

Hartford Manor Primary School & Nursery



Charging, Remissions and Debt Management Policy

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1. Introduction

This Charging and Remissions Policy complies with statutory requirements, has regard to Cheshire West's Policy Statements on charging and is reviewed on an annual basis by the school Governing Body's Leadership, Management and Finance Committee. It is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on [charging for school activities](#) and [the Education Act 1996](#), sections 449-462 of which set out the law on charging for school activities in maintained schools in England.

2. Aims and objectives

The aims of this Policy are to:

- have robust, clear processes in place for charging and remissions;
- 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;
- clarify how charges will be determined, so parents and guardians understand why requests for payment are sometimes made for some activities; and
- set out the school's approach to debt management.

3. Definitions

- Charge: a fee payable for specifically defined activities.
- Remission: the cancellation of a charge which would normally be payable.
- Debt: outstanding fees payable for specifically defined activities.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The governing body

The **governing body** has overall responsibility for approving the charging and remissions policy, but can delegate this to a committee, an individual governor or the headteacher.

The governing body also has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy.

In our school, responsibility for approving the charging and remissions policy and monitoring its implementation has been delegated to the **Leadership Management & Finance** committee.

4.2 The Principal

The principal is responsible for ensuring staff are familiar with the charging and remissions policy, and that it is being applied consistently.

4.3 Staff

Our staff are responsible for:

- implementing the charging and remissions policy consistently; and
- notifying the Principal of any specific circumstances which they are unsure about or where they are not certain if the policy applies.

The senior leadership team will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this policy and its implementation.

4.4 Parents

Parents are expected to notify staff, or the Principal, of any concerns or queries regarding the charging, remissions and debt management policy.

5. When charges cannot be made

The school cannot charge for:

5.1 Education

- Admission applications;
- Education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment);
- Education provided outside school hours if it is part of:
 - the national curriculum;
 - a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
 - Religious Education
- Instrumental or vocal tuition, for pupils learning individually or in groups, unless the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent
- Entry for a prescribed public examination if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school
- Examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school

5.2 Transport

- Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the local authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport.
- Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing board or local authority has arranged for pupils to be educated.
- Transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when he or she has been prepared for that examination at the school.
- Transport provided in connection with a curriculum entitlement, eg swimming.

5.3 Residential visits

- Education provided on any visit that takes place during school hours
- Education provided on any visit that takes place outside school hours if it is part of:
 - The national curriculum
 - A syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
 - Religious education
- Supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential visit.

6. When charges can be made

The school can charge for:

6.1 Education

- any materials, books, instruments or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him or her to own them;
- optional extras (see below);
- music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances;
- certain early years provision, for example additional nursery sessions over and above grant funded hours; and
- Use of Community facilities.

6.2 Optional extras

We are able to charge for 'optional extras'. In these cases, the school can charge for providing materials, books, instruments or equipment. 'Optional extras' may include:

- Education provided outside of school time that is not part of:
 - The national curriculum
 - A syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
 - Religious education.
- Examination entry fee(s) if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school.
- Transport (other than transport that is required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the local authority/governing board has 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. At Hartford Manor these include paid nursery sessions, including the nursery lunch club, breakfast and after-school clubs, tea and supervised homework sessions).

Any charge made in respect of individual pupils will:

- not be greater than the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating;
- not include an element of subsidy for any other pupils who wish to take part in the activity but whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge; and
- not include the cost of alternative provision for those pupils who do not wish to participate. Parental agreement is necessary for the provision of an optional extra which is to be charged for.

Where charges can be made, the charges for each activity will be determined by the governing board and reviewed annually, in June. Parents will be informed of the charges for the coming year each July. Charges for school, trips/visits and residentials are determined on an individual basis and approved by the Principal.

6.3 Music tuition

The school can charge for vocal or instrumental tuition provided either individually or to groups of pupils, provided that the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent. Charges may not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff giving the tuition.

6.4 Residential visits

Schools can charge for board and lodging on residential visits, but the charge must not exceed the actual cost.

7. Voluntary contributions

As an exception to the requirements set out in section 5 of this policy, the school is able to ask for voluntary contributions from parents to fund activities during school hours which would not otherwise be possible. For example, some school trips, visits and sports activities.

There is no obligation for parents to contribute. No child will be excluded from an activity if their parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay provided that consent has been given and that medical/other required forms have been completed and returned.

However, where the school is unable to raise enough funds for an activity or visit then it will be cancelled.

8. Remissions

In some circumstances the school may not charge for items or activities set out in section 6 of this policy. This will be at the discretion of the governing body and Principal, in all cases it will depend on the specific activity and individual circumstances.

8.1 Remissions for residential visits

Children who receive free school meals because their parents/carers receive certain benefits are not charged for the board and lodgings element of residential visits. Charges for other 'chargeable activities' may also be fully or partially remitted, in line with paragraph 8 above.

9. School meals

Parents are responsible for providing a lunch for their child, this may be in the form of a paid meal, application of a free meal entitlement or a packed lunch from home. All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to a free school meal. Children in nursery and years 3-6 may be entitled to a free school meal, depending upon circumstances.

We adopt a flexible approach to providing lunches at Hartford Manor, allowing children to choose between a school dinner and packed lunch from day to day. This also means that for many parents, payment is made on a daily basis rather than weekly, monthly or half termly. All payments are made using Gateway, either online or via a PayPoint card. We do not provide a school lunch where the parent/carer owes for 5 meals or more. It is the parent/carer's responsibility to keep the account in balance.

The school is responsible for the collection and reconciliation of all school dinner money and is liable for all arrears and non-payments. This means that where meals are provided but not paid for, the school budget has to bear the cost. The school budget is unable to

meet the burden of school meal debts. Parents/carers must pay for all school meals promptly.

10. Charging processes and debt management

Charges for all school meals and activities, including trips/visits, events, music lessons, study books and extended services are raised on the school's online payment system, Gateway. All parents/carers are provided with a Gateway login. Anyone wishing to pay in cash can do so using a Paypoint card in local stores.

It is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure that payments are made on time and that debt does not build up. Payment plans are set up for the more expensive residential visits.

10.1 Debt management

The school admin team send weekly text/email reminders to parents/carers with outstanding balances. **Parents/carers must not ignore these reminders.** Continued failure to pay or to agree a payment plan will result in letters from the Principal leading to access to the activity being withdrawn. Where a school meal debt is for 5 meals or more no further meals will be provided until the debt is cleared.

Where debts remain outstanding, they will be referred to Cheshire West and Chester for collection. In such circumstances, parents/carers will receive invoices for the full amount outstanding and the debt becomes subject to the Council's formal debt collection procedures.

10.2 Difficulties with payment

Debtors are expected, whenever possible, to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue payment' reminder. As part of our charging process, parents/carers are offered an opportunity to discuss difficulties with making a payment with the Principal or business manager. It may be possible for the school to break the payments down into more manageable chunks through a payment plan, in all cases, a letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms for repayment. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child. For example, a sensitive approach to debt recovery will take the following factors into account:

- Hardship – where paying the debt would cause financial hardship.
- Ill health – where our recovery action might cause further ill health.
- Time – where the debt is so large compared to the person's income that it would take an unreasonable length of time to pay it all off.
- Cost – where the value of the debt is less than the cost of recovering it.

Multiple debts – where a parent/carer owes more than one debt to the school, we will seek to agree a single repayment plan to include all outstanding amounts

10.3 Write off of debts

In general, payment for all goods and services supplied by the school should be collected in advance or 'at the point of sale'. In line with the local authority's 'Scheme for financing

schools' and the Governing Body's scheme of delegation, the Leadership, Management and Finance committee is empowered to write off debts.

The Principal will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is monitored each half term. Records will be maintained to detail individual debts and the total value of debt to the school in order that it can be determined at any point in time. These details will be regularly reported to the Leadership, Management and Finance committee along with any action that has been put in place to recover the debt.

11. Monitoring arrangements

The Leadership, Management and Finance committee monitors charges and remissions, and ensures these comply with this policy. This policy will be reviewed by this committee each year.