



CHARGING, REMISSIONS AND SCHOOL ARREARS

Role: Mrs A Tura School Business Manager	Date: June 2018	Submitted to: Resources Committee on 2 July 2018	Chair of Committee: Mr Barry Bond	Renewal Date: Summer 2019
Signed: 		Signed: 		

Green Park aims to provide access to high quality education and learning experiences, both in school and in the community and seeks to maximise each pupil's achievement as part of his or her life long learning. It is the school's aim to be a centre of Educational Excellence in the heart of the community.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 All education during school hours is free. We do not charge for any activity undertaken as part of the National Curriculum.
- 1.2 The Governing body may not charge for anything unless it has drawn up a statement of general policy on charging. It should take account of each type of activity that can be charged for and explain when charges will be made. If charges are to be made for example optional extras parents need to know how the charges will be worked out and who might qualify for help with the cost (or even get it free). This information should be made available to parents.
- 1.3 If a charge is made for each pupil it should not exceed the actual cost. If further funds need to be raised, for example to help in hardship cases, this must be voluntary contributions or general fund raising.

2 Education partly during school hours

- 2.1 Sometimes an activity can partly happen during and partly outside school hours. If most of the time spent on a non-residential activity occurs during school hours that activity counts as taking place entirely in school hours and no charge can be made.

3. Education outside of school hours

- 3.1 Parents can only be charged for activities that happen outside school hours when these activities are not a necessary part of the national curriculum or do not form part of the school's basic curriculum or religious education curriculum. In addition no charge can be made for activities that are an essential part of the syllabus for an approved examination.

- 3.2 Charges can be made for other activities that happen outside school hours if parents agree to pay. The Education Act 1996 describes these activities as 'optional extras' and it is up to the Governors to decide whether to make a charge.
- 3.3 When organising school trips or visits 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 cancel a trip. If a trip goes ahead, it may include children whose parents have not paid any contribution.
- 3.4 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. Parents have a right to know how each trip is funded. The school provides this information on request.
- 3.5 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 attractions e.g. sea life centre; safari park
 - sporting activities which require transport expenses;
 - outdoor adventurous activities e.g. narrow boat
 - visits to a theatre company e.g. theatre performance
 - Musical events e.g. Disney on Ice.

4 Residential visits

- 4.1 Special rules apply for residential activities. A trip counts as falling within school time if the number of school sessions missed by the pupil amounts to half or more of the number of half days taken up by the activity. Each school day is normally divided into two sessions and each half day is divided into two half days beginning at noon and midnight.
- 4.2 On this basis a term time trip from noon Wednesday to 9pm Sunday would last for nine half days, include five school sessions and would count as taking place in school time. A trip from noon Thursday to 9pm Sunday would count as seven half days, include three school sessions and would be classified as charging as taking place outside of school time. If 50% or more of a half day is spent on a residential trip the whole of that half day should be treated as spent on the trip.
- 4.3 If a residential activity takes place largely during school time, meets the requirements of the syllabus for a public examination or is to do with the national curriculum or religious education no charge may be made either for the education or for the cost of travel.
- 4.4 However parents can be charged for board and lodging but the cost must not exceed the actual cost of the provision.
- 4.5 Where the trip takes place wholly, or mainly, during school hour's children whose parents are in receipt of the following support payments will, in addition to having a free school lunch entitlement, also be entitled to the remission of these charges:

Income Support

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

4.6 The Headteacher should advise all parents of the right to claim free activities if they are receiving these benefits.

5 Voluntary Contributions

5.1 Although schools cannot charge for school time activities they may still invite parents and others to make a voluntary contribution (in cash or kind) to make school funds go further. All requests to parents for voluntary contributions must make it quite clear that the contributions would be voluntary. Governing bodies should also make it clear that children of parents who do not contribute will not be treated any differently. If a particular trip cannot take place without some help from parents this should be explained to them at the planning stage.

5.2 Headteachers or governing bodies may ask parents for a voluntary contribution towards the cost of:

- any activity which takes place during school hours

5.3 When there are not enough voluntary contributions to make the activity possible and there is no way to make up the shortfall, that activity must be cancelled. No child may be left out of an activity because his /her parents cannot or will not make a contribution of any kind. The school must first decide which class, or group of pupils will benefit from the activity and then look for voluntary contributions, either for that activity or by general fund raising.

6 Music

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

7 Swimming

7.1 The school organises swimming lessons for all children. These take place in school time and are part of the National Curriculum. We therefore make no charge for this activity. We inform parents when these lessons are to take place, and we ask parents for their written permission for their child to take part. We ask parents to provide the correct clothing for their child to participate in the programme.

8 School minibus

- 8.1 We do not charge for activities taking place in the school day. We do normally charge if children are transported in the minibus to an extracurricular activity. However, we use these charges only to cover the expenses of the trip, and not to make a profit.

9 School Meals

- 9.1 School Meals Under the Education Act 2011 schools are permitted to charge up to the maximum cost of a school meal. With effect from 1.9.18 Green Park School is being charged **£2.30** for each Universal Infant Free School Meal (UIFSM), **£2.94** for each Special school meal, **£2.63** for each flexible meal and **£2.83** for each paid meal they provide to visitors.
- 9.2 However the Governing body agreed to continue to pass on only part of this cost to parents/carers. The current agreed cost to parents/carers is **£2.40** per paid meal and **£1.90** per discounted/flexible meal, from 1.9.18 these rates will remain as **£2.40** and **£1.90** respectively. Children in Early Years Education or of Infant School age at present receive a free meal under the Universal Infant Free School Meal Scheme currently in place.
- 9.3 To be eligible for a discounted/flexible charge meal parents/carers must meet the criteria of being a low-income family in receipt of working tax credit as permitted under the flexible charging framework (Education Act 2011). To be eligible for a free school meal, where no charge is made for the provision of a school meal (separate to the UIFSM), parents/carers need to meet the following criteria:

Income Support

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

10. School Arrears - Recovery Procedure

It is recognised that schools occasionally face certain difficulties when collecting dinner money and therefore the following guidelines have been adopted by the schools to keep arrears to a minimum.

- 10.1 The Director for Customer & Shared Services has advised that it is uneconomical to pursue outstanding debts in respect of small amounts of money – currently below £75, through the normal invoicing system.
- 10.2 The school will pursue smaller amounts (below £75) and the Admin Officers and Headteacher will make appropriate arrangements with parents/guardians to ensure that arrears are cleared on a regular basis. The school will follow the process outlined below.
- 10.3 Where meals have been provided for a period of four days and no notification of entitlement has been received, procedures to recover payment, using the suggested documentation detailed below, should begin:-
 - 1: Day 5:- Letter at Annex A to be sent to parent/guardian/carer.
 - 2: Day 8:- Letter at Annex B to be sent to parent/guardian/carer.
 - 3: Day 10:- Letter at Annex C to be sent to parent/guardian/carer.
 - 4: If arrears continue to accrue to more than £75 (current amount), letter at Annex D to be sent to The Director for Customer and Shared Services – Financial Services.
- 10.4 Entitlement to free school meals should be pursued by the school on the 5th day, by means of a letter to the parents/guardians/carers advising that confirmation of entitlement has not been received. Refer to Annex A for recommended format.
- 10.5 If there is no response to this letter, payment for school meals arrears should be pursued by the school on 8th day, by means of a letter to the parents/guardians/carers requesting payment. Refer to Annex B for recommended format.
- 10.6 If immediate payment is not received a further letter should be sent to the parents/guardians/carers on the 10th day. Refer to Annex C for recommended format.
- 10.7 This procedure should ensure that there is no further increase to the existing arrears as parents/guardians/carers should have made alternative arrangements for their child(ren) at lunchtime. If, however, this is not the case, the decision remains with the Headteacher as to whether a meal is provided to a child without a payment being made.

The school should continue to pursue any increasing debts.
- 10.8 If arrears are allowed to accrue and reach £75 details should be forwarded to The Director for Customer and Shared Services - Financial Services, for the appropriate action to be taken. Refer to Annex D for recommended format.
- 10.9 An official invoice will be raised for all debts over £75. A charge per invoice – currently £10 will be levied against the school. This is necessary to offset costs

incurred by the Council when raising Sundry Debtor Invoices. No invoices will be raised for amounts of less than £75.

10.10 A payment plan will be offered to all parents/carers with the option of paying for this via Teachers2Parents – School Money.

11 **Monitoring and review**

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

ANNEX A

ADMINISTRATION OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS
RECOMMENDED STANDARD FORMAT FOR DAY 5
LETTER TO PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

Class: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian/Carer

I have not been able to verify that your child is entitled to free school meals. Could you please contact the City Council Pupil and Student Services Team, Children & Young People (Telephone number 551462) as they have no record of you applying for free meals. Please complete your application on-line :

<https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/article/12105/Free-School-Meals-Application>

Please note that if verification of your entitlement is not received you will be charged for any meals that your child has received at £x.xx per meal.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

ANNEX B

ADMINISTRATION OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS
RECOMMENDED STANDARD FORMAT FOR DAY 8
LETTER TO PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian/Carer

We wrote to you recently regarding your child's entitlement to free meals. Please note we do not appear to have received any payment for school meals taken as listed below.

Week Ending:	Number Of Meals:	Price Per Meal: £ p	Total Amount Due: £ p

Could you arrange to send in payment of £-.—immediately. If you are unable to make payment, please contact me at school as soon as possible to discuss the matter.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

ANNEX C

ADMINISTRATION OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS
RECOMMENDED STANDARD FORMAT FOR DAY 10
LETTER TO PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

Class: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian/Carer

Please note that I do not appear to have received any payments for meals taken as listed below.

Week Ending:	Number Of Meals:	Price Per Meal: £ p	Total Amount Due: £ p

I should be grateful if you would send in the above outstanding balance immediately. If you are unable to make payment, please contact me at school as soon as possible to discuss the matter.

Unless the balance of £ --- is paid by Monday --/--/-- it will be your responsibility to make alternative lunchtime arrangements for _____ by way of a packed lunch or other means. If there was any doubt as to whether or not this was happening I may have to refer your case to The Director for Children & Young People for further investigation.

In addition, if payment is not made by the above date, I shall have no option but to arrange for an official invoice to be issued to you by the City Council who will pursue the debt through its procedures.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER

ANNEX D

**PROGRESSION OF SCHOOL MEAL ARREARS
RECOMMENDED STANDARD FORMAT FOR
REFERRAL TO CITY COUNCIL**

Our Ref: _____

Date: _____

For the attention of Jane Williams – Customer and Shared Services – Financial Services

Director for Customer and Shared Services
Financial Services
Civic Centre
St Peters Square
Wolverhampton
WV1 1RL

Dear

Could you please arrange collection of outstanding dinner money arrears?

I have written to the child's/children's parents/guardians/carers but, as of the above date these arrears still remain unpaid.

Pupil Name	Full Name, Address and Contact Telephone/Mobile Number Of Parent/Guardian	Period of outstanding meals (From – To)	Amount Due £ p

NB The above details must be completed in full to enable an invoice to be raised.

I acknowledge a charge (currently £10) per invoice raised in excess of £75 will be charged against my budget share.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER