



The Sunflower Federation

Charging and Remissions Policy

FGB 21st March 2024

(Due to be reviewed 2026)

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Chair of Governor

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This policy sets out the Charging and Remissions policy of The Sunflower Federation schools and provides information to parents on the circumstances where the federation schools' would charge for activities; whether these are within school hours or out of school hours. It also provides information on activities where no charge is made.

Principle

The Governors of The Sunflower Federation uphold the principle of free education embodied in the Education Act 1996 Sections 449-462 and have adopted the DfE's advice on Charging for school activities¹. Where charges are permitted the Governors give their authority to the Head teacher to use her discretion in waiving costs when considering individual circumstances.

No pupil will be denied the opportunity to participate in any activity during or outside school hours on account of parents being unable or unwilling to pay the cost.

1. EDUCATION DURING SCHOOL HOURS

- No charge can be made for admitting pupils to maintained schools.
- Education provided during school hours must be free. This includes materials and equipment, and transport provided in school hours by the Local Authority (LA) or by the school to carry pupils between the school and an activity.

2. EDUCATION PARTLY DURING SCHOOL HOURS

- Some activities take place partly during and partly outside school hours. If most of the time spent on a non-residential activity occurs during school hours, that activity counts as taking place entirely in school hours and no charge may be made.

Time spent on travel only counts as being during school hours if the travel takes place during school hours. As an example, a long-distance trip might involve much travel before and after normal school hours, but if the time spent at the destination fell mainly within school hours, the trip would count as happening in school time and be free of charge.

By contrast, a trip that involved leaving school an hour or so earlier than usual in the afternoon, but then went on until quite late in the evening, would be classified as taking place outside school time. Charges would then be allowed.

3. EDUCATION OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS

- Parents can only be charged for activities that happen outside school hours when these activities are not a necessary part of the national curriculum or do not form part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education.

¹ Department for Education - Departmental advice for governing bodies, school leaders, school staff and local authorities (May 2018).

- Charges may be made for other activities that happen outside school hours if parents agree to pay.

The Education Act 1996 describes activities that can be charged for as “optional extras”. It is up to the LA or governing body providing the activities to decide whether to make a charge.

4. RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITIES

- Charging can be made for residential trips that fall outside of school time.

A trip counts as falling 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. Each school day is normally divided into two sessions and each 24-hour period is divided into two half-days, beginning at noon and at midnight.

On this basis, a term-time trip from noon on Wednesday to 9.00p.m. on Sunday would last for nine half-days, include five school sessions and would count as taking place in school time. A trip from noon on Thursday to 9.00p.m. on Sunday would count as seven half-days, include three school sessions and would be classified for charging as taking place outside school time. If 50 per cent or more of a half-day is spent on a residential trip, the whole of that half-day should be treated as spent on the trip.

If a residential activity takes place largely during school time, 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.

However, charges can be made for board and lodging in these circumstances, except for pupils whose parents are receiving:

- *Income Support;*
- *Income based Jobseeker’s Allowance;*
- *Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;*
- *Child Tax Credit*
- *the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit; and*
an income-related employment and support allowance

The head teacher should advise all parents of the right to claim free activities if they are receiving these benefits.

5. ACTIVITIES NOT RUN BY THE SCHOOL OR LOCAL AUTHORITY

- When an organisation acting independently of a school or LA 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. However, where such an activity is approved by the school, is educational or is supervised by someone authorised by the school, then it is the DCSF’s view 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 4A (a) of the Education (Pupil Registration) Amendment) Regulations 1997.

6. VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

- Although schools cannot charge for school-time activities, they may still invite parents and others to make voluntary contributions (in cash or in kind) to make school funds go further.

All requests to parents for voluntary contributions must make it quite clear that the contributions would be voluntary. Governing bodies should also make it clear that children of parents who do not contribute will not be treated any differently. If a particular activity cannot take place without some help from parents, this should be explained to them at the planning stage.

Where there are not enough voluntary contributions to make the activity possible and there is no way to make up the shortfall, the activity must be cancelled. The essential point is that no pupil may be left out of an activity because his or her parents cannot, or will not, make a contribution of any kind. The school must first decide which class, or group of pupils, will benefit from the activity and then look for voluntary contributions, either for that activity, or by general fund-raising

Voluntary Contributions Requested at Schools

It is the case that without parental contributions some activities could not go ahead. The school tries very hard to fund as many activities as possible and the PTA is usually able to help fund special projects such as theatre trips.

There are some activities for which **voluntary** parental contributions are sought such as sailing, riding, swimming, class funds and cost of materials.

Sailing / Riding - The school is charged for these sessions and a suggested cost is requested from parents as a voluntary contribution.

Swimming - In order to cover some of the costs of running the pool a voluntary contribution may be requested. The same is true of the swimming lessons held at community swimming pools for which the school is charged.

Class funds - This fund operates to cover the costs of buying drinks and healthy snacks for break times, and to enable the pupils to use local shops and cafes as part of social training. Parents are asked for an appropriate sum and / or consumables to be sent in. These funds are subject to regular internal and external audit. Requests can be sent for these contributions, but no parent should be sent reminders for money and accounts should not list parents by name.

Costs of materials / resources - Parents may be asked to contribute to materials used in technology, food technology or PSHE.

All of these contributions are requested as voluntary and there is no pressure placed on parents to comply. When parents do not comply, children continue to join in all the activities.

Activities dependent on voluntary contributions

There are some activities e.g. school trips that can only take part if all or most of the costs are met by contribution. When a parental contribution is sought in these circumstances teachers must first ask the head for permission to request a charge.

Letters will be sent to parents detailing the activity and the request for contributions will be worded as follows either:

1. Parents / carers are requested to pay a voluntary contribution of £... for this activity. This covers the full cost of the activity. If the activity goes ahead all pupils will take part regardless of their parent's ability or willingness to pay the costs. However, if sufficient funds are not raised the activity may have to be cancelled.

Or:

2. Parents / carers are requested to pay a voluntary contribution of £... for this activity. This covers part of the cost of the activity, the school / PTA will fund the remainder. If the activity goes ahead all pupils will take part regardless of their parent's ability or willingness to pay the costs. However, if sufficient funds are not raised the activity may have to be cancelled.

School Journeys.

The board and lodgings can be charged to parents, however staff costs, and activities cannot be charged unless the activity is out of school hours. The costs of school journeys would be prohibitive if the school had to bear the costs of staff travel and board and the activities. These extra costs are therefore requested as a voluntary part of the costs and letters to parents outlining costs must make this breakdown clear. Unless the costs are met the trip could not take place and the form of wording suggested above should also be included in the letter.

School journeys are always planned well in advance and parents are offered the facility to pay in instalments. The period of payment can be extended beyond the date of the holiday.

The school is aware of several charitable organisations that can contribute towards school journey costs for individual pupils and help will be sought from these quarters with the permission of the parents where there is a genuine case of hardship.

7. DAMAGE / LOSS TO PROPERTY

A pupil responsible for non-accidental damage to personal or school property such as books, equipment, windows etc., will render the parent liable for the cost of repair or replacement at the Head teacher's discretion, or referral to the Chair of Governors if the claim is considered to be excessive.

In any matter of dispute arising over interpretation, the Governors will be guided by Hertfordshire County Council regulations currently in use.

- A charge may be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of school property (including premises, furniture, equipment, books or materials), the charge to

be the cost of replacement or repair, or such lower cost as the Head teacher may decide.

- A charge may be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of property (including premises, furniture, equipment, books or materials), belonging to a third party, where the cost has been recharged to the school. The charge to be replacement or repair, or such lower cost as the Head teacher may decide.

8. REMISSIONS

The Legal Requirements.

The statutory arrangement for the remission of charges cover parents on Income Support, family credit, jobseeker's allowance, or disability working allowance. These parents must receive full remission of board and lodging charges for an activity out of school hours or is essential to the National Curriculum.

Parents who are not able to pay through hardship of any sort are asked to discuss this with the school in confidence. The school has arrangements to fund activities for disadvantaged children from the delegated budget. For larger sums – for school journeys for example there are a number of local charities who will help fund a journey for a child who is disadvantaged.

The PTA (Parent-School-Association) has a policy not to pay for any one child for a holiday as they believe that their role is to provide funds for the whole school or groups within the school. However, they might fund an activity which is part of a school journey– a theatre trip for example – which helps to reduce costs to all parents.

Parents wishing to pay for an activity may choose to do so in instalments to suit their needs. The school Finance Manager will arrange and operate the scheme.

Confidentiality must be ensured for parents requesting financial assistance.