



**Stramongate** School

**STRAMONGATE SCHOOL**

# **CHARGING AND REMISSIONS POLICY**

<b>Approved by</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Vicky Pimblett
<b>Position:</b>	Chair of the Full Governing Board
<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	4 July 2022
<b>Proposed review date:</b>	June 2023





## Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Admissions .....	1
3	Activities Wholly During the School Day .....	1
4	Activities Wholly Outside the School Day.....	2
5	Non-residential Activities that take place Partly During and Partly Outside the School Day.....	2
6	Residential Activities.....	2
7	Optional Extras .....	3
8	Music Tuition .....	3
9	School Milk Scheme .....	4
10	Before and/or After School Care .....	5
11	Damage to Property and Breakages.....	5
12	Calculating Charges.....	5
13	Debt Recovery .....	6
14	Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluation .....	6
15	References and Associated Policies and Procedures .....	6

### Appendix 1: Template Debt Letters for Outstanding Meals Balances

## 1 Introduction

Stramongate School (hereinafter referred to as 'we' or 'the school') recognises the valuable contribution that a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including trips, clubs and residential experiences can make towards the education of our children and young people and aims to promote and provide such activities both as part of a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils and as additional optional enrichment activities.

The school strives to ensure that all young people have an equal opportunity to benefit from such activities, both on and off site and within and outside of the curriculum, regardless of their family's financial means. To ensure transparency in setting charges and also to ensure all young people are able to access all of the provision we offer, this Policy sets out our approach to charging and remissions. It has been informed by adherence to the law and by following statutory Department for Education guidance.

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that, during the school day, all young people have full and free access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The school day is defined as 8:55am until 3:15pm, excluding the lunchtime period of 11:45 to 12:50 for Reception and Key Stage 1 and 11:55 to 12:55 for Key Stage 2. A school session is equivalent to half a day i.e. either one morning session before lunch or one afternoon session afterwards.

We recognise our responsibility to ensure that the offer of activities and educational visits does not place an unnecessary burden on family finances and where we can we aim to:

- inform parents of upcoming trips and any associated costs as soon as is possible to allow parents to plan ahead;
- ensure our payments systems allow parents to pay in instalments;
- make it possible for parents to pay by instalments beyond the date of the trip when short notice opportunity arises; and
- ensure fair access to popular trips by acknowledging that offering them on a 'first pay, first served' basis discriminates against low income families and we will avoid that method of selection.

Where this Policy refers to "parents" we mean any person with parental responsibility for a child.

Where this policy refers to a "charge", this is an amount of money that must be paid in order for a child to participate in an opportunity e.g. the cost of board and lodgings on a residential visit where the family are not on the prescribed benefits listed in [Section 6](#).

Where this policy refers to a "voluntary contribution", this is an amount of money that school would like families to contribute towards the cost of an opportunity in order to make it financially viable. There is no obligation to pay a voluntary contribution but without enough contributions, an activity might be cancelled entirely.

Where this policy refers to "remission", this is an amount of money that school will or might agree to provide to fund an opportunity for a child. Governors *will* make provision for all statutory remission requirements e.g. using the relevant Pupil Premium funding to pay for a residential experience for a child with a legal entitlement. Governors *might*, if funding allows, agree to provide financial support to pupils who are not legally entitled to remission, but does so entirely at their discretion.

This policy does not apply to charges made and determined by other organisations offering activities and services on the school premises e.g. the After School Club run by or nursery education offered by Stramongate Nursery.

## 2 Admissions

No charge will be made for any aspect of the admissions process to this school.

## 3 Activities Wholly During the School Day

No charge will be made for 'education' provided during normal school hours. 'Education' is defined as including all activities related to the National Curriculum and religious education as well as the materials,

equipment and transport required to provide it. Music Tuition which is not part of the school curriculum (i.e. optional individual or small group tuition) is covered under [Section 8](#), below.

We recognise that the definition of 'education' as 'part of the National Curriculum' is not limited to learning outside the classroom experiences required as part of a specific subject e.g. geography or science fieldwork, but also includes activities designed to fulfil requirements under the National Curriculum 'inclusion statement' and others as applicable.

We will ask parents for voluntary contributions to help school fund the range of these opportunities we offer, for example, visits to a museum or historical site, but no young person will be excluded from an activity on the basis of a parent's inability or unwillingness to pay this contribution. The Governing Board reserves the right however, to cancel an activity in its entirety if insufficient voluntary contributions are received.

A charge may be made to cover the cost of ingredients or materials where parents have been informed in advance and the child will own (i.e. bring home) the finished product.

From time to time we may invite a non-school based organisation such as the Life Bus or STEM workshop providers to deliver an activity during the school day. Such organisations may wish to charge parents, who are entitled not to pay any fee and instead to ask the Head teacher to agree to their child being absent/taught elsewhere in the school for that period. In many cases, however, parents will be asked for a voluntary contribution towards the cost of the activity.

#### **4 Activities Wholly Outside the School Day**

No charge will be made for education provided outside of normal school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum or part of religious education.

We will ask parents for voluntary contributions to help school fund the range of these opportunities we offer, but no young person will be excluded from an activity on the basis of a parent's inability or unwillingness to pay this contribution. The Governing Board reserves the right, however, to cancel an activity in its entirety if insufficient voluntary contributions are received.

Other enrichment activities not required as part of the national curriculum or religious education *and* which are wholly outside school hours are Optional Extras and chargeable. Please see [Section 7](#) for more information about charging for Optional Extras.

Breakfast club, lunchtime activities, after school and other extra-curricular clubs are wholly outside of school hours and do not fall under the definition of 'education' above. Please see [Section 7](#) for more information about charging for Optional Extras.

#### **5 Non-residential Activities that take place Partly During and Partly Outside the School Day**

Where the majority of time spent on a non-residential activity is *within* normal school hours, the charging regime will be as if it happens *fully within* school hours. The majority of time is defined as 50% or more.

Where the majority of the time spent on a non-residential activity is *outside* of normal school hours, the charging regime will be as if it happens *fully outside* school hours i.e. the activity becomes an 'Optional Extra' unless it is part of the National Curriculum or part of religious education. The majority of time is defined, in this case, as more than 50%.

Travel time is included when considering the time spent on an activity only when it occurs during school time as defined in the Introduction.

#### **6 Residential Activities**

A residential visit may be wholly chargeable if it is an Optional Extra. Please see [Section 7](#) for more information about charging for Optional Extras.

If a residential visit is **not** an Optional Extra, charges will be made to the parents of pupils who wish to participate in residential activities for the cost of board and lodging with the exception of those in receipt

of certain benefits. Details of appropriate benefits can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>.

We understand that parents should be informed of this when they are asked for money. Parents are encouraged to discuss their circumstances in confidence with our School Business Manager.

Where possible, the school may also secure funding on behalf of families facing financial hardship, for example, from the YHA Breaks Programme. Any such funding will be deducted from the charge made in respect of the pupil for which the application has been made.

In order to cover any other costs associated with a residential visit e.g. activity tuition, for which charges cannot be made, parents will be asked to make a voluntary contribution. No child will be denied the opportunity of attending a residential (only where it is an Optional Extra) if the parents do not wish to or cannot contribute voluntarily. It is possible however, that unless sufficient voluntary contributions are received to cover the cost, the experience will not go ahead. The Governing Board reserves the right, to cancel an activity in its entirety if insufficient voluntary contributions are received.

Other charges will be made to cover associated costs only where the visit is an Optional Extra because the number of normal school sessions (defined in the [Introduction](#)) missed by the pupils taking part totals less than half of the number of half-days taken up by the activity. The DfE defines a half-day session as a period of 12 hours ending in noon or midnight. In such cases, parents will be told how the charges were calculated.

#### **Example 1**

Pupils are away from noon on Wednesday to 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 9 half days including 5 school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place during school hours.

#### **Example 2**

Pupils are away from school from noon on Thursday until 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 7 half days including 3 school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place outside school hours.

## **7 Optional Extras**

The Governing Board reserves the right to charge parents for activities deemed to be Optional Extras. Such activities will include, for example, attending breakfast club or receiving optional, individual or small group music tuition (outside of the National Curriculum requirements), which does not fit the definition of 'education' in [Section 3](#). Parents must make payment in order for their child to participate.

Lunchtime and after school activity clubs do not operate during normal school hours and to cover the costs of offering such opportunities a charge may be made to the parents of pupils who wish to participate in them. Families on a low income who are unable to pay such charges should speak to our School Business Manager in complete confidence.

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;
- 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 a proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, where the tuition is an optional extra.

## **8 Music Tuition**

No charge will be made for tuition for pupils learning to play musical instruments if the tuition is required as part of the National Curriculum or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at this school, or forms part of religious education. This includes the First Access to the Key Stage 2 Instrumental and Vocal Tuition Programme (Wider Opportunities) currently undertaken by our Year 3 and 4 pupils.

A charge will be made for vocal and musical instrument tuition for either an individual pupil or groups of any appropriate size, where it does not fall into the category of teaching described above, even if this tuition is undertaken during the School day.

National charging guidance is followed and no charge will be made in respect of a pupil who is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 22(l) of the Children Act 1989).

## 9 School Meals

School meals are available to pupils at a cost of £2.60 per day or free of charge to those pupils whose family is in receipt of one of the prescribed benefits listed in [Section 6](#) or who are eligible for [Universal Infant Free School Meals](#). Information on how to apply for free school meals is available from the school office and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>.

Children may order their school meals in advance or by 9:30am on the day, via our School Grid system.

We ask that parents pay promptly for school meals and encourage parents to set up a Direct Debit with School Grid to enable this. Payments may also be made via Parentmail or by cash or cheque (made payable to Stramongate School) handed to the School Office.

### **Please note:**

- Our staff will not look through any child's personal belongings for meal payments: the child or parent needs to hand them in, and our staff will give reminders to do so.
- If a cheque is returned to us unpaid, parents will be charged the relevant banking fee and may also be charged an administration fee representing 5% of the value of the returned cheque.

If a child's entitlement to free school meals has expired, a parent must provide a packed lunch or arrange for payment for any school meals taken.

If a parent has not signed up for Direct Debit via Live Kitchen, we will send a balance reminder for any outstanding balance at the end of each month.

The school is not obliged to provide a school meal where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for a free school meal has not been received. We will therefore act promptly to address financial issues at an early stage if we can, to prevent arrears accumulating.

Where our efforts to resolve payment problems within the month fail, or where a persistent debt has arisen the following procedure applies:

If a parent accumulates a school meals debt of 4 weeks or more (up to £52) or has not made a payment for any [outstanding amount](#) within 2 months, we will send a reminder email via Parentmail detailing the amount owed and asking for immediate payment. [A follow up telephone call will be made one week later.](#)

If payment is not received within 2 weeks, a second reminder email will be sent detailing the consequences of non-payment and a final date by which payment must be made. A follow up telephone call will be made one week later.

If the matter remains unresolved after one month, the parent will be sent a 3rd and final letter requesting payment and detailing the school's next steps, which could include debt recovery action.

Where a balance exceeds 2 months' meals [£104](#), [and the parents have not agreed a payment plan](#), the school will cease to provide the child with school meals with immediate effect and parents must provide a packed lunch. The School Office will call the parents if no such packed lunch is provided.

The school budget cannot tolerate a school meals debt amounting to more than one month's payment. If debts are incurred by parents, the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents instead. If a parent repeatedly fails to provide a packed lunch, or sufficient monies to cover the cost of school meals, we may need to make a referral to our Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership in case this is a sign that a pupil is experiencing a significant underlying wellbeing or safeguarding issue.

Parents in specific financial difficulties should speak to the School Business Manager in the strictest confidence. School will, in exceptional circumstances and where we believe the money will be



forthcoming, continue to provide a school meal conditional on full payment being received in a reasonable timeframe. We are committed to working together to find a suitable payment plan for any parent who asks for one. We might also be able to signpost a family to government support they may be entitled to, or to community support available in the immediate or short term.

Where no attempt is made to clear a debt, we will take appropriate debt recovery action in accordance with our normal financial procedures (see [Section 13](#) for more information).

## 10 School Milk Scheme

We understand that under *'The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014'*, we must make lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk available for drinking at least **once** a day during school hours at a fair cost or free of charge to all pupils who are entitled.

Up to one third of a pint of milk, per day, is available to all children free of charge, regardless of their family circumstances, up to the age of 5. Throughout the rest of the school, milk will also be offered free of charge to children whose family is in receipt of one of the prescribed benefits listed in [Section 6](#).

When a child has their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, a small charge will be made towards the cost of continuing to provide this single portion of milk to those parents who want their children to continue receiving it.

Children who have reached the age of 5 and have not yet reached the age of 19 can continue to receive free school milk if their family is in receipt of one of the prescribed benefits listed in [Section 6](#).

A parent who wishes their child to receive more than one portion of milk per day must pay the full cost of each additional portion, even when their first portion is free due to an entitlement.

For more information about our milk scheme and the current charges please visit <https://www.coolmilk.com/> or speak with our School Office.

## 11 Before and/or After School Care

Charges will be made for any childcare services offered to pupils before school (e.g. Breakfast club), after school and during school holidays, with the level of fees and any remissions to be set and reviewed regularly by the Governing Board or individual service provider. For information about current childcare charges please speak to the school office.

This section about childcare services does not apply to extra-curricular after school activities or activities or events run by Stramongate Nursery. Please see [Section 7](#) to understand any charges we might make from time to time, such as for ingredients used in Cooking Club.

## 12 Damage to Property and Breakages

The school will attempt to recover some or all of the costs incurred repairing wilful or culpably negligent damage or breakage of school property or such damage or breakage of property belonging to a third party where the school has been charged. The actual amount will be determined by the Head teacher.

## 13 Calculating Charges

When charges are made for any activity, whether during or outside of the school day, they will be based on the actual costs incurred, divided by the total number of pupils participating. There will be no levy on those who can pay to support those who can't. Support for cases of hardship will come through applicable funding such as pupil premium monies, specified voluntary contributions, any funds received from applications to third party charities, such as the YHA Breaks Programme, and fundraising.

Parents who would qualify for support are those in receipt of benefits as described in [Section 6](#).

The principles of best value will be applied when planning activities that incur costs to school and/or charges to parents.

## 14 Debt Recovery

It is the financial management policy of this school that all contributions will be collected in advance **in respect of services provided (e.g. breakfast club) and sales (e.g. of uniform)** and therefore it is expected that no debts will be accrued **in relation to these items**. In the unlikely event that debts are accrued, the Governing Board authorises school to take all reasonable measures to collect debts as part of its management of public funds. In doing so they will observe the relevant financial regulations and any other legal requirements.

**As outlined above, debts may accrue in relation to School meals. However, these are carefully monitored. It is the school experience that such debts are usually repaid in full, however, this approach will be kept under regular review.**

Staff will follow set school procedures to secure the collection of all debts. A debt will be written off only after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it. Only debts below that allowed for in the annual funding letter issued by the Secretary of State may be written off. The recovery of any sums above this amount will be referred first to the Governors and then to the Secretary of State for approval. If any debtor has a number of debts that together exceed the write-off limit then these will be treated as a total amount.

Unless a decision to write-off a debt is demonstrably a reasonable course of action authorisation is in place to initiate legal or other action to recover debts.

A formal record of any debts written off will be maintained and this will be retained for 7 years.

## 15 Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluation

The Monitoring Committee of the Governing Board will monitor the impact of this policy by receiving on an annual basis, a financial report on those activities that resulted in charges being levied, the subsidies awarded (without giving names) and the source of those subsidies.

## 16 References and Associated Policies and Procedures

- Education Act 1996, Section 457
- Education (School Sessions and Charges and Remissions Policies) (Information) (England) Regulations 1999
- DfE Statutory Guidance document '*Charging for school activities: Departmental advice for governing bodies, school leaders, school staff and local authorities*', May 2018
- Educational Visits Procedures
- Single Equality Scheme

## Appendix 1: Template Debt Letters for Outstanding Meals Balances

### Letter 1: First Reminder – for outstanding meals balances over £52 or where no payment has been received in 2 months

[Child's name] currently has an outstanding meals balance of £[amount]. To help us use School funds to support children's learning, we ask that outstanding meals balances are paid promptly and that outstanding balances are kept below 4 weeks' meals or £52.00. Please make arrangements to settle this balance as soon as possible. Payments can be made via School Grid, Parentmail or by cash or cheque handed to the School Office. Wherever possible, we encourage all parents / carers to sign up for the School Grid Direct Debit service.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties and would like to discuss a payment plan, please contact the School Office.

*Follow up telephone call to be made one week after to confirm receipt of first reminder and discuss*

### Letter 2: Second Reminder (2 weeks later)

[Child's name] has an outstanding meals balance of £[amount] and no payment has been received since our reminder letter of [date]. To help us use School funds to support children's learning, we ask that outstanding meals balances are paid promptly and that outstanding balances are kept below 4 weeks' meals or £52.00 and settled within one month. Payments can be made via School Grid, Parentmail or by cash or cheque handed to the School Office. Wherever possible, we encourage all parents / carers to sign up for the School Grid Direct Debit service.

If you do not settle your balance, or make the first payment of an agreed payment plan (please contact the School Business Manager to discuss) by [date 2 weeks later] we will no longer be able to provide [child] with school meals and may be required to commence debt recovery actions.

*Follow up telephone call to be made one week after second reminder letter.*

### Letter 3: Final Reminder

Despite reminders sent on [date] and [date], you still have an outstanding school meals balance of [£amount] for meals taken by [child]. We are no longer able to provide [child] with meals and, with immediate effect, you must send them to school with a packed lunch until the balance has been cleared in full.

If the debt has not been paid in full, or a payment plan agreed with a first payment made, by [date] we will commence our debt recovery process via the small claims court.

## Appendix 2: Template Debt Letters for Outstanding Breakfast Club Balances

### Letter 1: First Reminder – for outstanding breakfast club balances not paid for by the end of the month to which they relate

[Child's name] currently has an outstanding breakfast club charges of £[amount]. To help us use School funds to support children's learning, we ask that outstanding balances are paid promptly and before the end of the month to which they relate. Please make arrangements to settle this balance as soon as possible. Payments can be made via School Grid, Parentmail or by cash or cheque handed to the School Office. Wherever possible, we encourage all parents / carers to sign up for the School Grid Direct Debit service.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties and would like to discuss a payment plan, please contact the School Office.

*Follow up telephone call to be made to confirm receipt of first reminder and discuss*

### Letter 2: Second Reminder (1 week later)

[Child's name] has an outstanding breakfast club charges of [£amount] and no payment has been received since our reminder letter of [date]. To help us use School funds to support children's learning, we ask that outstanding balances are paid promptly. Please make arrangements to settle this balance as soon as possible. Payments can be made via School Grid, Parentmail or by cash or cheque handed to the School Office. Wherever possible, we encourage all parents / carers to sign up for the School Grid Direct Debit service.

If you do not settle your balance by [date 1 week later], [child] will no longer be able to attend breakfast club.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties and would like to discuss a payment plan, please contact the School Office.

*Follow up telephone call to be made one week after second reminder letter.*

### Letter 3: Final Reminder (after 2 weeks)

Despite reminders sent on [date] and [date], you still have an outstanding breakfast club charges of [£amount] in relation to [child]. [Child] will no longer be able to attend breakfast club, with immediate effect.

If the debt has not been paid in full, or a payment plan agreed with a first payment made, by [date] we will commence our debt recovery process via the small claims court.