

# Charging and Remissions Policy



## Stockham Primary School Charging and Remissions Policy: 2023

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Reviewed by:	Tyrone Rees
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Next Review Date:	25/02/2025

# Charging and Remissions Policy

## 1 Introduction

Stockham School believes that all our pupils should have an equal opportunity to benefit from school activities and visits (curricular and extra-curricular) independent of their parents' financial means. We will do our best to ensure a good range of visits and activities is offered, at the same time, we will try to minimise the financial barriers which may prevent some pupils taking advantage of the opportunities. All the education we provide during normal school hours is at no charge to pupils. We do not charge for any activity undertaken as part of the National Curriculum. The 1996 Education Act requires all schools to have a policy on charging and remissions for school activities, which must be reviewed regularly. The review date is recorded at the end of this document

## 2 Voluntary Contributions

When organising school trips or visits/visitors to enrich the curriculum and the educational experience of the children, the school invites parents to contribute to the cost. All contributions are voluntary. If we do not receive sufficient voluntary contributions, we may have to cancel a trip.

If a parent wishes their child to take part in a school trip or event but is unwilling or unable to make a voluntary contribution, we do allow the child to participate fully in the trip or activity. Sometimes the school pays additional costs in order to support the visit or requests support from the Friends of Stockham (FOS) for this purpose. Parents have a right to know how each trip is funded, and the school provides this information on request.

The following is a list of additional activities, organised by the school, which require voluntary contributions from parents. These activities are known as 'optional extras'. This list is not exhaustive:

- visits to museums;
- sporting activities which require transport expenses;
- outdoor adventure activities;
- visits to, or by, a theatre company;
- musical events;
- residential visits.

## 3 Residential visits

If the school organises a residential visit in school time, or mainly in school time, which is to provide education directly related to the National Curriculum, we calculate a charge to cover all costs associated with the trip. If we cannot raise sufficient funding through these voluntary contributions, the visit may have to be cancelled, and that aspect of the curriculum would have to be covered in other ways. The FOS have been very helpful in the past in contributing funds so that no child misses this opportunity by virtue of their financial circumstances.

## 4 Music tuition

All children study music as part of the normal school curriculum. We do not charge for this.

There is a charge for individual or small-group music tuition, since this is an additional curriculum activity, and not part of the National Curriculum. These individual or small-group lessons are taught by peripatetic music teachers. The Music Service make a

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charge for these lessons, but parents in receipt of state benefits are exempt from payment. We give parents information about additional music tuition at the start of each academic year.

## 5 Swimming

The school organises swimming lessons, and all children will have the opportunity to take part in swimming lessons organized by the school during their time with us. These take place in school time and are part of the National Curriculum. We do ask for a voluntary contribution from parents to cover the cost of transport. We inform parents when these lessons are to take place, and we seek the parents' written permission for their children to take part.

## 6 Sports

The school offers additional coaching after school in a range of sports. Where this is run by a qualified coach, who is not a member of the school staff, they make a small charge for these sessions.

## 7 Additional considerations

We recognise our responsibility to ensure that the offer of activities and educational visits does not place an unnecessary burden on family finances. To this end we try to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Topic plans include costs for trips/visitors planned for that topic. These are sent home at the end of the previous term, to aid financial planning.
- Where possible we give the parents at least 3 weeks' notice of a planned trip and its cost.
- We have established a system for parents to pay in instalments.
- When an opportunity for a trip arises at short notice it will be possible to arrange to pay by instalments beyond the date of the trip.

## 8 Confidentiality

In all events we will try our utmost to assist families experiencing difficulty in meeting the contributions requested for these trips/events. Requests for help with payments should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be handled in a confidential manner. Requests may be made to the FOS for financial support for events (not specific individuals), and therefore there is no disclosure of personal information.

## 9 Overdue Payments

### Reporting of outstanding debts

The Head Teacher will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is regularly monitored by liaising with the school finance organiser.

Suitable records will be maintained to detail individual debts and the total value of debt to the school in order that it can be determined at any time and may be reported to the Finance Committee.

The Finance Committee with the Head Teacher will review the level of outstanding debts at least three times a year to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective.

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## Debt Recovery Procedures

All correspondence with parents will state the maximum period that the school regards as reasonable before payment is overdue.

Where payment from the parent/guardian has not been received in advance or not more than 2 weeks in arrears, an invoice stating the date by which payment is due, should be issued for the full amount in order to officially set up the debt.

## Verbal and Written Reminders

Details of all reminders, whether verbal, text or in writing, will be maintained. Where a letter is issued, a copy must be retained on file.

Should a debt need to be taken beyond two reminder letters, formal written evidence may have to be produced. It is therefore important that at least one, but preferably two, written reminders are sent.

## Initial 'overdue payment' reminder

In general, the Finance and Administrator Officer will notify the parent/guardian after having built up a good relationship with the parents and an initial reminder may be informal and can be made either in person or by telephone.

The date of the initial reminder should be recorded.

## First 'overdue payment' reminder letter

A formal reminder letter should be issued 2 weeks after the informal reminder.

*If action is to proceed further, it is necessary to prove that all reasonable attempts have been made to recover the debt, and that these attempts have been made in a timely manner, i.e., at the time that the debt first became overdue.*

The date of the first 'overdue payment' reminder letter should be recorded.

## Second 'overdue payment' reminder letter

A second reminder letter will be issued 2 weeks after the first reminder letter.

The date of the second 'overdue payment' reminder letter should be recorded.

## Failure to respond to reminders / settle a debt

If after two reminders, a response or payment is not received, a letter will be sent to the debtor advising them that the matter will be referred to the Council's Legal Services Section.

At the discretion of the Head Teacher the debtor may be advised that they will be required to pay in advance for all future supplies or the supply will no longer be available to them.

This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Finance Committee.

## Negotiation of repayment terms

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue payment' reminder. If a debtor requests for

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'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Head Teacher. A record of all such agreements entered into will be retained. In all cases, a letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms for repayment.

The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

The Head Teacher will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further 'credit' and will, in future, be required to pay in advance. This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Finance Committee

## **If people are unable to pay;**

The school may reduce or cancel a debt in certain circumstances. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be carried out, taking the following factors into account.

- hardship – where paying the debt would cause financial hardship.
- ill health – where our recovery action might cause further ill health.
- time – where the debt is so large compared to the person's income that it would take an unreasonable length of time to pay it all off.
- cost – where the value of the debt is less than the cost of recovering it.

## **Costs of debt recovery**

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Head Teacher will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor.

The debtor will be formally advised in writing that they will be required to pay the additional costs incurred by the school in recovering the debt.

This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Finance Committee.

## **Bad debts**

This debt recovery policy should be cross-referenced to the Scheme for Financing Schools.

Write-off of any debt requires the written approval of the Headteacher up to the limit of £100, after which Finance Committee approval is required and then LA approval is required.

A record of the write-off, the reason for it, and the approval for it, will be retained for 7 years.

This policy is monitored by the governing body, and will be reviewed in 2 years, or earlier if necessary.

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## **Version History**

Version	Date	Description of Changes -
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1.0	May 2023	Issuance of the policy into new template with minor rewording