

**Policy Guidance for Schools on
CHARGING AND REMISSIONS FOR
SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

February 2018

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to head teachers and governing bodies on charges which can be made for activities. The Guidance will also assist in determining the school's policy on charging and remission and will be of particular benefit when considering school visits and journeys. This Guidance has been produced by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, and is based on Guidance issued in January 2009 by The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). See Annex 3 for relevant legislation and further guidance.

Schools have a duty to provide parents with information, regarding what charges can and cannot be made for services provided.

The objectives of the charging and remissions provisions set out in the legislation are:

- to maintain the right to free school education
- to establish that activities offered wholly or mainly during normal teaching time should be available to all pupils regardless of their parents' ability or willingness to help meet the cost; (to determine whether the activity is in school time see calculation in Sections 5 and 6)
- to emphasise that there is no statutory requirement to charge for any form of education or related activity, but to give LAs and schools the discretion to charge for optional activities provided wholly or mainly out of school hours
- to confirm the right of LAs and schools to invite voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school, or in support of any activity organised by the school, whether during or outside school hours.

In summary the governing body:

- may not charge for any activities which take place in school time, apart from instrumental tuition that has been requested by a parent/carer but which is not part of the National Curriculum or an initial 'taster' session in which the whole class engages (Section 8)
- must draw up a Charging and Remissions policy, which does not have to be the same as the Authority's policy as long as it meets the requirements of the law;
- must keep the policy under review. The LA recommends that the policy is subject to review on an annual basis
- may invite parents and others to make voluntary contributions towards any part of the school's work (Section 2).
- may charge for activities that are provided wholly or mainly outside school hours, as long as these activities are optional extras (Section 4)
- may charge for board and lodging on residential courses (Section 6)
- Should only make charges which reflect the actual cost of the activity and should not result in a net surplus or 'profit' or include any element of subsidy toward pupils unable to meet the cost of an activity.

Section 1 Prohibited Charges

A school governing body cannot charge for:

- 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, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- tuition for pupils learning to play musical instruments if the tuition is required as part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
- 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;
- education provided on any trip that takes place during school hours;
- education provided on any trip 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 pupil 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 pupils on a residential trip;
- transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the local education authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport;
- transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing body or local education authority has arranged for pupils to be educated;
- transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when he has been prepared for that examination at the school;
- transport provided in connection with an educational trip.

It should be noted that a charge can be made for any materials, books, instruments or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him to own them.

Section 2 Voluntary Contributions

The restrictions on charging for school activities do not in any way prohibit or restrict the Authority or schools from seeking voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or in support of any school activity, whether during or outside school hours, residential or non-residential.

Contributions must be genuinely voluntary and the terms of any request inviting parents to make a contribution must make it clear that:

- a) There is no obligation to contribute, and
- b) Pupils at the school will not be treated any differently according to whether or not their parents have made any contribution in response to the request

If the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contribution, the governing body or head teacher must make this clear to parents at the outset. An initial letter should explain the nature of the proposed activity and its likely value on educational terms. It should then indicate the contribution per pupil which would be required if the activity were to take place. It should emphasise that there is no obligation to contribute and that no pupil would be omitted from the activity because his or her

parents were unwilling or unable to contribute, but it should be made equally clear that the activity would not take place if parents were reluctant to support it. Please see suggested wording for letters home regarding voluntary contributions in Annex 5.

There is no limit to the level of voluntary contributions which parent or others can make to school activities, nor is any restriction placed upon the use which can be made of such contributions. A request for a contribution towards the cost of a particular activity could, for example, include the cost of subsidising pupils from low-income families, or the cost of travel for accompanying teachers. Alternatively, parents could be asked to contribute towards part of the cost at the time of the visit or activity, and the rest could be met from the proceeds of general fund-raising events held in preceding months. As a matter of good practice schools should outline in their charging policy how any excess contributions will be used.

Primary schools may choose to offer swimming either in KS1 or KS2 in order to meet the statutory requirement. Schools are not permitted to charge for swimming lessons in school hours or for lessons outside of school hours. However, it is permitted to request a voluntary contribution from parents.

Section 3 Activities not run by the LA or the School

When an organisation, acting independently of a school or the Authority, arranges an activity to take place during school hours and parents want their children to join the activity, such organisations may charge parents. 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. However, where an activity is organised by a third party, and is approved by the school, is educational or is supervised by someone authorised by the school, then it is the view of the DCSF that it should be treated as if it were provided by the school, and no charge should be made to the parents, or pupils. Such an activity, if it takes place outside the school premises is an 'approved educational activity' within the meaning of Regulation 6(4) (a) of the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

In this situation a request for a voluntary contribution from the parents can be made.

Section 4 Education Outside of School Hours

Parents can be charged for activities that happen outside of school hours (see Section 5 for definition) when these activities:

- a) are not a necessary part of the National Curriculum
- b) are not part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school
- c) are not part of the school's basis curriculum for religious education

The above are defined in Regulation 455 (3) of the 1996 Education Act as '**optional extras**'

Charging for optional extras is at the discretion of the body which would otherwise meet the cost of the optional extra. An activity which takes place during school hours cannot, by definition, be an optional extra. (Musical instrument tuition is an exception – see Section 8).

Participation in any optional extra will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet such charges as are made. The agreement of parents is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra for which charges are to be made. If a school proposes making a charge for an optional extra, it should consider using the suggested text at Annex 5, especially if some pupils may qualify for help with the cost, or even get it free.

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

In cases where a small proportion of the activity takes place during school hours the charge cannot include the cost of alternative provision for those pupils who do not wish to participate. No charge can therefore be made for supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential trip.

Where it is not permissible to charge parents, any subsidy must come from the school funds, voluntary fund raising or voluntary parental contribution.

The cost can include an appropriate element for:

- (i) pupils' travel cost;
- (ii) pupils' board and lodging;
- (iii) materials, books, instruments and equipment;
- (iv) non-teaching staff costs;
- (v) entrance fees to museums, theatres etc;
- (vi) insurance costs.

Any charge may also take account of the costs of engaging teaching staff specifically for the purpose of providing the activity and supplying such staff with travel, board and lodging. If any of the teaching staff are already employed by the Authority or the governing body of the school, their costs may not be included in the costs passed onto the pupils unless they are engaged on a separate contract for services to provide the optional extra.

There is no requirement to charge for optional extras. The body funding the activity is free to determine whether any charge should be made for it and, if so, how much should be charged to whom, subject to the charge not exceeding the actual cost.

In any case where the Authority is funding the activity and has determined to recover the cost, there will be a charge to parents, unless the governing body decides to use its own funds to subsidise the activity.

Section 5 Non-residential Activities

A non-residential activity is deemed to take place during school hours if 50% or more of the period spent on the activity occurs during school hours. Time spent on travel counts for the purpose of the calculation only 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 falls during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside school hours

No charge may be made in respect of any activity which is deemed to take place in school hours.

Example 1

A long distance excursion might involve some hours of travel before and after the school day, but the time spent at the destination could fall mainly within normal school hours. For the purposes of charging legislation this would be classified as an activity taking place in school hours.

No charge can be made, but a voluntary contribution can be requested.

Example 2

An excursion which requires pupils to leave school earlier than usual in the afternoon but involves them in an activity which does not end until late in the evening would be less than 50% in school time and therefore would be considered to have taken place outside of school hours.

A charge can be made subject to conditions at Section 4 a, b, and c.

Section 6 Residential Activities

It would not be practical to apply the 50% rule to any activity which involves nights away since school hours will always take up less than 50% of a 24 hour period.

The test to determine whether an activity is within or outside of school hours is based on the number of half days taken up by the activity (including travel) relative to the number of school sessions the pupils would have attended had the activity not taken place. The Regulations require that the school day be divided into two sessions. A 'half-day' means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day.

A school trip is considered to have taken place within school time if the number of school sessions missed by the pupils amounts to half or more of the number of half days taken up by the activity.

Example 1

A school trip in term time from noon on Wednesday to 9 pm on Sunday would last for 9 half days.

This would be:

- (i) 5 half days including school session; and
- (ii) 4 half days not including school session.

This would count as an activity taking place in school time.

For a residential activity taking place in school time, as previously determined by the calculation, no charge may be made for:

- (i) the education provided; or
- (ii) the cost of the travel.

A charge can be made for board and lodging, but must be remitted in full for families in receipt of certain benefits (See Section 7)

Example 2

A school trip in term time from noon on Thursday to 9 pm Sunday would count as 7 half days.

This would be:

- (i) 3 half days including schools sessions; and
- (ii) 4 half days not including school sessions.

This trip would be classified as taking place outside school time.

For a residential activity taking place outside of school time, the full cost may be charged and any remission is at the discretion of the Governors.

If 50% or more of a half day is spent on a residential trip, that half day should be considered as time spent on the activity.

Section 7 Exemptions from Charging

Section 200 of the Education Act 2002 outlines the conditions for the remission of charges (board and lodging) for residential school trips. The eligibility criteria for the remission of charges are aligned with free school lunch eligibility.

Children whose parents are in receipt of the following support payments will, in addition to free school lunch entitlement also be eligible for remission of charges for board and lodgings during residential school trips.

The relevant support payments are:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Support under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit, where the parent does not receive Working Tax Credit and the family's annual household income (as assessed by HMRC) does not exceed £16,190 (FY 10/11).
- The guarantee element of State pension Credit
- An income related employment and support allowance that was introduced on 27th October 2008

It should be noted that it is free school lunch **eligibility** and not uptake that should be regarded as the trigger for entitlement to a remission of charges for residential trips.

Where a school intends to undertake an activity where a charge for board and lodging will be made, the head teacher should advise all parents that anyone in receipt of the support payments is entitled to claim remission. Parents who are in receipt of the support payments can be invited to make a voluntary contribution.

The costs involved in the remission of board and lodging must be borne by the school.

Example

A school undertakes a geography field trip as part of a GCSE course. The activity is integral to the course and therefore the expectation is that all pupils will attend. (In this example it does not matter whether the trip is wholly or partly in school time).

Board and lodging is a permitted charge and therefore the following would apply:

- a) a charge can be made for board and lodging;
- b) families in receipt of relevant support payments (see above) are exempt from the charges if those charges are levied. They can be invited to make a voluntary contribution, but in any case the child has a right to attend;
- c) a family who are not in receipt of support payments will be expected to pay, if they do not the child cannot attend.

There are four significant issues arising from this example:

- (i) no charge can be levied by the school unless the school has an approved Charging Policy;
- (ii) how schools will deal with low income families (to include hardship cases) who are not in receipt of support payments. This needs to be addressed in the school's policy;
- (iii) the determination on a remission of charges is made at the time the trip takes place – Is the family in receipt of support payments whilst the child is engaged on the activity;
- (iv) what provision for learning related to the trip activities will be made for any child who does not attend. (A similar provision would have to be made where illness prevents a child from participating on the trip).

Section 8 Music Tuition

Although regulations state that all education provided during school hours must be free, music lessons are the exception to this rule.

Charges may be made for teaching an individual pupil or groups of an appropriate size to play a musical instrument or sing. Information on the relevant legislation can be found in Annex 2.

Charges may only be made if the teaching is not an essential part of either the National Curriculum or a public exam syllabus being followed by the pupil(s), or the first access to the Key Stage 2 Instrumental and Vocal Tuition Programme (Wider Opportunities)

Section 9 Charging and Remissions Policy

Under the legislation, a governing body may only charge for certain defined activities if it has drawn up a charging and remissions policy. If the governing body chooses to charge parents for the board and lodging costs of a residential visit and the education provided is free, the governing body **must** as a minimum remit the board and lodging costs for those parents in receipt of the support payments outlined in Section 7. Other than this remission, like charging, is at the discretion of the governing body.

If a charge is to be made for a particular type of activity, for example optional extras (see Section 4), 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. This information should be made available to parents.

The remissions policy must set out the circumstances in which the school proposes to remit (wholly or partly) and charge which would otherwise be payable to them in accordance with their charging policy.

The policy will include other areas than those specially related to school visits and journeys.

The legislation requires that the policy will set out what is to be charged for and in which circumstances charges will be remitted in whole or in part.

Annex 1 to this Guidance sets out those areas which governing bodies will need to consider in determining their charging and remissions policy.

Parents have a right to ask for a copy of the charges and remissions policy and a summary should be included in the school prospectus.

A model policy is provided at Annex 4.

Areas to consider in a Charging and Remissions Policy

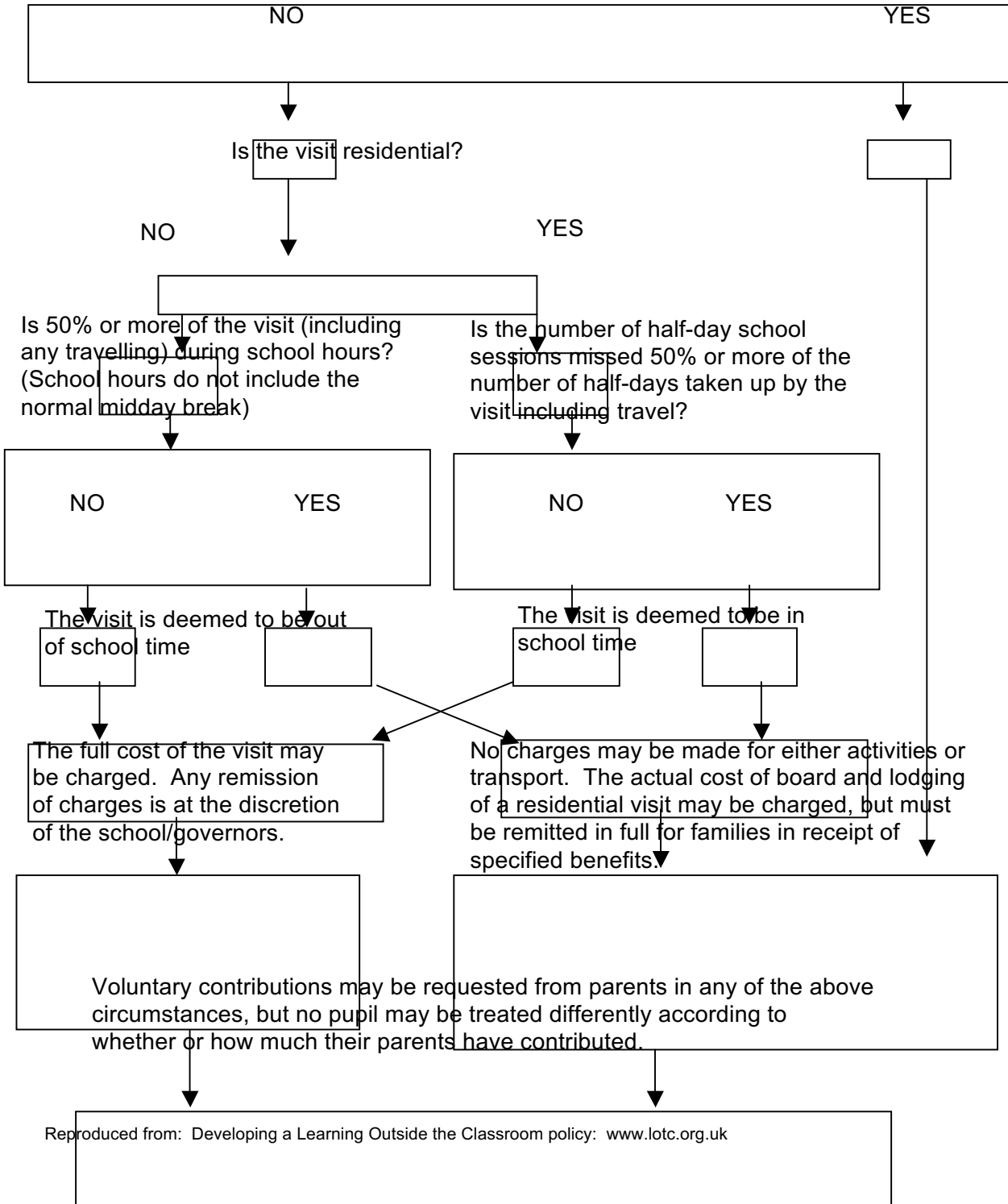
When determining the policy the governing body will need to consider the following which are permissible charges.

- 1) Board and Lodging on residential visits in school hours, unless parents are in receipt of relevant benefits which entitle them to exemption of these charges (Section 7)
- 2) Costs associated with music tuition, whether in or out of school hours, apart from exemptions (Section 8)
- 3) Activities which take place wholly or mainly outside school hours, and which are not provided as part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination, and not required to fulfil statutory duties relating to the National Curriculum or religious education.
- 4) The cost of entering a pupil for a public exam not prescribed in the regulations, and for preparing the pupil for such an exam outside school hours.
- 5) Resits of prescribed public examinations where no further preparation has been provided by the school.
- 6) Consideration also needs to be given to:
 - a) The proportion of the costs where a charge is to be made
 - b) Whether any remission is to be extended beyond the statutory minimum
 - c) Whether or not special consideration needs to be given to hardship cases not contained within the exemptions and how this is to be determined
 - d) The level of support from school funds where the level of voluntary contributions is insufficient to fund the visit or journey
 - e) Arrangements for education where the parents fail to pay the charge being levied by the school.

Annex 2

Is the visit designed to fulfil a statutory requirement (e.g. any requirements of the national curriculum, religious education, or the syllabus of a prescribed public examination)?

Charges / Voluntary Contributions



Legislation

- Chapter III of the Education Act 1996, sections 449-462
- The Education (School Sessions and Charges Remissions Policies) (Information) (England) Regulations 1999
- The Education (Residential Trips) (Prescribed Tax Credits) (England) Regulations 2003
- The Education (Residential Trips) (Prescribed Tax Credits) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2005
- The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007

Further Guidance

- Charging for School Activities, DCSF, January 2009
<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=8145>
- Guide to the Law for School Governors (Chapter 23 Charging for School Activities). January 2010.
<http://www.governornet.co.uk/linkAttachments/GTTL%2024.10.09.pdf>
- Developing a Learning Outside the Classroom Policy
<http://www.lotc.org.uk/pdf/1.3.2%20Developing%20a%20LOtC%20policy.pdf>

**Kimberworth Community Primary School and
Early Years Setting**

CHARGING AND REMISSIONS POLICY

Date of Policy approval: September 2015

Date of Policy review: September 2016

Policy approved Cllr Simon Currie Chairperson

This policy has been formulated in accordance with Authority's guidance on:
Charging for School Activities.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to set out what charges will be levied for activities, what remissions will be implemented and the circumstances under which voluntary contributions will be requested from parents.

Responsibilities

The Governing Body of the School is responsible for determining the content of the policy and the Head Teacher for implementation. Any determinations with respect to individual parents will be considered jointly by the Head teacher and Governing Body.

Charges cannot be made for:

The Governing Body of the School recognises that the legislation prohibits charges for the following:

- 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, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- tuition for pupils learning to play musical instruments if the tuition is required as part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- 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;
- education provided on any trip that takes place during school hours;
- education provided on any trip 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 pupil 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 pupils on a residential trip;
- transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the local education authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport;

- transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing body or local authority has arranged for pupils to be educated;
- transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when he has been prepared for that examination at the school;
- transport provided in connection with an educational trip.

Publication of Information

A summary of this policy will be included in the School Prospectus which will specify what charges are/are not to be made and for which activities voluntary contributions will be invited from parents.

Charges

(It will be necessary to determine for each of the following whether the governing body intends to make a charge)

- (a) board and lodging on residential visits (not to exceed the costs)
- (b) the proportionate costs for an individual child of activities wholly or mainly outside school hours ('optional extras') to meet the costs for:
 - i. travel
 - ii. materials and equipment
 - iii. non-teaching staff costs
 - iv. entrance fees
 - v. insurance costs
- (c) Vocal and musical instrument tuition
- (d) re-sits for public examinations where no further preparation has been provided by the school
- (e) costs of non-prescribed examinations where no further preparation has been provided by the school
- (f) any other education, transport or examination fee unless charges are specifically prohibited
- (g) breakages and replacements as a result of damages caused wilfully or negligently by pupils
- (h) extra-curricular activities and school clubs.

(See also Annex 1 paragraph 6).

Remission

(Where the governing body have determined to charge for board and lodging on a school trip the following paragraph must be included).

Children whose parents are in receipt of the following support payments will, in addition to having a free school lunch entitlement, also be entitled to the remission of

charges for board and lodging costs during residential school trips. The relevant support payments are:

- (a) Income Support
- (b) Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- (c) Support under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- (d) Child Tax Credit, where the parent does not receive Working Tax Credit and the family's annual household income (as assessed by HMRC) does not exceed £16,190 (FY 10/11).
- (e) The guarantee element of State pension Credit
- (f) An income related employment and support allowance that was introduced on 27th October 2008

In respect of (d) above account will be taken of any revision to the amount as advised by the Authority.

Voluntary Contributions

Option B

Parents will be invited to make a voluntary contribution for the following:
(Schools may wish to consider pupil's travel costs, entrance fees to museums, castles etc, insurance costs, educator/artists fees etc and must list these below)

- a) Travel Costs
- b) Entrance Fees
- c) Educational visitors
- d) Theatre Groups

The terms of any request made to parents will specify that the request is for a voluntary contribution and in no way represents a charge. In addition the following will be made clear to parents:

- a) that the contribution is genuinely voluntary and a parent is under no obligation to pay
- b) that registered pupils at the school will not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents have made any contribution in response to the request.

The responsibility for determining the level of voluntary contribution is delegated to the Head Teacher.

(Where a request for voluntary contributions is included in the policy the governors should set out the purposes to which the voluntary contributions will be put).

Voluntary contributions will be used to:

- Travel Costs
- Entrance Fees
- Educational Visitors
- Theatre Groups

Sample text for insertion in to letter requesting Voluntary Contributions for a school trip (Section 2 of Guidance)

'You are invited to make a voluntary contribution of £xx the cost of transport and entrance to NN. Although the contribution is voluntary, I do need to point out that it is probable the visit could not take place unless all parents who are able are willing to contribute.

I appreciate that some families may find it difficult to contribute all or part of the suggested sum, and if you feel you are in such a position, please feel free to contact me in confidence.

Please note that if a family is unable to contribute, and the trip still takes place, no child for whom the trip is intended will be disadvantaged and left out of the activity.'

Sample text for insertion in to letter requesting payment (a charge) for an optional extra, e.g. a theatre visit (Section 4 of Guidance)

'As a major part of the visit to NN is outside of school hours and the activity is not directly related the children's curriculum, there will be a charge for the visit of £x per child. This includes the cost for the coach and theatre ticket.

If any pupil wishes to take part, but financial circumstances make it difficult to meet the charge, please do not hesitate to contact me in confidence to discuss whether some arrangement may be made'

Questions and Answers From DCSF Guidance

Q What is a charging policy?

A Under the charging provisions set out in legislation, governing bodies and local authorities of maintained schools may choose to charge for certain defined activities, but only if they have first drawn-up charging and remissions policies. These policies should be made available to parents on request.

Q A visit involving staying overnight has been arranged for children at my school. Can the school charge for this?

A Where a school activity requires pupils to spend nights away from home the school is allowed to make a charge for board and lodging. This is with the exception of pupils whose parents are receiving: Income Support; Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; or Child Tax Credit (providing that they do not also receive Working Tax Credit and have an annual income, assessed by the Inland Revenue that does not exceed £15,575 FY 08/09) and an income related employment and support allowance. Since April 2003 the eligibility criteria that entitle families to an exemption from paying for the cost of board and lodging on residential visits have been aligned with free school meals eligibility criteria. The head teacher must inform all parents of the right to claim free board and lodging if they are receiving these benefits.

Q. With regard to the remission of board & lodging payments, can you please explain who pays for the expense, would it come out of the school budget or is there a grant available to claim?

A Although the criteria for being eligible for the remission of charges for board and lodgings is the same as free school meals, that is where the similarity ends. The costs involved in the remission of board and lodgings are to be borne by the school from their contingency funds. There is no return to be completed to re-claim the money back.

Q Our school has a large number of pupils eligible for free school meals, this means that they would also receive remission for board and lodgings expenses for residential school visits. How can the school fund/organize residential visits?

A The government provides funding for schools to each local authority according to a formula which recognises the different needs of each area. The same basic funding is provided for all comparable pupils across the country. This is then topped up according to local needs.

One of these top-ups reflects the numbers of pupils in a certain area living in deprived circumstances, as these pupils need extra help if they are to have an equal opportunity in life. The amount that individual schools receive from the local authority reflects their relative need compared with other local schools, through the locally agreed funding formula. All local authorities' funding formulae are required to include

an element to reflect the needs of deprived pupils. It is for head teachers and school governing bodies to decide how to spend their available resources.

Schools cannot exclude children from taking part in an activity that is part of the National Curriculum purely on the grounds that the parent or carer, cannot make, or refuses to make, a contribution. This can clearly place schools in some difficulty on occasions where a number of parents/carers might be in such a position. The school then has to decide whether they can cover the costs of such activity from within the budget or by fundraising, or whether the activity has to be cancelled.

If there is a residential activity taking place largely during school time, or which meets the requirements of the syllabus for a public examination, or is to do with the National Curriculum or religious education, no charge may be made either for the education or for the cost of travel.

Q Can governing bodies charge for educating children in maintained schools?

A. The local authority or governing body cannot charge for education that takes place in school hours. Nor can they charge for activities that take place outside school hours if these are part of the National Curriculum, necessary as part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education. They can charge for permitted 'optional extras', provided they have drawn up a statement of general policy on charging and given details of 'optional extras' they intend to charge for. The governing body's policy does not have to be the same as the local authority's policy, as long as it meets the requirements of the law.

Q Can a school charge for an activity that takes place out of school hours?

This kind of activity is often referred to as an 'optional extra'. Where an optional extra is being provided, a charge can be made for providing materials, books, instruments, or equipment. See guidance on optional extras.

The actual charge for the optional extra cannot exceed the actual cost of the provision. Schools cannot and must not make a profit from charging for 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.

Q Can a school ask parents for voluntary contributions?

A Schools may invite parents and others to make voluntary contributions to make school funds go further. All requests to parents for voluntary contributions must make it quite clear that the contributions would be voluntary. It should be remembered that education provided during school hours must be free. This includes materials, equipment, and transport provided in school hours by the local authority or by the school to carry pupils between the school and an activity. Governing bodies should also clearly explain that children of parents who do not

contribute will not be treated any differently, and that the activity might be cancelled if insufficient contributions are received.

Q The school has sent letters out to parents asking for contributions towards a school visit, do parents have to pay?

A Head teachers or governing bodies may ask parents for voluntary contributions towards the cost of:

any activity which takes place during school hours;

school equipment; and

school funds generally.

Children of parents who are unable, or unwilling, to contribute may not be discriminated against. However, if insufficient voluntary contributions are received to cover the cost of the visit, or activity, and there is no alternative method to make up the shortfall, then the school should cancel the activity/visit. It would be advisable to make parents aware of a possible cancellation to the activity/visit if insufficient voluntary contributions are received from the outset.

Q What happens if the school is not able to raise enough voluntary contributions to cover costs?

A Where there are not enough voluntary contributions, and there is no way to make up the shortfall, for example school funds and/or fundraising activities, then it must be cancelled. The possibility of the activity/visit being cancelled due to a shortfall in contributions should be made clear in the information sent to parents.

Q What if a parent is unable, or unwilling to make a voluntary contribution? How does this affect their child(ren)?

A The school cannot exclude a child from taking part in an activity that is part of the National Curriculum purely on the grounds that you, the parent or carer, cannot make, or refuses to make a contribution. This can clearly place schools in some difficulty on occasions where a number of parents/carers might be in such a position. The school then has to decide whether they can cover the costs of such activity from within the budget or by fundraising, or whether the activity has to be cancelled.

Q What support can a school offer a parent/carers who has difficulty making a financial contribution?

A Schools must ensure that parents in receipt of Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, 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 £15,575 (Financial Year 2008/09). Some schools also have funds available to enable families in financial difficulty to send their children on visits/activities. Parents should be encouraged to speak to the head teacher in order to establish if such funding arrangements exist.

No charge may be made if there is a residential activity taking place largely during school time, or which meets the requirements of the syllabus for a public

examination. In addition, if the activity is to do with the National Curriculum or religious education, no charge may be made either for the education or for the cost of travel for any pupil, not just those whose parents are in receipt of benefits.

Q What about charges for transport during school hours?

A Any transport provided by the school in school hours will be provided free of charge (though a voluntary contribution could be requested). Guidance on school travel and transport is available [here](#).

Q Can the school charge for something like cooking ingredients or materials needed for a technology lesson?

A The school can make a charge to cover the costs of materials/ingredients for subjects such as design or food technology where parents have indicated in advance that they would like their child to bring home the finished product.

Q Can the school charge entry fees for examinations?

A 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; and
- 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.

Q. Can a school make a charge to pay for the administration required as part of the admission process?

A. Para 1.82 of the current School Admissions Code and para 1.93 of the revised School Admissions Code (which comes into force in February 2009) rules out practices that can lead to covert selection, such as asking parents for a financial contribution as a condition of entry. We are clear that schools cannot ask for a voluntary contribution as part of the admissions process and where this is found, we will not tolerate it. Legislation prevents maintained schools from charging fees for admission or for providing education during school hours.

Q. Can a school ask for a direct debit to the school fund?

A. No. A school may ask for voluntary contributions, as long as it is clear that they are voluntary, but we are clear that state education should be free and we have no intention of changing this policy. We will not tolerate this when it is brought to our notice. No contributions may be sought as part of the admissions process.