



Building each other up –  
with God as our firm foundation

# Charging and Remissions and Collection of School Meals Money and Debts Policy

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### **1. Statement of intent**

The governing body of St Paul's Church of England Primary School recognises the valuable contribution that the wide range of educational activities, including trips and clubs can make towards a pupil's education. We want children to '*live life in all its fullness*' (**John 10:10**). We understand that families face financial pressures but expect that charges will be met and voluntary contributions made whenever possible so that the school's budget for teaching and learning is not compromised and to ensure that visits and activities are sustainable for future years. We want the best outcomes for every child in our care.

The governing body aims to promote and provide activities both as part of a broad and balanced **curriculum for the pupils of the school and as additional optional activities**.

St Paul's C of E Primary School is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils, regardless of financial circumstances, and has established the following policy and procedures to ensure that no child is discriminated against by our offering of school trips, activities and educational extras.

In addition, we are committed to adhering to legal requirements regarding charging for school activities, and meeting all statutory guidance provided by the DfE.

We promise:

- Not to charge for education provided during school hours.
- To inform parents on low incomes and in receipt of relevant benefits of the support available to them when asking for contributions.

**Nothing in this policy statement precludes the Governing Body inviting parents to make Voluntary Contribution towards the cost of additional activities which take place in school time. Parents may be advised that the continuance of an activity may depend upon voluntary contributions, but once it has been decided to run an activity no qualifying child will be excluded on grounds of voluntary contributions.**

Legal framework

1. This policy will have consideration for, and be in compliance with, the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- Education Act 1996
- The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Prescribed Public Examinations) (England) Regulations 2010
- DfE (2014) 'Charging for School Activities'
- DfE (2015) 'Governors' Handbook

## **2. Charging for education**

We will not charge parents for:

- Admission applications.
- Education provided during school hours.
- Education provided outside school hours if it is part of the national curriculum, part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for by 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-sits, if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sits at the school.

We may charge parents for the following:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment, where they desire their child to own them
- Optional extras
- Music tuition (in certain circumstances)

### **3. Optional extras**

We may charge parents for the following optional extras:

- Education provided outside of school time that is not:
  - Part of the national curriculum.
  - Part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school.
  - Religious education.
- Examination entry fees where the pupil has not been prepared for the examinations at the school
- Transport, other than that arranged by the LA for the pupil to be provided with education
- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit
- Extended day services offered to pupils

When calculating the cost of optional extras, the school will only take into account the following:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment provided in relation to the optional extra
- The cost of buildings and accommodation
- The employment of non-teaching staff
- The cost of teaching staff (including teaching assistants) under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra
- The cost, or an appropriate proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide vocal tuition or tuition in playing a musical instrument

The school will not charge in excess of the actual cost of providing the optional extra divided by the number of participating pupils. We will not charge a subsidy for any pupils wishing to participate but whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge. If

a proportion of the activity takes place during school hours, we will not charge for the cost of alternative provision for those not participating.

Participation in any optional activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Therefore, parental agreement is a pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra.

#### **4. Examination fees**

We may charge for examination fees if:

- The examination is on the prescribed list (which includes SATS), but the pupil was not prepared for it at the school.
- The examination is not on the prescribed list, but the school arranged for the pupil to take it.
- 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 fee.

#### **5. Examinations**

If a pupil or their parents consider it to be in the best interests of the pupil to request that an examination is re-marked, any fees involved must be covered by the pupil or their parents. If the awarding body changes the overall grade of the result, the school will not be charged by the awarding body and the parent/pupil will have their fees refunded.

#### **6. Voluntary contributions**

We may, from time-to-time, ask for voluntary contributions towards school activities. If an activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, we will make this clear to parents at the outset. We will also make it clear that there is no obligation for parents to make a contribution, and notify parents whether assistance is available. We trust in the integrity of parents to contribute whenever is possible as we want to enrich the experiences of our children across the curriculum.

No child will be excluded from an activity simply because their parents are unable to pay. If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child will still be given an equal opportunity to take part in the activity. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund an activity, and the school cannot fund it via another source, the activity will be cancelled.

We will strive to ensure that parents do not feel pressurised into making voluntary contributions.

#### **7. Music tuition**

Music tuition is the only exception to the rule that all education provided during school hours must be free. The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007 allow for

charges to be made for vocal or instrumental tuition provided either individually or to groups of any size – provided that the tuition is at the request of the pupil's parents.

The charges will not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff providing the tuition.

## **8. Transport**

We will not charge for:

- Transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the LA has a statutory obligation to provide the transport.
- Transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing body or LA has arranged for pupils to be educated.
- Transporting pupils to meet an examination requirement when they have been prepared for the examination at the school.
- Transport provided for an educational visit although, as stated, we are likely to request a VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION to make the visit viable.

## **9. Residential visits**

We will not 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, 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 teachers accompanying pupils on visits.

We may charge for board and lodging – but the charge will not exceed the actual costs. Again, these are likely to be VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS.

## **10. Remissions**

Parents in receipt of any of the following benefits may request assistance with the costs of activities in terms of part-payments and extended payment times:

- Universal Credit
- 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) did not exceed £16,190 in the previous financial year
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit

To request assistance, parents should contact the headteacher or administrative staff.

## **11. School Meals : Collection of Money and Debts**

This section concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the cases of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. Parents/Carers will be sent a copy of this policy when their child(ren) reach(es) Key Stage 2 (KS2).

### **General Principle**

School meals should be paid for in advance. If a pupil is to have meals for the duration of the week monies must be received during that week or if the school is to accept pupils having an occasional meal monies must be received during that week.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

### **Free School Meals Entitlement**

KS2 pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to Free School Meals. If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the Local Authority. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide Free School Meals to pupils where this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority.

### **Flexible Charging**

St Paul's buys into the flexible charging service with the Local Authority. Families identified as low-income are offered a subsidised cost for school dinners.

### **Procedure for Collection of Arrears**

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise:

Reminder messages are sent via the School Comms Gateway app if charges are owed.

A gentle reminder letter will be sent home after 1 week of accumulated arrears (Appendix 1)

The parent/carer will be informed in writing where three weeks' arrears have accumulated and advised to make immediate payment (Appendix 2)

A final letter the parent/ carer informing them that no meals will be provided for their child(ren) (Appendix 3).

If payment has not been received by a specified date (ie in accordance with the policy the date when four weeks arrears have accumulated)

No meals to be provided to pupils when arrears exceeds four weeks.

Once the final letter deadline has expired the debt will be passed into the debt recovery team at Wolverhampton Local Authority when legal proceeding may begin.

At St Paul's, payments for clubs and dinner money are made through School Comms Gateway. Balance/credit can be added in advance to pay for dinners. A barcode can be provided for families to make payment at a PayPoint if they are not able to download / access the app.

### **Before and After School Care**

Payment for club sessions must be paid for in advance via the School Comms Gateway app.



APPENDIX 1

Date:

**Gentle reminder letter**

Child's name:

Dear Parent / Carer,

According to our records there is outstanding dinner money for your child(ren).

Please send in £\_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

This is payment for w/c\_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to pay by cheque, please make it payable to WCC.

If you have any queries, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

APPENDIX 2

Date:

**Accumulated School Meal Arrears**

Child's name:

Dear Parent / Carer,

Following the letter, dated \_\_\_\_\_ regarding outstanding school dinner money, our records show that this has not been paid for the period \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

To date, the amount of arrears is now £\_\_\_\_\_.

We now request that you contact school as soon as possible to organise payment.

If the debt is not cleared, you must provide a packed lunch.

Please find enclosed the school's 'Collection of School Meals Money and Debts Policy'.

This debt needs to be paid as soon as possible please, cheques are to be made payable to WCC.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

**Non-payment of school dinner money arrears.**

Date:

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your child(ren) despite previous letters sent home on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Arrears to date total £\_\_\_\_\_

Following the school policy on dinner money arrears (a copy of which you were sent on \_\_\_\_\_), I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days of the date of this letter, the debt will be referred to the Wolverhampton Local Authority Debt Recovery Team.

I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to Court.

Until the debt is cleared, I must instruct you to make alternative arrangements for your child(rens)'s lunch as no meals will be provided in school from \_\_\_\_\_.

Cheques are to be made payable to WCC.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher