



CHARGING FOR OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

*"So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas.
'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'* **Luke 19:13**

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To be reviewed by:	Director of Support Services and Governors

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other policies and not as a standalone policy

Reasons for this policy

The school's educational vision is "To provide an innovative, inspirational and Christian education which challenges, nurtures and informs our students to enable them to take their place in a changing world." Learning does not just take place in a classroom; it can and should extend to experiencing the world around us. The aim of educational visits offsite is to extend learning through providing stimulation, inspiration and challenge, as well as developing broader skills including independence, responsibility, leadership and teamwork. Most activities offsite incur charges to parents, so this policy is needed to provide a fair and consistent framework for these charges.

The aims and objectives of this policy are:

- To meet legal requirements.
- To ensure there is a consistent approach to charging for offsite activities.
- To look provide clear guidance and expectations of the way we can support parents.

1. Introduction

The Authority (West Sussex County Council) has issued a full statement outlining its policy on charging. A summary of the legal requirements is set out below.

Other than in the case of board and lodging no charge is permitted in cases where an activity is provided:-

- (a) to fulfil any requirements specified in the syllabus for a prescribed public examination; or
- (b) specifically to fulfil statutory duties relating to the National Curriculum, imposed by sections 357(1) and 400(4) of the 1996 Act; or
- (c) specifically to fulfil statutory duties relating to religious education imposed by section 384 and 388.

2. Optional extras

Participation in any optional extra will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet such charges as are made. Any charges made may not exceed the cost of the provision of the optional extra.

The cost may include an appropriate element for:-

- (a) a pupil's travel costs;
- (b) a pupil's board and lodging costs;
- (c) materials, books, instruments and other equipment;
- (d) non-teaching staff costs;
- (e) teaching staff costs, including the cost of travel and board and lodging, where a teacher or instructor has been engaged specifically for the purpose of providing the activity.

The cost must be determined on the basis of the cost to each individual pupil participating in the activity.

Within the limitations of the Act it shall be for each governing body to determine whether any charge should be made and, if so, the amount. In circumstances where the Authority is responsible for making a charge, the full cost will normally be charged for each pupil, subject to the policy for remission set out in paragraph below.

3. Definition of optional extras

Optional extras are activities which take place wholly or mainly out of school hours. School hours do not include the mid-day break.

A non-residential activity shall be deemed to take place out of school hours if 50% or more of the whole time spent on the activity occurs out of school hours. In the case of a residential activity, if the number of school sessions is less than 50% of the number of half days taken up by the activity, the activity is deemed to have taken place out of school hours.

Further details are included in DES Circular 2/89 as amended in the Education Reform Act 1996: Changes for School Activities and the DfEE publication Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits (HASPEV).

4. Board and lodging

In circumstances where the Authority is responsible for making a charge the full cost will normally be charged for each pupil, subject to the policy for remission set out in paragraph 4.5 below.

5. Remissions

Where parents are in receipt of income support, income based job seekers allowance, child tax credit or support under Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, full remission of board and lodging charges must be made where the activity takes place in school hours or the activity whether or in out of school hours forms part of the syllabus for a prescribed public examination or is provided specifically to fulfil statutory duties under the National Curriculum. All parents must be made aware of this provision in relation to each activity involving board and lodging so that they may inform the school if they so wish of their circumstances. The cost may not be recovered by levying an additional charge from other pupils.

Any other remissions are a matter for the Authority or the governing body, whichever is levying the charge.

6. Voluntary Contributions

While charges cannot be levied for activities not covered by the policy outlined above, parents can be invited in writing to make voluntary contributions. Organisers of activities, in seeking such contributions, must ensure that communications inviting contributions are sensitively worded and that special care is taken so far as parents in receipt of income support, income based job seekers allowance, disabled persons tax credit or family tax credit or otherwise in demonstrable financial difficulties are concerned. Communications must make clear that the contributions are totally voluntary and that there is no obligation to contribute. Parents must also be informed that all pupils in any group participating in an activity that is not an optional extra for which charging is permissible, will be permitted to participate whether or not their parents make a voluntary contribution.

No contribution shall be sought from a parent prior to a pupil's admission to school.

7. Activities arranged during school hours by a third party.

Since it is laid down in D.E.S. Circular 2/89 "Charges for School Activities" as amended by the Education Act 1996 that neither the Local Authority nor the Governors of a school are able to take part in a transaction of this kind and that the third party (e.g. commercial organisation) has to levy charges direct on the parents, it follows that any third party will be negotiating direct with parents. The Governors have to decide, therefore, whether in principle to permit arrangements of this kind and in each individual case whether pupils and staff members should be released. Such arrangements must be entered into only with great care. Advice should be sought if there is any doubt at all as to whether what is proposed is genuinely a third party arrangement. There may also be difficulties relating to supervision, safety, insurance and contracts for any teachers involved.

8. Notes

It should be noted that any complaints made relating to charging, which are not resolved by informal means, will be dealt with under the college complaints procedure.

It should be noted that the Authority and governing bodies or headteachers have been required to make available information about their charging and remissions policies under the regulations relating to information that came into force on 1st September, 1989. Details of school hours also have to be published under the same regulations.