

Charging Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 Sections 449-462 of the Education Act 1996 sets out the law on charging for school activities in schools maintained by local authorities in England. The Department for Education produced a document ([*Charging for school activities: Departmental advice for governing bodies, school leaders, school staff and local authorities*](#)) in May 2018 to provide guidance to schools. [Learning Outside the Classroom](#) provides further guidance.

1.2 All education during school hours (including any materials, books, instruments and other equipment) is free. The school cannot and does not charge for:

- an admission application;
- education provided during school hours;
- education provided outside of school hours if it is part of the national curriculum or part of 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;

1.3 It is important for parents/carers to understand the difference between a 'charge' and a 'voluntary contribution'. Whilst the school will not charge for the day-to-day education it provides, it will ask parents/carers for a voluntary contribution for those activities that enrich the curriculum and involve transportation to sites other than sport events.

2. Optional Extras

The school can and does charge for 'optional extras';

- education provided outside of school time that is not part of the national curriculum or part of religious education
- transport (other than transport to and from a school the local authority have arranged for the pupil to be provided with education)
- board and lodging on a residential visit
- extended day services (after-school clubs) when there is a cost incurred by the school

2.1 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;
- the cost of buildings and accommodation;
- 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;
- the cost, or an appropriate proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, or vocal tuition, where the tuition is an optional extra.

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

It must 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.

2.3 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. Therefore, no charge can be made for supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential visit.

2.4 Participation by a pupil 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.

3 Voluntary contributions

3.1 Nothing in legislation prevents a governing body from asking for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any school activities. When organising school visits beyond the school day which enrich the curriculum and educational experience of the children, the school invites parents/carers to make a voluntary contribution to cover the cost of the visit. The headteacher makes it clear to parents/carers that there is no obligation to make any contribution.

3.2 Sometimes the school and/or its associated charity, the *Friends of Langtoft School* subsidise the cost in order to make the visit affordable to the majority of families. Parents/carers on low income* are encouraged to discuss and agree with the headteacher a payment plan.

* and in therefore in receipt of the following benefits;

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- [Universal Credit](#)

3.3 All contributions are voluntary. If the school does not receive sufficient voluntary contributions or cannot fund the visit from some other source, it may be necessary to cancel the visit. This is made clear to parents/carers from the outset.

3.4 If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child must still be given an equal chance to go on the visit.

CHARGING POLICY FOR:

4 Instrumental and vocal music tuition

4.1 All children study music as part of the normal school curriculum. We do not charge for this.

4.2 Music teachers visit the school and teach some children at the request of their parent/carer. The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007 set out the circumstances in which charges can be made, including vocal tuition: this is when parents/carers enter into an agreement between themselves and the organisation for paying fees. This is not part of normal school curriculum.

4.3 Charges may now be made for vocal or instrumental tuition provided either individually, or to groups of any size, 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 who provide the tuition.

4.4 No charge will be made in respect of a child who is looked after by the local authority (within the meaning of section 22(l) of the Children Act 1989).

5 Transport

Schools cannot charge for

- 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 they have been prepared for that examination at the school; and
- transport provided in connection with an educational visit.

6 Residential visits

6.1 Schools cannot charge for:

- 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 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 visit.

6.2 Schools can charge for:

- board and lodging and the charge must not exceed the actual cost.

6.3 When a school informs parents about a forthcoming visit, they should make it clear that parents who can prove they are in receipt of certain benefits will receive support in paying the cost of board and lodging. The list of benefits to which this applies can be found in **3.2**

7. Education partly during school hours

7.1 Where an activity takes place partly during and partly outside school hours, there is a basis for determining whether it is deemed to take place either inside or outside school hours. However, a charge can only be made for the activity outside school hours if it is not part of the national curriculum, not part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school and not part of religious education.

7.2 If 50% or more of the time spent on the activity occurs during school hours, it is deemed to take place during school hours. Time spent on travel counts in this calculation if the travel itself occurs during school hours. School hours do not include the break in the middle of the day.

7.3 Where less than 50% of the time spent on an activity falls during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside school hours. For example, an excursion might require pupils to leave school an hour before the school day ends, but the activity does not end until late in the evening.

7.4 Non-residential activities

If 50% or more of the time spent on the activity occurs during school hours, it is deemed to take place during school hours. Time spent on travel counts in this calculation 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 on an activity falls during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside school hours. For example, an excursion might require pupils to leave school an hour before the school day ends, but the activity does not end until late in the evening.

7.5 Residential visits

If the number of school sessions taken up by the visit is equal to or greater than 50% of the number of half days spent on the visit, it is deemed to have taken place during school hours (even if some activities take place late in the evening). Whatever the starting and finishing times of the school day, regulations require that the school day is divided into 2 sessions. A 'half day' means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day.

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.

8. Frequently asked questions

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 in receipt of certain benefits. The list of benefits to which this applies can be found [here](#). 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 and lodging payments, 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 visits. How can the school fund/organise residential visits?

A. Government funding for schools to each local authority recognises the different needs of each area. In terms of the allocation to schools, each local authority sets a funding formula which is agreed with the local schools forum. All local authorities are required to include an element in their formula to reflect the needs of deprived pupils. The amount that individual schools receive from the local authority reflects their relative need compared with other local schools.

In addition, schools receive pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils, based largely on those who are eligible for free school meals. This funding is provided by the government to raise the attainment of eligible pupils and narrow the attainment gap between eligible pupils and their peers. It is for head teachers and school governing bodies to decide how to use their formula funding and pupil premium allocation.

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 and academies?

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?

A. 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 advice on optional extras in **section 2**.

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 prerequisite 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 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;
- 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 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. Where a residential trip includes education for which charging is prohibited and the pupil's parent is in receipt of certain benefits, they will be exempt from paying the cost of

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board and lodging. The list of benefits to which this applies can be found here. Schools must ensure that parents are aware of the support available to them when being asked for contributions toward the costs of school visits. 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 must be provided free of charge (though a voluntary contribution could be requested).

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 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. No contributions may be sought as part of the admissions process.

Q. Can a school ask parents to contribute to (or pay in full) the cost of a tablet or computer?

A. Sections 451 and 454 of the Education Act 1996 prohibits schools from charging for education and the supply of materials, books, instruments or other equipment (this would include tablets), during school hours. However, there is no prohibition on asking parents to make voluntary contributions. Additionally there is a specific exception in the legislation which enables schools to charge for materials where the pupil's parent wishes them to own the materials. All contribution requests to parents must make clear that the contributions are voluntary and that, if a parent cannot make or refuses to make a contribution, their children will not be treated any differently and will not be excluded from taking part in any activity or related equipment.