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Birchwood High School

Charging and Remissions Policy

We believe 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. This charging and remissions policy describes how we will do our best to ensure a good range of visits and activities is offered and, at the same time, try to minimise the financial barriers which may prevent some pupils taking full advantage of the opportunities.

This policy has been informed by Sections 449-462 of the Education Act 1996 and the DfE document "*Charging for school activities. Advice for governing bodies, school leaders, school staff, and local authorities (October 2014)*". The policy complements the school's equality policy, curriculum policy, educational visits policy and the teaching and learning policy.

The Principal, Staff and Governors will ensure that the following applies:

1. No charges can be made for:

- An admission application to the school;
- Education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment);
- Education provided outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education;
- Instrumental or vocal tuition for pupils leaning individually or in groups unless the tuition is provided at the request for the parent. In this case charges may not exceed the cost of provision including the cost of staff providing the tuition. The school reserves the right to ask for a voluntary contribution of 50% of the cost of providing music tuition for a prescribed public examination for which the pupil is being prepared at school;
- Entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school;
- Examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school. Although, if a pupil fails, without good reason, to meet any examination requirement for a syllabus a charge will be made;
- Transport of students to other premises where the school has arranged for pupils to be educated and transport that enables a pupil to meet an examination requirement when he/she has been prepared for the examination at the school;
- Transport that the local education authority has a statutory obligation to provide;
- Education provided on any trip that takes place during school hours;
- Education provided on any trip that takes place outside school hours if it is part of the National Curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of the school's basic curriculum for religious education;
- Supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential trip;
- Transport provided in connection with an educational trip.

2. Activities for which the school can charge

a) School trips

i) School trips outside school hours

- Non-residential activities) (other than those listed on previous page) which take place outside school hours, but only if the majority of the time spent on that activity takes place outside school hours (time spent on travel counts in this calculation if the travel itself occurs during school hours).

ii) Residential activities

- Board and lodging costs (but only those costs) of residential trips deemed to take place during school time. However, pupils whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits (see point 3 below) will not be charged for board and lodging costs.
- Residential trips deemed to take place outside school time (other than those listed on previous page).

Is a residential trip in or out of school time?

If the number of school sessions on a residential trip is equal to or greater than 50 percent of the number of half days spent on the trip it is deemed to have taken place during school hours (even if some activities take place late in the evening). Whatever the starting and finishing times of the school day, regulations require that the school day is divided into two sessions. A "half day" means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day.

Note - when any trip is arranged parents will be notified of the policy for allocating places.

b) Music tuition

- Music tuition that is at the request of parents for individuals or groups of pupils.

c) Optional extras

Activities which can be charged for (with the exception of board and lodging for residential trips) are regarded as "optional extras". Charges will not exceed the actual cost (per pupil) of provision and parental agreement will be obtained before a charge is made.

i) Materials and revision guides

- Where a pupil or parent wishes to retain items produced as a result of art, craft and design, or design and technology, a charge may be levied for the cost of the materials used. In the case of Food Technology, pupils usually provide their own ingredients, but if the pupil forgets, the school provides the ingredients and levies a charge. Textbooks are provided free of charge, but in some subjects, additional revision guides are available, for which a charge is made.

ii) Music tuition

- Charges will be made for music tuition for individual pupils or groups of pupils to cover the cost, or a proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument or singing, where the tuition is an optional extra. HCC operates a remissions policy for students in remissions category (see section 3 below). Details of the scheme are available from the Hertfordshire Music Service Customer Service Centre 01438 844848

d) Damage to/loss of property

- A charge will be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of school property (including premises, furniture, equipment, books or materials), the charge to be the cost of replacement or repair, or such lower cost as the Principal may decide;
- A charge will be levied in respect of wilful damage, neglect or loss of property (including premises, furniture, equipment, books or materials) belonging to a third party, where the cost has been recharged to the school. The charge to be the cost of replacement or repair, or such lower cost as the Principal may decide.

e) Voluntary contributions

- Voluntary contributions will be requested for all residential and non residential trips and visits but students whose parents/guardians are unable or unwilling to pay will not be discriminated against. However, where there are insufficient voluntary contributions to make an activity possible, the activity may be cancelled.

3. Remissions

- In order to remove financial barriers from disadvantaged pupils, the governing body has agreed that some activities and visits where charges can legally be made will be offered at no charge or a reduced charge to parents in particular circumstances. Criteria for qualification for remission are as follows:
- 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 parents/carers are 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 parents/carers stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if parents/carers apply on or after 1 April 2018 and have household income less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)
- The eligibility criteria that entitle families to an exemption from paying for the cost of board and lodging on residential visits have been aligned with free school meals eligibility criteria. Eligible students may have all or part of the cost of trips and other optional extras paid from the Pupil Premium Grant while funding permits
- The Principal, Finance & Estates Committee or Governing Body may decide not to levy charges in respect of a particular activity, if it feels it is reasonable in the circumstances.
- Additional categories of parents may apply for help with some costs in some circumstances in order that no pupil will be unfairly disadvantaged. Applications will be considered and support may be granted at the discretion of the Principal.

4. Additional considerations

- The governing body recognises its responsibility to ensure that the offer of activities and educational visits does not place an unnecessary burden on family finances. To this end we will try to adhere to the following guidelines:
 - where possible we shall publish a list of visits (and their approximate cost) at the beginning of the school year so that parents can plan ahead;
 - we will establish a system for parents to pay in instalments in advance of school trips taking place;
 - 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;
 - we acknowledge that offering opportunities on a "first pay, first served" basis discriminates against pupils from families on lower incomes and we will avoid that method of selection;
 - At the end of each journey or visit, the surplus or deficit will be calculated and confirmed against the ledger records. If the journey or visit makes a surplus, then parents and guardians will be offered a refund where surplus is 10% or more of the contribution per head and the refund value is £10 or greater.

5. Catering

- The school charges for school meals. Payment is made through ParentPay, a Company which facilitates a secure online system that enables parents to pay money into an account via their individual username and password payments are recorded against the pupil account and meals are then purchased via the cashless catering system and the meal cost deducted from the pupil's account.
- Pupils who receive free school meals have their catering accounts automatically topped up each day and can use the cashless system to purchase food.