Charges, Remissions and Debt Management Policy

**Aim**


The Head teacher and Governors of Birches Green Infants School are proud of the excellent facilities and opportunities available to pupils, and of the high standards achieved. The value of providing a wide range of experiences to enrich and extend pupils' learning and to contribute to their personal development is recognised and valued by all stakeholders. We aim to promote and provide such experiences for the pupils of the school, both as part of a broad and balanced curriculum and as additional optional activities.

Some of these activities have an associated cost and cannot be provided unless voluntary contributions are received or parents are charged for the cost. This policy will set out the circumstances in which charges will or will not be made for school activities and when charges may be waived in order to ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to benefit from school visits, curricular and extra-curricular activities.

**Purpose**

We aim:

- To make school activities accessible to all pupils regardless of family income.
- To encourage and promote external activities which give added value to the curriculum.
- To provide a process that will allow activities to take place at a minimum cost to parents, pupils and the school.
- To respond to the wide variations in family income while not adding additional unexpected burdens to the school budget.

1. **Legislation**

1.1 **Education during school hours**

- The DfE in its guidance to School Governors states that "education provided during school hours must be free. The definition of "education" includes materials, equipment and transport provided in school hours by school to carry pupils between the school and an activity." It goes on to advise that "although
schools cannot charge for school time activities, they still invite parents and others to make voluntary contributions (in cash or in kind)

- When additional costs are incurred by Birches Green Infants to enhance the curriculum opportunities for the pupils, parents may be requested to make voluntary contributions. However, no pupil will be left out of an activity because his or her parents cannot or will not make a contribution of any kind.

1 1.2 Education outside school hours

These are activities that happen outside school hours if parents agree to pay. The Education Reform Act 1988 described activities, which can be charged for as "optional extras".

2. Charging

2.1 Contributions - Educational trips in school hours

- Governors have agreed that all school trips will be subsidised - An amount each year is allocated from school budget share to contribute towards the cost of transport for one trip per year group each academic year. Voluntary contributions will be requested to help with providing activities even though they may be part of the normal school day or part of the National Curriculum.
- If voluntary contributions are requested for an activity it should be clearly understood that there is no obligation to contribute and that if the parent is unable or unwilling to pay, the child will not be excluded from the activity.
- If any Parent has difficulty in meeting the full cost, an application can be made for some help towards the cost from the Governors Fund. Applications are confidential and will be considered by Governors.
- If sufficient contributions are not received the activity may have to be cancelled.

2.2 Educational trips out of school hours

- The Governing body reserves the right to make a charge for trips which are not part of the school curriculum or are outside the school day (i.e. Weekend residential)

2.3 School Fund

- Every September, parents are invited to contribute £5.00 per year per child. This will contribute towards the cost of 'extra' resources needed for wet day play toys, cookery items, Christmas parties etc.

2.4 Lost School Equipment, Books etc

- Books and other materials are provided free of charge and remain the property of the school. Parents will be expected to replace or pay for the cost of lost items of School property.

2.5 Breakages and Damage to School Buildings, Furniture or Property

- Parents will be charged for damage caused as a result of a pupil's behaviour.
2.6 **Residential Activity**
- The DfE in its guidance to School Governors states that “For a residential activity taking place largely during school time, or essential to the education provided at the school, no charge may be made for either the education or the costs of the travel.
- However, charges will be made for board and lodging in these circumstances, except for pupils who are receiving Income Support or Child Tax Credit (excluding Working Tax Credit). All parents will be informed of the right to claim free activities if they are in receipt of these benefits.” A voluntary contribution will be requested by the school for such activities.

2.7 **Photocopying**
- Any photocopying that is requested by parents relating to their child, under the ‘Freedom of Information Act’, will be charged at:
  - 15p per sheet black and white copies
  - 25p per sheet colour copies

2.8 **Private fees**
- Any report or data that is requested on a child for the purpose of a third party private assessment requested by a parent (e.g. mid-year pupil progress report for solicitors, private psychologist reports or solicitor reports) will be charged at an agreed rate by the Head Teacher in discussion with the Chair or Vice-chair of Governors. This rate will include a cost for staff time to sort and collate the relevant information (not less than £10 per hour) as well as photocopying charges (as stated above) and postage.
- The Governing Body may, from time to time, amend the categories of activity for which a charge may be made.
- Nothing in this policy statement precludes the Governing Body from inviting parents to make a voluntary contribution towards the cost of providing education for pupils.

3. **Remissions**
- The fundamental aim of this policy is to ensure that all pupils gain fully from everything that the school is able to offer them and is based on an understanding of the relationship between low income, entitlement and access. This policy takes into account the very real and persistent difficulties which people on low income have in meeting the costs of educational activities for their children.
- Where parents are in receipt of Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Support under part IV of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999 or Child Tax Credit (provided that Working Tax Credit is not also received), the Governing Body will observe its statutory requirement to remit in full the cost of board and lodgings for any residential activity that the school organised for the pupil if the activity is deemed to take place within school hours.
- There may be cases of family hardship which make it difficult for pupils to take part in other particular activities for which a charge is made. When arranging a
chargeable activity the Governing Body will invite parents to apply in confidence for the remission of charges in part or in full. Authorisation of remission will be made by the Head Teacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

- **Data Protection of pupils and families**
  Those Children and families who are granted remission of charges will not be identified and remission will remain confidential.

4. **Late Collection of Children**

- Children should be collected from school by 3.15p.m. Sometimes we appreciate that difficulties arise in parents attending on time to collect their children and in those circumstances a telephone call to the School Office should be made giving the reasons for late collection and an estimated time of arrival.

- However, children who are collected late on more than three occasions in one term will in future be subject to a charge of £5.00 payable by the Parent upon receipt of an Invoice from the School. Monies raised will be paid into School Fund. Staff are not available to care for children after 3.15p.m. and children are required to wait in the entrance foyer. Before and After School provision is available for anyone experiencing regular difficulties and the details for Precious People are available from the School Office upon request.

5. **Debt Management**

- School recognises that a debt to school is money owed to the Public Purse. As a result, it is essential that debt is kept to a minimum and efforts are taken to recover money. School encourages communications between parents school wherever possible to avoid debts building up.

- Where there is a non-voluntary charge made for a service or event (e.g. School Dinners), we state that these must be paid a week in advance. These fees can be paid half termly if the parent wishes.

- **Informal reminders**: These are sent 1 day after a meal is left unpaid by text message.

- **First Reminder**: Once a debt reaches £25 and/or a one month overdue, a text message and letter are sent out with a request to bring payments up to date.

- **Final Reminder**: Once a debt reaches £50 and/or six weeks overdue, a second reminder is sent, requesting immediate payment (within 7 days). These state that the service will be cut off if payment is not received. These are sent by text message and letter.

  An administrative charge of £5 is added to the debt.

- **Debt Enforcement**: Should there be no satisfactory response to the above reminders, the debt will be passed to the Small Claims Court for settling. An administrative charge of £50 is added to the debt to help recover the costs associated with such action.
- **Payment Difficulties**: From time to time, parents may find themselves in a position where they are unable to pay due to financial difficulties at home. School will look to find appropriate ways around this, including accepting smaller, regular payments, or payments made over an extended period. We encourage anyone who is facing difficulty to get in touch sooner, rather than later, so that appropriate action can be taken. School retain the right to overlook the administrative charges providing an early response is made.

Policy reviewed by Governors March 2018
Next review due March 2019

Signed _________________________ Chair of Governors Dated _________

Signed _________________________ Headteacher Dated _________