



Charging & Remissions Policy

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FEATHERSTONE WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHARGING POLICY

Introduction

The Teaching Staff and Governing Body of Featherstone Wood Primary School are proud of the wide range of activities offered to the pupils of the school that enhance and enrich their learning. The cost to parents of this provision is kept to a minimum, and, on many occasions, is absorbed entirely by the school. However, it is the school's policy to charge parents in respect of a few specific types of activity. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1996 and the more detailed Hertfordshire Local Education Authority policy on charging.

Activities within School Hours

Apart from school trips, for which parents are requested to make voluntary contributions, activities undertaken as part of the National Curriculum and within school hours are not charged for. The activities listed below include those whose cost is absorbed by the school. These activities are planned for and allocations are made to specific curriculum and staffing budgets.

- Visits by individuals and groups eg authors & artists / theatre & music groups
- Workshop sessions eg 1 Decision, History off the Page, Planetarium visits
- Sessions led by sports and fitness coaches eg tag rugby, badminton, rounders, keep fit
- Renewable resources required for practical subjects including those required for food technology & cooking sessions
- Group music lessons (Violin in KS2 & Ocarina in KS1)

School trips and visits are a valuable way of enriching the curriculum and educational experiences of our children. The occurrence of trips and visits for each year group is carefully planned, and regularly reviewed, to ensure breadth, balance and relevance of provision. A monitoring sheet, which records each Year Group's use of the school grounds, the local environment and day trips, is completed by Year Group Leaders. The cost of each day trip is carefully considered. Year Group Leaders are required to complete an Application for an Educational Visit form stating the reason for the trip, the relevance to the School Development Plan and justifying the costs to be incurred. Completed forms are submitted to the Headteacher for final approval.

Parents are invited to make a contribution towards the cost of day trips. All contributions are voluntary and the school will meet any outstanding costs. However, if insufficient contributions are received to make a trip viable, it may be cancelled. If a trip goes ahead, it may, if parental permission has been given, include children whose parents have not paid any contribution. These children are not treated any differently from their peers. Sometimes the school pays additional costs in order to support the visit. Parents have the right to know how each trip is funded. The school provides this information upon request. In order to keep costs for parents to a minimum, spending money for the children is not required, or accepted, on any of our day trips.

Residential Trips

Parents will be charged for the board and lodging costs of a residential trip. On residential trips which are not optional extras, and which take place during school hours, some parents may have board and lodging costs remitted. These are parents in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit provided the parent is not entitled to Working Tax Credit and their annual income, assessed by the Inland Revenue, does not exceed £16,190
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Universal Credit

Voluntary contributions will be sought for activities undertaken during residential trips which are not optional extras, as they are for day trips. Trips may be cancelled if insufficient contributions are received. Full costs are charged where a trip is deemed an optional extra.

Optional Extra Activities

These take place outside school hours and are not required in order to fulfil statutory duties relating to the National Curriculum or to religious education. Participation in these activities is made on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges that are made. These activities include:

- Teacher led after school clubs eg music, art & craft, games & ICT, sport
- After school clubs led by external providers eg Premier Sport - football & basketball
- Breakfast Club / After School Club

Lost and Damaged Equipment

Parents are asked to make a donation to cover the cost of lost or damaged equipment and resources, for example, reading books and violins /ocarinas.

Copies of School Documentation

Single copies of school documents, available through our Publication Scheme, are provided free of charge if they are only one or two pages long. A charge of 10p per sheet is made for longer documents or multiple copies (towards photocopying costs). Postage is charged for at the cost price.

FEATHERSTONE WOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

General requirements

Featherstone Wood Primary School will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debts as part of its management of public funds. 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.

Featherstone Wood Primary School's debt recovery policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the Financial Handbook for Schools and any other legal requirements. In particular:

- the Governing Body will not write-off any debt belonging to the school which exceeds £500. Any sums above this will be referred to the Director of Children Schools and Families for approval and the formal agreement of the County Council's Finance Director obtained before writing-off. (If any debtor has a number of debts which together exceed the write-off limit then these will be treated as a total amount).
- a formal record of any debts written off will be maintained and this will be retained for 7 years (the form of this record is specified below and set out in Appendix C).
- Featherstone Wood Primary School will not initiate any legal action to recover debts, but will refer any debts which it has not been able to collect (unless a decision to write-off the debt is demonstrably a reasonable course of action) to the County Secretary to consider taking legal or other action to recover the debt.
- the school will NOT write-off any debt belonging to the County Council or another party, e.g. debts for school meals. If in doubt as to the appropriate action to collect any such debts the school will seek advice promptly from officers of the County Council.

School staff are expected to follow the following procedures to secure the collection of all debts.

Recording of goods or services supplied where payment is not received in advance or 'at the point of sale'.

A record will be kept of all such supplies that details what was supplied, the value, the date(s) and the identity of the 'debtor', e.g. child, parent, hirer, etc.

Where invoices are raised these should state the date by which payment is due.

In all other cases correspondence with parents, etc. should indicate the maximum period that the school regards as reasonable before payment is overdue, e.g. contributions for a school trip should be received by, payment for items purchased should be sent to the school office by, etc.

The Headteacher should determine what the reasonable 'credit period' is if this is not otherwise specified, e.g. the governors may stipulate the maximum settlement period for school lettings in a separate 'premises hiring policy'.

Initial reminders

Initial reminders may be informal and made either in person (when a parent comes to collect/drop off the child) or by telephone. Normally, the secretary will undertake this having built up a good relationship with the parents.

First reminder letter

A formal reminder letter should be issued after '2' weeks from any informal reminder / the date of supply, e.g. two weeks.

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.

Second reminder letter

A second reminder letter will be issued in '1' weeks after the First reminder letter.

Using reminder letters

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

Failure to respond to reminders / settle a debt

If no response is received from the reminders issued, a letter will be sent to the debtor advising them that the matter will be referred to the County Secretary's Department, Legal and Administration.

At the discretion of the Headteacher/Resources Committee, 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.

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 reminder'.

If a debtor asks for 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Headteacher/Resources Committee. Debts > £100 may only be entered into with the approval of the Resources Committee. A record of all such agreements will be kept. A letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms (unless this is not judged necessary). The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

The Headteacher/Resources Committee will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further 'credit' and will be required to pay in advance in future.

Costs of debt recovery

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Headteacher/Resources Committee will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor. This decision and its basis will be recorded.

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

Reporting of outstanding debt levels

The School Business Manager will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is known / can be determined at any time.

The Headteacher will review the level of outstanding debts every term to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective. Debts in excess of £100 will be brought to the attention of the Resources Committee.

(Monitoring of outstanding debts may be differentiated by type, e.g. if school meal debts prove more of a problem than those for lettings of premises then the frequency and degree of monitoring should reflect this).

Bad debts

The school's debt recovery policy has been cross-referenced to the Schedule of Financial Delegation.

Write-off of any debt <£100 requires the written approval of the Headteacher. The writing off of debts between £100 and £500 requires the written approval of the Resources Committee.

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

Any debt belonging to the County Council will be referred to the appropriate officer for consideration/action without delay once the school has taken reasonable measures to collect the debt (i.e. has followed the reminder notification procedures set out above).

In the case of school meal debts the procedure set out in the School Meals & Milk Administration Handbook will be followed.