

Ringwood School

Charges and Remissions Policy

POLICY DETAILS

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Charging and Remissions Policy

Statutory guidance is set out by the Department for Education (DfE) on the area of charges and remissions for schools, which Ringwood School fully complies with. One of the requirements is for a school to have a documented charges & remissions policy.

This document sets out the most significant points of that guidance and the policy applied in Ringwood School.

1. The Statutory Guidance

Guidance and regulations for schools are set out in a number of documents from the Department for Education. This includes the Ringwood School Master Funding Agreement, which is in Appendix 2. The most comprehensive information, however, comes from the “Charging for School Activities” document, that is included as Appendix 1.

2. The Policy Applying for Ringwood School

How the guidance is applied within Ringwood School is set out below, with a fuller list of specific examples:

- i) No charges will be made for:
 - a. Activities or materials that are a necessary part of the Ringwood School curriculum or syllabus
 - b. Exam entrance fees for subjects the school is preparing students for
 - c. Any trip that takes place mainly or wholly in the school day
- ii) Charges will, or may, be requested for items such as, but not limited to:
 - a. Materials, books, instruments or equipment:
 - i. where the student / parent wishes to own the resource.
 - In some subjects students find it helpful to buy a copy of a core text book or script in order to annotate it
 - In some subjects, like Art, Textiles, Technology, students create items using materials provided by the school. The school reserves the right to charge appropriately if students or parents want to take them home at the end of the project
 - ii. where recommended and sourced by the school (typically to obtain the best price for parents) which are not used as part of normal curriculum teaching.

- This typically might be additional revision materials or particular scientific calculators
- b. Exams:
- i. Entry fees if:
 - the exam is not on the school's set list,
 - the pupil was not taught for the exam at the school, or
 - a student fails without good reason to complete the requirements of the public exam and where the school paid the entry fee
 - ii. Exam re-sits (if the School is not specifically teaching for re-sit)
 - iii. Exam re-marks, unless mark is altered and fee is returned by exam board
- c. Visits:
- i. When more than 50% of time is outside of school hours, unless it is a requirement for the curriculum
 - very few of the trips undertaken are a strict requirement of the curriculum, but that will be made clear in the trip invitation letter
 - will range from including residential trips in the holidays (like ski-ing trips) to visits to theatres or other activities that happen after the school day
 - ii. Board & lodging for residential trips that take place mainly within school hours or are a curriculum requirement (unless student family qualifies for free school meals)
 - iii. Any costs that the school cannot recover or avoid in relation to a school trip in the situation where the pupil withdraws from a trip voluntarily or is withdrawn by the school as a result of behavioural concerns
- d. Optional activities outside of the school day, even if of a relevant and valuable educational nature:
- i. This might include sports fixtures, clubs, school productions, supervised homework or other activities
 - ii. With most of these activities presently resourced by existing staff giving their time and minimal incremental other costs, the school generally does not apply charges, but it nonetheless reserves the right to do so at any stage, with prior notification
- e. Music tuition where additional to normal school teaching and where specifically signed up to by pupils / parents
- f. School lockers

- g. Damage to property and breakages, where caused by wilful or reckless behaviour of the student or parent
 - h. Replacing items that are either lost or not-returned, such as textbooks, exercise books, student lunch cards, bus passes, library books.
- iii) Other items parents are expected to pay for include:
- a. School meals, unless they have successfully applied for free school meals, in which case an amount will be applied to the pupil's catering account each day for use just on that day
 - b. School uniform, including required PE kit
 - c. Transport to school where that is provided by the school but is not an obligation of the school and where parents specifically sign up for the service
 - d. Basic stationary like pens / pencils /calculators, but excluding exercise books.
- iv) Voluntary contributions

Voluntary contributions are requested to finance activities or materials from time to time, fully in line with the guiding principles set out in section 2. iii) above.

Voluntary contributions are most frequently used to finance trips that are taking place largely in school hours and which therefore fall to not be chargeable. These trips are not mandatory for the curriculum but the school offers a broad range to enrich the education of the pupils. The school does not in most cases use main school funds to finance these trips and therefore it is made clear when requesting contributions, that we reserve the right to cancel the trip if contributions are not sufficient.

It is important to note that voluntary contributions are considered only optional up to the point when total contributions pledged has been assessed and a decision taken for the trip to proceed. Beyond that, the voluntary contribution offered at the outset will be considered a commitment to pay the amount pledged.

Further clarity on how the level of financial contributions is arrived at for trips is set out in Appendix 3.

Beyond trips, voluntary contributions are also asked for funding other activities or, in some cases, towards certain curriculum courses where the school considers that it offers students a more expensive range of materials or other educational delivery in order to enhance and enrich the educational experience for students, beyond the minimum requirement for the course.

3. Remissions / Financial Assistance Available

Recognising that all the curriculum education and most other activities are either non chargeable or for which only voluntary contributions are requested, for the limited areas where charges are applicable, the following assistance is available:

- i) Specific Area of Assistance include:
 - a. School meals in Years 7-11: free school meal allowance – if meet the eligibility test
 - b. Uniform for Years 7-11: if eligible for free school meals, then a voucher is provided by the school of £120 towards the initial uniform purchase in Year 7, and again in either Year 9 or 10, if still eligible, when the uniform has typically been grown out of.
 - c. For chargeable school trips, the School set aside a budget to provide students that qualify for free school meals to have financial assistance to support participation up to a maximum of 50% of the school trip cost (the assistance being capped at a maximum of £500).

The assistance is not an entitlement but can be applied for and will be considered for approval by the Assistant Headteacher in charge of Trips and/or Headteacher who will take into consideration attendance, behaviour and perceived value of the trip to the student as well as overall spend on financial assistance in year relative to the Budget set aside.

Eligibility for allowance to financial assistance does not mean the student is automatically entitled to go on the trip. If it is an over-subscribed trip the student will still need to participate in the ballot along with other students to determine the final list of participants.

In exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher have discretion to offer financial assistance in excess of the limits above if the value of that support is considered to merit this.

- d. For 6th form: there is a 16-19 Bursary Fund, described further in a separate policy document, which offers financial assistance where hardship is limiting participation in education including the provision of free school meals.

ii) Other Assistance

The School does offer a small general hardship fund for families in serious financial need, on which enquiries can be made either through the student's Head of Year, or to either the School Operations Manager or Deputy Head.

Beyond that, the school may make remissions available for any chargeable area at its discretion to meet the needs of individual students. Any application for that should be made via the relevant Head of Year, who will consider and make recommendation to the Head teacher and Head of Business & Finance for final endorsement.

Appendix 1: Summary of “Charging for School Activities” document by DfE – May 2018

There are four main areas covered by this document being:

- i) Educational Activities
- ii) Optional Extras
- iii) Voluntary Contributions
- iv) School Trips & Visits

The key points of these are addressed in turn below:

i) Educational Activities

a. Schools **cannot** charge for:

- Education provided during school hours, including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment needed
- Education provided outside of school hours if it is part of the national curriculum / syllabus / religious education
- Music tuition, unless provided at the request of the pupil’s parent
- Exam entry (for school taught courses)
- Exam re-sits (if the pupil is being taught for the re-sit at school)

b. Schools **can** charge for:

- Any materials, books, instruments or equipment, where the pupil’s parent wishes him/her to own them
- Optional extras (see below)
- Music tuition, if provided additionally at the request of the pupil’s parent, but not if part an essential part of curriculum or for a “looked after” child

ii) Optional Extras

Charges may be made when “optional extras” are provided. These are typically defined as covering:

- Education provided outside of school time, that is not part of national curriculum / syllabus / religious education
- Exam re-sits (if the school has not specifically taught for the re-sit)
- Board & lodging for a pupil on a residential trip (subject to limitations)
- Extended day services offered to pupils (eg breakfast club, after school clubs, supervised homework)

- Transport to school, if provided by the school where the local authority does not have a statutory obligation to provide it

In these situations, there is also guidance on how charges can be made, with key points being:

- The charge for an individual cannot exceed the cost for that individual – no subsidising of other pupils is permitted
- Express prior consent from the parents to the activity and charging

iii) Voluntary Contributions

Nothing in the legislation prevents a school asking for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any school activity. However:

- If the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, this needs to be made clear to parents at the outset
- There can be no obligation, or pressure imposed on parents to make the contribution
- No child should be excluded from an activity simply because that pupil's parents are unwilling or unable to pay
- If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised, and the school has no other sources of funding for it, then the activity must be cancelled
- All pupils should have an equal chance of going on the activity and the policy for allocating places to the activity must be made clear at the outset.

iv) School Trips

Additional clarity is provided as follows:

a. A school cannot charge for a visit if:

- 50% or more of the visit takes place during school hours, or
- A visit is a necessary part of the curriculum, whenever it takes place

However, if the trip is a residential, then board & lodging can be charged for, other than for those families in receipt of specified benefits.

b. A school can charge in relation to a visit:

- If the visit is not a necessary part of the curriculum and less than 50% of the visit takes place during school hours, or
- For the board & lodging of a residential trip which falls mainly in school hours, subject to family not being in receipt of specified benefits, and

this point needs to be made clear to families at the outset of each trip, so those families are not deterred from applying for financial reasons.

Appendix 2: Ringwood School Master Funding Agreement (2020) (on School website)

Section 2 states:

“The Academy Trust must comply with sections 402, 450-457 and 459-462 of the Education Act 1996 with regard to public examinations, charging, providing information, inviting voluntary contributions and recovering civil debts, as if the Academy were a maintained school.”

and

“There must be no charge for admission to or attendance at the Academy and the Academy will only charge pupils where the law allows maintained schools to charge.”

and

“Clause above does not prevent the Academy Trust receiving funds from an LA or a charity in respect of the admission and attendance of a pupil with SEN to the Academy.”

and

“Notwithstanding clause above, the Academy Trust may charge people who are not registered pupils at the Academy for education provided or use of facilities”

Appendix 3: Other Guidance on Voluntary Contributions and Refunds for Trips

In setting the level of voluntary contribution requested from parents:

- They are based on realistic, but sensibly cautious, assumptions in respect of costings and number of students expected to go on the trip
- Some allowance, upto a maximum of 5%, will be made for overall contributions falling short of the overall amount we ask from each party – ie there is a small element of potential cross subsidising of students
- Whilst no cost is included for teaching staff that lead or accompany visits, we do include in the trip costing an estimate of expected supply costs to cover teaching staff whilst away and a 5% central services fee, which goes towards a specific administrative resource that the school employs for this area

In contrast, when setting the price for a chargeable trip, no allowance is included for:

- Cross subsidising other students
- Supply costs to cover any staff that are missing school time

Refunds:

At the end of any trip, a surplus may arise, perhaps from more students attending, or actual costs being lower than forecast. A refund will be made if that surplus (net of school contributions if applicable) is more than £5 per person or 20% of the original trip price, whichever is lower (and subject to a minimum refund of £2.50) and made in an equitable manner (in relation to contributions made for individual students).

In a situation where there has been a default on parental committed payments, this will be taken into consideration in assessing the surplus to refund only up to the level of total cross subsidising of students being a maximum of 5% of full trip price.

Ballots:

- If a trip is oversubscribed, a ballot will be held to determine the disadvantaged students participation (to ensure a minimum representation on the trip consistent with the % of such students in the full cohort). All remaining students will then be balloted for the remaining places.
- If a student misses out on a ballot for one trip, no additional priority will be given to that student should they be in a ballot for a subsequent trip – all trips will be viewed individually.