

# **MERE VALLEY FEDERATION**

# **CHARGING POLICY**

## VERSION

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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. Departmental advice supporting this is available to schools and Governing Boards in “Charging for school activities” issued in October 2014.

This document outlines the charging and remission for school activities and school visits policy for Merebrook Infant and Emerson Valley Schools.

Please note that information on charges for letting out schools’ premises is found in the Lettings Policy which is separate from this policy.

## 2 CHARGING IN EDUCATION

Both schools comply with the legal requirements set upon it by the above legislation. These are summarised below. For full details on any area of charging, please refer to the guidance listed in Section 1 above.

Please note that wherever “parent” is referenced, this should be understood to include carers and any other adult responsible for a pupil.

### 2.1 Activities for which Charges May Not Be Made

The following are activities for which the schools may not charge:

- Education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment);
- Education provided 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 the school’s basic curriculum for 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;
- Entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school, and
- Examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school.

### 2.2 Activities for which Charges May Be Made

Schools and local authorities **can** charge for:

- Any materials, books, instruments, or equipment, where the child’s parent wishes him/her to own them;
- Optional extras (see below);
- Music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances;
- Community facilities.

### 2.3 Optional Extras

Charges may be made for some activities that are known as ‘optional extras’. Where an optional extra is being provided, a charge **can** be made for providing materials, books, instruments, or equipment. **Optional extras are:**

- 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; or
- ▶ Part of religious education.
- Examination entry fee(s) if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school;
- Transport (other than transport that is required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the local authority/Governing Board has arranged for the pupil to be provided with education);
- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit;
- Extended day services offered to pupils (for example breakfast club, after-school clubs, tea and supervised homework sessions).

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; and
- 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.

Any charge made in respect of individual pupils must 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.

Furthermore, 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.

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 pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

## 2.4 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 Board or local authority has arranged for pupils to be educated;
- Transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when he has been prepared for that examination at the school; and
- Transport provided in connection with an educational visit.

## 2.5 Residential visits

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.

Schools **can** charge for:

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

When a school informs parents about a forthcoming visit, they should make it clear that parents who can prove they are in receipt of the following benefits will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging:

- Universal Credit in prescribed circumstances;<sup>6</sup>
- Income Support (IS);
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA);
- 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) does not exceed £16,190 (financial year 2013/14);
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit;
- An income related employment and support allowance that was introduced on 27 October 2008.

## 2.6 Voluntary Contributions

Nothing in legislation prevents a school Governing Board from asking for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the schools or any school activities. However, if the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, the Governing Board or head teacher should make this clear to parents at the outset. The Governing Board or head teacher must also make it clear to parents that there is no obligation to make any contribution.

It is important to note that no child should be excluded from an activity simply because his or her parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund a visit, or the school cannot fund it from some other source, then it must be cancelled. Schools must ensure that they make this clear to parents. If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child must still be given an equal chance to go on the visit. Schools should make it clear to parents at the outset what their policy for allocating places on school visits will be.

When making requests for voluntary contributions, parents must not be made to feel pressurised into paying as it is voluntary and not compulsory. Schools should avoid sending colour coded letters to parents as a reminder to make payments and direct debit or standing order mandates should not be sent to parents when requesting contributions.

### **3 CHARGING AT MEREBOOK INFANT AND EMERSON VALLEY SCHOOLS**

It is the responsibility of the Governing Board and the Headteacher to ensure that both Merebrook Infant and Emerson Valley Schools comply with the legislation as summarised above.

The ethos at both schools is that we should provide an educational experience oriented to the whole child. In order to provide this, the schools offer activities, in school and outside of school, which are designed to support the current curriculum and also to offer opportunities for children to experience something they would not normally have access to. Funding for these activities will be in line with legislation.

However, in the current financial climate, it is not possible for these activities to be wholly funded by the schools without impacting on provision of core teaching and learning. In order to continue to provide the additional activities, parents/carers are asked to contribute, on a voluntary basis, to the costs of provision for each of the activities.

We appreciate that this can be an additional burden for families but without these contributions, it may be necessary to cancel an activity.

In addition, there are some activities which are wholly outside of school educational provision; these are offered at a cost to parents/carers and are optional.

#### **3.1 Music Tuition**

Emerson Valley School currently employs a specialist music teacher who teaches groups and clubs during the school week as part of the core curriculum.

Additional music lessons are available from a local Peripatetic Music Service, as an optional extra. These are at an additional cost to parents/carers as charged by the service.

#### **3.2 Extra Examinations**

Both schools provide teaching and learning in line with the National Curriculum working towards Key Stage 1 and 2 expectations and assessments only. It does not provide teaching or support for any other prescribed public examination e.g. 11+, music theory or practical etc.

#### **3.3 After School Activities**

These occur outside of school hours, including transport to and from the location as appropriate. Charges will be levied to cover the costs of all resources, including, but not limited to, staffing, transport and any fees relating to the activities.

Normally, these are offered on a first-come, first-served basis; the schools reserve the right to cancel any of these clubs should there be insufficient numbers to cover the costs of the club.

#### **3.4 After School Provision**

After school provision, both before and after school, is outside of school funding expectations and, under the legislation, considered an optional extra (see section 2.3 Optional Extras above.)

##### **3.4.1 Breakfast Club**

Emerson Valley School wants all children to have the best opportunity to learn that we can provide. With this in mind, children who qualify for Pupil Premium, or whose parents/carers can evidence that they are in receipt of any of the benefits listed at Appendix 1 - Benefits

Considered for Exemption, will be given the opportunity to attend Breakfast Club at a reduced cost.

Merebrook Infant School has a breakfast club which is operated on site by an external company. Attendance at the club will be in line with the company's charges.

### **3.4.2 After School Care**

After School Care is provided by the Emerson Valley to offer wrap round care for children who attend the school. Whilst the school makes every effort to provide interesting activities in this period, it is essentially child care provision. Merebrook Infant School has after school care which is operated on site by an external company. Attendance at the club will be in line with the company's charges.

The schools will not subsidise access to either of these services for children and expect parents/carers to pay for this service in line with all information provided/charges notified by the service provider.

## **3.5 Trips**

### **3.5.1 Day Trips**

Both schools schedule day trips to support delivery of the National Curriculum. Each year group will be offered the opportunity to go on day trips linked to the curriculum for that year. These are normally offered at least once per term. Each trip has been scheduled to link in with the current topic/s being studied by the year group and attendance at the trip is expected from all children within the year group.

However, in the current financial climate, it is not possible for these trips to be wholly funded by the schools without impacting on provision of core teaching and learning. Whilst the schools will allocate some funds to each day trip scheduled during the school year, parents/carers are asked to contribute, on a voluntary basis, to the costs of provision for each trip. Where insufficient contributions are received, a trip will be cancelled prior to the schools incurring any cancellation charges.

### **3.5.2 Residential Trips**

Residential trips are offered to students in years 5 and 6. These trips are not educationally based and do not support delivery of the National Curriculum; they are designed to offer students the opportunity to experience activities which are not part of the core curriculum including key social opportunities such as staying away from home. Charges are made to cover the costs for transport, activities and board and lodging. Costs for staff who attend residential trips are not included in the overall cost of the trips. Adults who attend in order to support the trip do so at no extra cost.

Attendance at residential trips is at the discretion of parents/carers and costs for attendance are expected to be fully funded by parents/carers. The trip location may have quotas for booking or too few attendees may increase costs for all attendees. In circumstances such as these, the school reserves the right to cancel a trip.

## **3.6 Breakages or Damage to School Premises/Equipment**

The Headteacher may ask parents to pay for damage to school property or equipment where this is the result of the pupil's behaviour, either during or outside of school hours.

## **3.7 Catering**

School meals for children in Early Years and Years 1 and 2 are currently funded by the Department of Education. All children at Merebrook Infant School have the opportunity to partake of school lunches at no cost to parents/carers.

Catered school lunches are provided by an external company at Emerson Valley School. Charges for lunches are set by the company. Children who are entitled to Free School Meals will be funded in line with current legislation.

### **3.8 Other**

If a parent indicates in advance that they would like to keep the finished product created as part of a school activity, the schools reserve the right to charge for the cost of ingredients and/or materials used to create the product.

## **4 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The Governing Board recognises its responsibility to ensure that the offer of activities and educational visits does not place an unnecessary burden on family finances. To this end we will try to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Where possible, we shall publish a list of visits (and their approximate cost) at the beginning of the school year so that parents can plan ahead;
- We have established a system for parents to pay in instalments; however, all payments must be received prior to the trip taking place.

## **5 REFUNDS**

The calculation of costs for an activity is made on the basis of the numbers of pupils in the relevant year or class group. It is therefore not possible to offer a refund of the activity cost if a child is unable to attend at short notice or after the cancellation cut-off date advertised for a specific activity.

If an activity is cancelled as a result of insufficient interest or funding, all monies paid by parents/carers will be re-funded.

## Appendix 1 - BENEFITS CONSIDERED FOR EXEMPTION

- Universal Credit in prescribed circumstances;
- Income Support (IS);
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IBJSA);
- 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) does not exceed £16,190 (financial year 2013/14);
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit;
- An income related employment and support allowance that was introduced on 27 October 2008.