



Pebworth First and Blackminster Middle Schools
Federation



Charging and remissions policy

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out what charges can and cannot be made for activities in the Pebworth First and Blackminster Schools Federation. The policy has been drawn up in accordance with Sections 449-462 of The Education Act 1996 which sets out the law regarding what charges can and cannot be made for activities in schools maintained by local authorities. This policy has used as its basis the DfE document 'Charging for school activities' which can be found at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/706830/Charging_for_school_activities.pdf

For the purpose of this policy all activities/trips/visits that take place during school time, or out of school time, are deemed as 'optional extras'. Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

Voluntary Contributions

Nothing in legislation prevents a school governing body or local authority from asking for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any school activities. However, if the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, the governing body or Headteacher should make this clear to parents at the outset. The governing body or Headteacher must also make it clear to parents that there is no obligation to make any contribution.

It is important to note that no child should be excluded from an activity simply because his or her parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund a visit, then it must be cancelled. Schools must make sure that they make this clear to parents. If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child must still be given an equal chance to go on the visit. BMS and PFS will make it clear to parents at the outset what our policy for allocating places on school visits will be.

Circumstances where no charge is made

No charge will be made for:

Education in School

- Education provided wholly or mainly during school hours.
- Admission to school for children of compulsory school age.
- Activities which are part of the National Curriculum, or are part of a prescribed examination syllabus, or part of Religious Education.
- The supply of any materials, books and instruments or other equipment.

Transport

- Transporting registered students to or from the school premises, where the local authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport.
- Transporting registered students to other premises where the governing body or local authority has arranged for students to be educated.
- Transport that enables a student to meet an examination requirement when he has been prepared for that examination at the school.

- Transport provided in connection with an educational visit which is part of the National Curriculum.

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, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the student is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education.
- Supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying students on a residential visit.

Music tuition

- Children learning to play musical instruments as part of the National Curriculum; or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the student is being prepared for by the school, or part of religious education; or
- Cost associated with preparing a student for an examination.

Examination fees

- Entry for a prescribed public examination if the student has been prepared for it at the school or for examination re-sit if the student is being prepared for the re-sits at the school.

Circumstances where the school may charge parents

Optional Extras

Charges may be made for other activities known as 'optional extras'. Where an optional extra is being provided, a charge may be made for providing materials, books, instruments, or equipment as follows:-

Education

- Activities which take place mainly or wholly out of school time if they are not part of the National Curriculum, not part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the students being prepared for at the school and not part of religious education.
- Materials used in practical subjects and project assignments provided parents have agreed in advance that they or the student wish to keep the finished product e.g. ingredients or materials.

Music tuition

- Musical instrument tuition provided to individual students or to a group of not more than four students if the teaching of music tuition is not part of the National Curriculum or a public examination syllabus being followed by the student.

Transport

- Transport that is not required to take the student to school or to other premises where the governing body have arranged for the student to be provided with education.

Examination Fees

- The examination is on the set list, but the student was not prepared for it at the school.
- The examination is not on the set list, but the school arranges for the student to take it.
- A student 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.

Board and Lodgings

- The cost of board and lodging for residential trips, even when taking place largely during school time. (Students whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits are exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging, see page 6).

Voluntary Contributions

Although schools cannot charge for school time activities, voluntary contributions may be sought from parents for activities which supplement the normal school curriculum.

Requests to parents for voluntary contributions will state that:-

- there is no legal obligation to make a voluntary contribution;
- students will not be excluded through parents' inability or unwillingness to pay;
- students of parents who cannot contribute will not be treated any differently; and
- where there are not enough voluntary contributions to make the activity possible and there is no way to make up the shortfall, the activity will be cancelled.

Requests made for voluntary contributions made in respect of individual students must not include any element of subsidy for any other students wishing to participate in the activity whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge.

Remissions

Parents who can prove they are in receipt of the following benefits will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging of a residential trip:-

1. Income Support.
2. Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance.
3. In receipt of any other benefit or allowance, or entitled to any tax credit under the Tax Credits Act 2002 or element of such a tax credit, as may be prescribed by regulations from time to time for any period wholly or partly comprised in the time spent on the trip.

Currently the following are prescribed:-

- I. Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- II. Child Tax Credit, providing Working Tax Credit is not also received and the family's income (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) does not exceed £16,040 (for 2009/10) (i.e. children who are eligible to receive free school meals.)

The governing body may wish to remit in full or in part, the cost of other activities for parents in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case by case basis.

Supplementary Information

Uniform, P.E. Kit, Calculators, Aprons, Pens etc. Aprons

Parents can be invited to equip their child with items of personal equipment intended to be used solely by their child.

Breakages and Damage

Where a student's behaviour results in damage to school property or equipment, parents may be asked to pay for the necessary repair or replacement. Each incident should be dealt with on its own merit and at the school's discretion.

Charges levied on parents by a third party (eg. a Travel Company)

These charges lie outside the new legal provisions.

Work Experience/Community Service

There is no requirement that the school or the Local Authority meet the costs of students who travel direct from their home to an activity sanctioned (but not provided) by the school or the Local Authority.

For other children whose parents would have difficulty in meeting costs but who are not eligible for the exemption, the Governing Body will consider individual requests for assistance. As much as possible Governors want to ensure students have equal access to educational opportunities, whatever their circumstances.

Asking for voluntary contributions to the school fund

Current guidance on charging for school activities, available from the Department for Education (DfE), states that "nothing in legislation prevents a school governing body or local authority from asking for voluntary contributions". The document explains on page 3: When making requests for voluntary contributions to the school funds, parents must not be made to feel pressured into paying as it is voluntary and not compulsory. BMS and PFS will ask for contributions to School Fund. The Federation will stress that the money will be used to support the rich variety of extra-curricular activities that complement the academic life of the school including after school activities. Occasionally the fund is also used to purchase items necessary to further enhance the work of the school. The Federation emphasises that parents should only contribute if they feel they are able, and explains that any donation at all would be beneficial for the children. The Federation also subscribes to the philosophy that 'today's money will be spent on today's children'. BMS and PFS will not send colour coded letters to parents as a reminder to make payments into the school or maintenance funds. BMS and PFS will also ensure that direct debit or standing order mandates are not sent to parents when requesting contributions.

Review

The Governors of the school are required to keep their policy under review and to review the level of any charges. This review will take place annually in the Autumn Term.

Guidance Documents for Staff

How to decide if an activity is inside or outside school hours

SCHOOL HOURS: Monday - Friday inclusive during term time. 8:25am - 3.15pm.

DAY VISITS: Inside school hours if 50% or more of the period spent on the activity occurs during school hours. Outside school hours if less than 50% of the period spent on the activity occurs during school hours

RESIDENTIAL VISITS: Each day may be divided into two sessions (half-days).

00.00 - 12.00 (1st session)

12.00 - 24.00 (2nd session)

If the number of the school sessions missed by the student is 50% or more than the duration of the visit then it has taken place inside school hours.

If the number of school sessions missed by the students is less than 50% of the duration of the visit then it has taken place outside school hours.

Sample Letters

Sample letter [1] Voluntary donation for Trip/Visit/Practical Activity

Dear Parents, [child's name/year/subject]

The school is organising a [Trip/Visit/Practical Activity] to [place] on [date(s)]. Activities such as this are beneficial because they give students experiences they may not otherwise have. In order to finance this trip we ask that parents and/or carers make a voluntary contribution of [amount] per student. There is no obligation to make a contribution and if you choose not to your child will not be treated any differently. However, should we not get enough contributions then we will have to cancel the trip/visit/practical activity. We very much hope that you are able to contribute.

We do not ask parents who get the following benefits to make a contribution:

- Income Support (IS);
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA);
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- Child Tax Credit, provided that Working Tax Credit is not also received and the family's income (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) does not exceed £16,040 (Financial Year 2009/10);
- the guarantee element of State Pension Credit; and
- an income related employment and support allowance that was introduced on 27 October 2008.

If you receive any of these, please let us know.

Your contribution will cover [specify: accommodation, meals (breakfast, packed lunch, and evening meal), insurance, transport and equipment costs].

To make your contribution please make a payment via ParentPay by [date].

Thank you very much for your support.

Yours sincerely

[name]

Sample letter [2] Voluntary donation for Trip/Visit/Practical Activity

Dear Parents, [child's name/year/subject]

The school is organising a [Trip/Visit/Practical Activity] to [place] on [date(s)]. Activities such as this are beneficial because they give students experiences they may not otherwise have. Your contribution will cover [specify: accommodation, meals (breakfast, packed lunch, and evening meal), insurance, transport and equipment costs]. All contributions are voluntary and the proposed activity may not take place unless a substantial majority of parents contribute. If a trip goes ahead, it may include children whose parents have not paid any contribution. We do not treat these children differently from any others.

Parents have a right to know how each trip is funded and the school provides this information on request. To make your contribution please make a payment via ParentPay by [date].

Thank you very much for your support.

Yours sincerely

[name]

Sample letter [3] Voluntary donation for Trip/Visit/Practical Activity/Optional Extra

Dear Parents, [child's name/year/subject]

The school is organising a [Trip/Visit/Practical Activity] to [place] on [date(s)]. Activities such as this are beneficial because they give students experiences they may not otherwise have. In order to finance this trip we ask that parents and/or carers make a voluntary contribution of [amount] per student. This will cover [specify: accommodation, meals (breakfast, packed lunch, and evening meal), insurance, transport and equipment costs].

The school is not in a position to subsidise [any/this] visit [s], or to offer remission of charges, therefore in order for a visit to take place a Voluntary Contribution from each student will be necessary. If sufficient Voluntary Contributions are not received then the visit will not take place.

To make your contribution please make a payment via ParentPay by [date].

Thank you very much for your support.

Yours sincerely

[name]

Sample letter [4] Residential Trips

Dear Parents, [child's name/year/subject]

The school is organising a Residential Trip to [place] on [date(s)]. Activities such as this are beneficial because they give students experiences they may not otherwise have.

No charge is being made for the activity or travel; however there is a charge of [amount] to cover the costs of board and lodging.

We do not ask parents who get the following benefits to make a payment:

- Income Support (IS);
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA);
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- Child Tax Credit, provided that Working Tax Credit is not also received and the family's income (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) does not exceed £16,040 (Financial Year 2009/10);
- the guarantee element of State Pension Credit; and
- an income related employment and support allowance that was introduced on 27 October 2008.

If you receive any of these, please let us know.

To make your payment please make a payment via ParentPay by [date].

Thank you very much for your support.

Yours sincerely

[name]