St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Charging and Remissions Policy

We grow and learn in the footsteps of Jesus

Approved by	
Name:	N. Pettitt
Position:	Chair of Governors
Signed:	N. Pettitt
Date:	2.9.2024
Proposed review date:	September 2025

[1] The Governing Body is free to delegate the approval of this Policy to a Committee of the Governing Body, an individual Governor or the Head teacher

[2] The Governing Body are free to determine the review frequency of this Policy

Review Sheet

Version Number	KAHSC Version Description	Date of Revision
1	Original	January 2012
2	Reformatted only	February 2014
3	Updated to reflect DfE publication '*Charging for school activities: Departmental advice for governing bodies, school leaders, school staff and local authorities*', October 2014. New section for boarding schools, clarification on communication with parents and addition on Children Looked After and music tuition.	March 2015
4	Clarifications: S4 - enrichment activities that do not fulfil the definition of 'education'. S5 – what majority means, and that travel time counts. S6 – determining if a residential is an Optional Extra with examples & additional sources of funding e.g. trusts. S7 – participation is determined by payment.	April 2015
5	Introduction updated to reflect that many more schools have community facilities, and this policy does not apply to charges for them and to reflect that "first pay, first served" access to trips is discrimination against low income families.	February 2016
6	Introduction updated to define remission and give examples; S9 – clarification that secondary schools must include a school milk scheme section if any pupils are up to and including the age of 18 *and* are entitled to free school meals.	April 2017
7	Updated to reflect DfE updated guidance (May 2018)	June 2018
8	Reviewed: No Legal or policy changes. What schools do or must do has not changed. Updated with a new section on school meals: a major policy clarification following acceptance by the DfE that school meals should be part of every school's charging and remissions policy because the government provides remission though UIFSM and FSM, governors have discretionary powers, and debt recovery must be managed. One minor clarification about school milk.	September 2020
9	Updated the review table page and replaced the FAQs with a link to the DfE document. No other changes or updates.	November 2022
	Reviewed September 2023 – no changes other than to links to national or KAHub websites. Amended and adapted by school. Reviewed Sep 24- no changes	September 2023

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1. Introduction

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School recognises the valuable contribution that a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including trips, clubs and residential experiences can make towards the education of our children and young people and aims to promote and provide such activities both as part of a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils and as additional optional enrichment activities.

The school strives to ensure that all young people have an equal opportunity to benefit from such activities, both on and off site and within and outside of the curriculum, regardless of their family's financial means. To ensure transparency in setting charges and to ensure all young people are able to access all of the provision we offer, this Policy sets out our approach to charging and remissions. It has been informed by adherence to the law and by following statutory Department for Education guidance.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that, during the school day, all young people have full and free access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The school day is defined as 8.45 a.m. to 3.10 p.m. excluding the lunchtime period (12.00 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.). A school session is equivalent to half a day i.e. either one morning session before lunch or one afternoon session afterwards.

We recognise our responsibility to ensure that the offer of activities and educational visits does not place an unnecessary burden on family finances and where we can we aim to:

- publish a list of visits and their approximate cost across all year groups at the beginning of the academic year so that parents can plan ahead for the next 1-7 years;
- ensure our payments systems allow parents to pay in instalments;
- make it possible for parents to pay by instalments beyond the date of the trip when short notice opportunity arises; and
- ensure fair access to popular trips by acknowledging that offering them on a 'first pay, first served' basis discriminates against low income families and we will avoid that method of selection.

Where this Policy refers to "parents" we mean any person with parental responsibility for a child.

Where this Policy refers to a "charge", this is an amount of money that must be paid in order for a child to participate in an opportunity e.g. the cost of board and lodgings on a residential visit where the family are not on the prescribed benefits listed in Section 6.

Where this Policy refers to a "voluntary contribution", this is an amount of money that school would like families to contribute towards the cost of an opportunity in order to make it financially viable. There is no obligation to pay a voluntary contribution but without enough contributions, an activity might be cancelled entirely.

Where this Policy refers to "remission", this is an amount of money that school will or might agree to provide to fund an opportunity for a child. Governors *will* make provision for all statutory remission requirements e.g. using the relevant Pupil Premium funding to pay for a residential experience for a child with a legal entitlement. Governors *might*, if funding allows, agree to provide financial support to pupils who are not legally entitled to remission, but does so entirely at their discretion.

This Policy does not apply to charges made and determined by other organisations offering activities and services on the school premises e.g. our Breakfast Club, or a community club that hires our hall to meet in etc.

2. Admissions

No charge will be made for any aspect of the admissions process to this school.

3. Activities wholly during the school day

No charge will be made for 'education' provided during normal school hours. 'Education' is defined as including all activities related to the National Curriculum and religious education as well as the materials, equipment and transport required to provide it. Music Tuition which is not part of the school curriculum is covered under Section 8, below.

We recognise that the definition of 'education' as 'part of the National Curriculum' is not limited to learning outside the classroom experiences required as part of a specific subject e.g. geography or science fieldwork, but also includes activities designed to fulfil requirements under the National Curriculum 'inclusion statement' and others as applicable.

A charge will be made to cover the cost of ingredients or materials where parents have confirmed in advance that they wish their child to own the finished product.

We will ask parents for voluntary contributions to help school fund the range of these opportunities we offer, but no young person will be excluded from an activity on the basis of a parent's inability or unwillingness to pay this contribution. The Governing Body reserves the right however, to cancel an activity in its entirety if insufficient voluntary contributions are received.

From time to time we may invite a non-school based organisation such as travelling theatre companies, life bus, to deliver an activity during the school day. Such organisations may wish to charge parents, who are entitled not to pay any fee and instead to ask the Head teacher to agree to their child being absent/taught elsewhere in the school for that period. In many cases, however, parents will be asked for a voluntary contribution towards the cost of the activity.

4. Activities wholly outside the school day

We will ask parents for voluntary contributions to help school fund the range of these opportunities we offer, but no young person will be excluded from an activity on the basis of a parent's inability or unwillingness to pay this contribution. The Governing Body reserves the right, however, to cancel an activity in its entirety if insufficient voluntary contributions are received.

Other enrichment activities not required as part of the national curriculum or religious education *and* which are wholly outside school hours are Optional Extras and chargeable. Please see Section 7 for more information about charging for Optional Extras.

Lunchtime activities, after school and other extra-curricular clubs are wholly outside of school hours and do not fall under the definition of 'education' above. Please see Section 7 for more information about charging for Optional Extras.

5. Non-residential activities that take place partly during and partly outside the school day

Where the majority of time spent on a non-residential activity is *within* normal school hours, the charging regime will be as if it happens *fully within* school hours. The majority of time is defined as 50% or more.

Where the majority of the time spent on a non-residential activity is *outside* of normal school hours, the charging regime will be as if it happens *fully outside* school hours i.e. the activity becomes an 'Optional Extra' unless it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of religious education. The majority of time is defined, in this case, as more than 50%.

Travel time is included when considering the time spent on an activity only when it occurs during school time as defined in the Introduction.

6. Residential activities

A residential visit may be wholly chargeable if it is an Optional Extra. Please see Section 7 for more information about charging for Optional Extras.

If a residential visit is **not** an Optional Extra, charges will be made to the parents of pupils who wish to participate in residential activities for the cost of board and lodging with the exception of those in receipt of certain benefits. Details of those benefits can be found at https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals.

We understand that parents should be informed of this when they are asked for money. Parents are encouraged to discuss their circumstances in confidence with the headteacher.

In order to cover any other costs associated with a residential visit e.g. activity tuition, for which charges cannot be made, parents will be asked to make a voluntary contribution. No child will be denied the

opportunity of attending a residential (only where it is not an Optional Extra) if the parents do not wish to or cannot contribute voluntarily. It is possible however, that unless sufficient voluntary contributions are received to cover the cost, the experience will not go ahead. The Governing Body reserves the right, to cancel an activity in its entirety if insufficient voluntary contributions are received.

Other charges will be made to cover associated costs only where the visit is an Optional Extra because the number of normal school sessions (defined in the Introduction) missed by the pupils taking part totals less than half of the number of half-days taken up by the activity. The DfE defines a half-day session as a period of 12 hours ending in noon or midnight. In such cases, parents will be told how the charges were calculated.

Example 1
Pupils are away from noon on Wednesday to 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 9 half days including 5 school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place during school hours.

Example 2
Pupils are away from school from noon on Thursday until 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 7 half days including 3 school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place outside school hours.

7. Optional extras

The Governing Body reserves the right to charge parents for activities deemed to be Optional Extras. Such activities will include, for example, an evening visit to a theatre which does not fit the definition of 'education' in Section 3.Parents must make payment in order for their child to participate.

Lunchtime and after school activity clubs do not operate during normal school hours and to cover the costs of offering such opportunities a charge may be made to the parents of pupils who wish to participate in them. Families on a low income who are unable to pay such charges should speak to the headteacher in complete confidence.

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;
- non-teaching staff;
- 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 a proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, where the tuition is an optional extra.

8. Music tuition

No charge will be made for 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 this school, or forms part of religious education. This includes the first access to the Key Stage 2 Instrumental and Vocal Tuition Programme (Wider Opportunities).

A charge will be made for vocal and musical instrument tuition for either an individual pupil or groups of any appropriate size, where it does not fall into the category of teaching described above.

National charging guidance is followed and no charge will be made in respect of a pupil who is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 22(l) of the Children Act 1989).

9. School Meals

School meals are available to pupils at a cost of £2.41 per day or free of charge to those pupils whose family is in receipt of one of the prescribed benefits listed in Section 6. Information on how to apply for free school meals is available from the school office and can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals.

To enable our school meals service to be efficiently planned, we require advance notice of a child's requirements and ask for half a term's notice to start or stop receiving a school meal.

Payment for school meals is required in advance and can be paid weekly, monthly, or half-termly either online via parent pay.

Please click on this link https://st-marys-cp.secure-primarysite.net/school-meals/ for instructions on how to access online payment

Please note:

- Our staff will not look through any child's personal belongings for meal payments: the child or parent needs to hand them in, and our staff will give reminders to do so.
- If a cheque is returned to us unpaid, parents will be charged the relevant banking fee and may also be charged an administration fee representing 5% of the value of the returned cheque.

If a child's entitlement to free school meals has expired, a parent must provide a packed lunch or make *advanced payment* for any school meals to be taken.

Should a child arrive at school without payment or a packed lunch, we will telephone home in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

While we do understand that everyone forgets occasionally, the school is not obliged to provide a school meal where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for a free school meal has not been received. We will therefore act promptly to address financial issues at an early stage if we can, to prevent arrears accumulating.

If no alternative arrangement is in place, we will suggest that, before lunchtime, the parent should bring to school a suitable packed lunch or the cost of a school meal. In special circumstances we might grant the parent a debt allowance of one meal (special permission to pay on the next school day), on the understanding that all future meals will be paid for in full, in advance.

Where our efforts to resolve payment problems within the same school week fail, or where a persistent debt has arisen the following procedure applies.

If a parent accumulates a school meals debt of 1 week or less (up to £13.50), we will send home with the child a reminder letter detailing the amount owed and asking for immediate payment.

If payment is not received and the debt amount increases to between 1 and 2 weeks' (up to £27), a second reminder letter will be sent home detailing the consequences of non-payment and a final date by which payment must be made.

If the matter remains unresolved, the parent will be sent a 3rd and final letter requesting payment and detailing the school's next steps, which could include debt recovery action.

The school budget cannot tolerate a school meals debt amounting to more than one week's payment. If debts are incurred by parents, the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents instead. If a parent repeatedly fails to provide a packed lunch, or sufficient monies to cover the cost of school meals, we may need to make a referral to our Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership in case this is a sign that a pupil is experiencing a significant underlying wellbeing or safeguarding issue.

Parents in specific financial difficulties should speak to the Head teacher in the strictest confidence. School will, in exceptional circumstances and where we believe the money will be forthcoming, continue to provide a school meal conditional on full payment being received in a reasonable timeframe. We are committed to working together to find a suitable payment plan for any parent who asks for one. We might also be able to signpost a family to government support they may be entitled to, or to community support available in the immediate or short term.

Where no attempt is made to clear a debt, we will take appropriate debt recovery action in accordance with our normal financial procedures (see Section 16 for more information).

10. School milk scheme

We understand that under *'The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014',* we must make lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk available for drinking at least **once** a day during school hours at a fair cost or free of charge to all pupils who are entitled.

Up to one third of a pint of milk is available to all children free of charge, regardless of their family circumstances up to the age of 5.

When a child has their 5th birthday, a small charge will be made towards the cost of continuing to provide this single portion of milk to those parents who want their children to continue receiving it.

Children who have reached the age of 5 and have not yet reached the age of 19 can continue to receive free school milk if their family is in receipt of one of the prescribed benefits. Details of those benefits can be found at https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals.

In the case of infant pupils who are entitled to a Universal free school meal, milk must be offered free to those pupils where it forms part of the school lunch. If milk is offered at any other time during the school day, it will only be free for those pupils with an underlying entitlement to free school meals and in receipt of one of the prescribed benefits.

A parent who wishes their child to receive more than one portion of milk per day must pay the full cost of each additional portion, even when their first portion is free due to an entitlement.

For more information about our milk scheme and the current charges please ask at the school office.

11. Damage to property and breakages

The school will attempt to recover some, or all the costs incurred repairing wilful or culpably negligent damage or breakage of school property or such damage or breakage of property belonging to a third party where the school has been charged. The actual amount will be determined by the Head teacher.

12. Calculating charges

When charges are made for any activity, whether during or outside of the school day, they will be based on the actual costs incurred, divided by the total number of pupils participating. There will be no levy on those who can pay to support those who can't. Support for cases of hardship will come through applicable funding such as pupil premium monies, or specified voluntary contributions and fundraising.

Parents who would qualify for support are those in receipt of benefits as described in Section 6.

The principles of best value will be applied when planning activities that incur costs to school and/or charges to parents.

13. Debt recovery

It is the financial management policy of this school that all services provided by the school are paid for in advance and therefore it is expected that no debts will be accrued. In the unlikely event that debts are accrued, the Governing Body authorises school to take all reasonable measures to collect debts as part of its management of public funds. In doing so they will observe the relevant financial regulations and any other legal requirements.

Staff will follow set school procedures to secure the collection of all debts. A debt will be written off only after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it. Only debts below that allowed for in the annual funding letter issued by the Secretary of State may be written off. The recovery of any sums above this amount will be referred first to the Governors and then to the Secretary of State for approval. If any debtor has a number of debts that together exceed the write-off limit, then these will be treated as a total amount.

Unless a decision to write-off a debt is demonstrably a reasonable course of action authorisation is in place to initiate legal or other action to recover debts.

A formal record of any debts written off will be maintained and this will be retained for 7 years.

14. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

The Finance Committee of the Governing Body will monitor the impact of this Policy by receiving on a termly basis, a financial report on those activities that resulted in charges being levied, the subsidies awarded (without giving names) and the source of those subsidies.

15. References and associated Policies and procedures

- Education Act 1996, Section 457
- Education (School Sessions and Charges and Remissions Policies) (Information) (England) Regulations 1999
- DfE Statutory Guidance document Charging for school activities which includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Educational Visits Procedures
- Single Equality Scheme