school.

If a charge is made for each pupil, this should not exceed the actual cost. If further funds need to be raised, for example, to help in hardship cases, this must be by voluntary contributions or general fund-raising, and not by charging the paying pupils more.

The permitted charge may include an allowance for the costs of teachers from the school who supervise the activity, but only if those teachers have been given a separate contract to provide the optional extra. A contract need not be a formal document. It could be a simple letter to a teacher asking him or her to provide a service on a particular occasion.

When drawing up their statements, governing bodies should remember that charging is only permissible for the following areas of activity:

- board and lodging on residential visits;
- costs associated with individual tuition, and tuition in groups, in the playing of musical instruments, including vocal tuition, out of school hours (unless it is provided as part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination or is required by the National Curriculum);
- activities which take place wholly or mainly outside school hours, but which are not provided as part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination and which are not required in order to fulfil statutory duties relating to the National Curriculum or to religious education;
- the cost of entering a pupil for a public examination, not prescribed in regulations, and for preparing the pupil for such an examination outside school hours;
- re-sits of prescribed public examinations when no further preparation has been provided by the school;
- optional extras.

Schools Hours

Parents must be informed of the days, and the hours of those days, that the school their children are attending is in session.

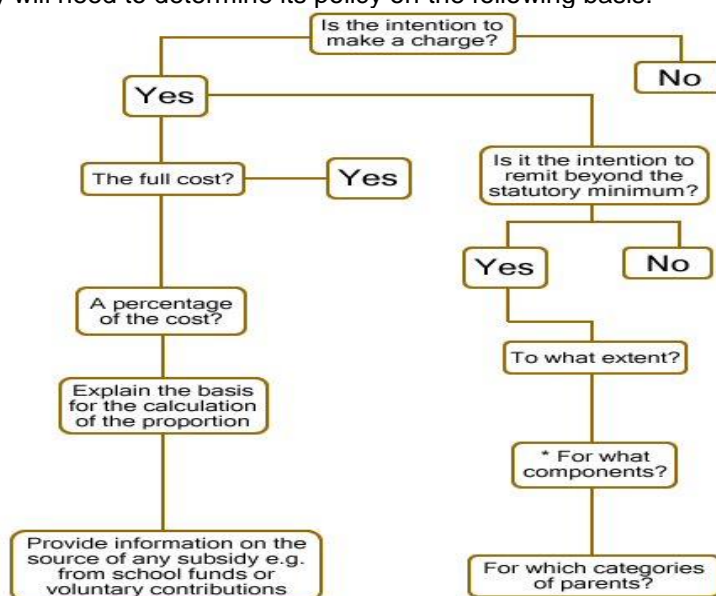
School "hours" mean when the school is in session and does not include breaks or INSET days. A school should provide a minimum of two sessions per day, each of two hours, giving a minimum of twenty hours per week. However, as a general guide to good practice, the Secretary of State has adopted the Office of Standards in Education's (OfSTED) advice on the following minimum hours per week:

- 21 hours for pupils aged 5 to 7
- 23 ½ hours for pupils aged 7 to 10
- 24 hours for pupils aged 11 to 13
- 25 hours for pupils aged 14 to 16

Middle Schools which are considered to be primary schools should aim to provide at least 23 ½ ; hours per week, while middle schools which are considered to be secondary schools should aim to provide a minimum of 24 hours per week. These hours do not include collective worship, registration or break times. As far as the number of days is concerned, a school must provide 190 days of two sessions or 380 half days of a single session - each session being a minimum of two hours as already stated.

Drawing up a Charging Policy

The flow chart below can be used by Governing Bodies to draw up their charging policy. For each of the areas above the governing body will need to determine its policy on the following basis:



* For example where music tuition is concerned schools might wish to remit the teaching costs but not instrument hire, etc.

Music Tuition

The new charging regulations for music tuition during the school day, The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007, (<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/stat.htm>) came into force on 1st September 2007. These regulations provide for the charging of tuition in groups of any appropriate size and allow charging for vocal tuition. However instrumental and vocal tuition which is part of the National Curriculum or the first programme in which the whole class engages with the Key Stage 2 Programme of Instrumental and Vocal Tuition (Wider Opportunities) cannot be charged for.

Other Activities During School Hours

In addition to music tuition, non-school organisations may be asked by a school to arrange an activity to take place during school hours and such organisations may charge parents where parents want their children to join the particular activity, such as an outside theatre group. While schools cannot charge for school-time activities, they can still ask parents to make voluntary contributions to help school funds go further where this is the source

of funding. While it is legitimate for the school to say a particular activity cannot take place if sufficient voluntary funding is not forthcoming, no pupil may be left out of such an activity because her or his parents cannot or will not make a contribution.

Also a non-school organisation may arrange an activity to take place during school hours and parents want their children to join the activity. Such organisations may charge parents. But parents must then ask the school to agree to their children being absent, just as they would if they wanted to take their children out of school for a family holiday. The head teacher and governing body must decide whether this is in the pupils' best interest. They must also bear in mind the requirements of the Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations that a pupil should not be allowed more than two weeks' absence in any year unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Public Examinations

No charges may be made for entering pupils for public examinations that are set out in regulations. The governing body must enter a pupil for each examination in a public examination syllabus that the school has prepared the pupil for. This does not need to apply if the governing body think there are educational reasons for not entering the pupil, or if the pupil's parents ask, in writing, that the pupil should not be entered. The LA may not override the governing body's decision on whether to enter a particular pupil for an examination.

An examination entry fee may be charged to parents if:

- the examination is on the set list, but the pupil was not prepared for it at the school;
- the examination is not on the set list but the school arranges for the pupil to take it;
- a pupil fails without good reason to complete the requirements of any public examination where the governing body or LA originally paid or agreed to pay the entry fee.

Charges may not be made for any cost associated with preparing a pupil for an examination. But charging is allowed for tuition and other costs if a pupil is prepared outside school hours for an examination that is not set out in regulations.

Within or Outside School Hours

For an activity to be considered wholly or mainly outside school hours, the bulk of the time spent on the activity must lie outside normal school hours. For example, if a group of pupils was going to a musical concert and had to leave mid-morning and arrive back an hour after school normally finished, such a visit would count as within school hours. On the other hand, if pupils had to leave mid-afternoon and arrived back in the late evening, such a visit would count as taking place outside school-time and charges could then be made.

Governing bodies should take care that where a charge is made it only covers the actual cost and the cost of teachers supervising the activity. If funds are needed to help with hardship cases, these must be through voluntary contributions or from any hardship fund set up by the school and/or the Parents' Association not by an added charge to other parents. Where the cost covers supervisory teachers, such teachers should have a contract that indicates this work is an optional extra.

Residential Activities

Residential activities are treated in a similar way to educational activities that take place wholly or partly outside school hours. A residential trip counts as falling within school-time if the number of school sessions missed by the pupils amounts to at least 50% of the number of half days taken up by the activity. Bearing in mind that the school day is divided into two sessions and that each 24 hour period is divided into two half days beginning at noon and at midnight, a trip taking place during the term that begins on Wednesday at 8.30 am and finishes on Saturday evening at 9 p.m. would count as 8 half days. Of these 8 half days, 6 half days count as school sessions, so this trip would be taken as happening in school-time. On the other hand, a trip starting at 8.30 am on Friday and finishing at noon on Sunday would count as 5 half days of which 2 would be counted as school sessions. This trip would therefore be considered as taking place outside school-time and could be charged for in total, including board and lodging.

For a residential trip taking place largely during school-time, or that is essential to the curriculum provided by the school, no charge can be made for the education element or the cost of travel. Charges can be made for board and lodging, but it must be remembered that in all cases this can only be done for parents who are not receiving income support, family credit, or disability working allowance.

The School Mini-Bus

Where a school runs a mini-bus, only the school's pupils, staff or parents may travel at a charge. However, schools can only charge if they have a permit issued under Section 19 of the Transport Act 1985, which exempts them from the Public Service Vehicle Operator and Driver Licensing Conditions. If no charge is made a school does not require a permit, but a permit is required for each mini-bus that a school owns if they are making a charge. Charges may recover some or all of the running costs of the vehicle (including depreciation) but such a service cannot make a profit either directly or indirectly.

Voluntary Contributions

Although schools cannot charge for school-time activities, they may still invite parents and others to make voluntary contributions (in cash or in kind) to make school funds go further. All requests to parents for voluntary contributions must make it quite clear that the contributions would be voluntary. Schools should also make it clear that children of parents who do not contribute will not be treated any differently. If a particular activity for pupils cannot take place without some financial help from parents, that should be explained to parents at the planning stage. The essential point is that no pupil may be left out of an activity because his or her parents cannot or will not make a contribution of any kind. The school must first decide which class or group of pupils is to benefit from the activity and then look for voluntary contributions, either for that activity or by general fund-raising.

Remission of Fees and Costs

Where parents receive the following support they are exempted from charges as indicated:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Any support under part 6 of the Immigrations and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit, provided that working Tax Credit is not also received, or the family's income as assessed by HM Customs and Revenue does not exceed £15,575 in the financial year 2008/2009
- The guarantee of State Pension Credit
- An income related employment and support allowance that was introduced on October 27th 2008

Such parents must have board and lodging costs remitted to them if the trip takes place mainly during school hours. Fees for residential trips (rather than the cost of board and lodging) may not be charged to such parents, even if the trip is outside school hours, but forms part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination (e.g. GCSE) or is part of the National Curriculum or the syllabus for religious education.

Other Relevant Policies and Procedures

- Home-school agreements
- School prospectus
- Annual report to parents
- Family support information
- Parents and Teachers Associations
- Attendance policy

Agreed by Chair of Governors: Denise Williams-Dean _____ Date _____

Agreed by Headteacher: Lesley Murdoch _____ Date _____