Charging and remissions policy

November 2026

Version 3.4

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1 Introduction

1.1 Sonning Common Primary 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/carers/guardians' 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.

1.2 The 1996 Education Act (sections 449-462) requires all schools to have a policy on charging and remissions for school activities. This policy follows government guidance on charging for school activities. This policy identifies activities for which:

- voluntary contributions may be requested
- charges will be made
- charges will not be made.
- charges may be waived

2 What can schools charge for?

2.1 Schools cannot charge for:

- an admission application to any state funded 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
- instrumental or vocal tuition, for pupils learning individually or in groups, unless the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent/carer/guardian.

2.2 Schools can charge for:

- any materials, books, instruments, or equipment, where the child's parent/carer/guardian wishes him/her to own them;
- optional extras (eg transport, residential visits board and lodgings, extended day provision); for more information see section 4)
- music and vocal tuition (provided the tuition is provided at the request of the parent/carer/guardian)

3 Voluntary contributions

3.1 Separately from the matter of charging, schools may always seek voluntary contributions in order to offer a wide variety of experiences to pupils. This includes materials, equipment, and transport provided in school hours by the school to carry pupils between the school and an activity.

3.2 All requests for voluntary contributions will emphasise their voluntary nature and the fact that pupils of parents/carers/guardians who do not make such contributions will be treated no differently from those who have. If insufficient contributions are received, the trip or activity may have to be cancelled.

3.3 When any trip is arranged, parents/carers/guardians will be notified of the policy for allocating places. This should recognise that parents/carers/guardians may not be able to pay quickly and may have to budget for the trip over a reasonable period of time.

4 Optional Extras

4.1 Charges may be made for optional activities that are known as 'Optional Extras'. Any charges made will not exceed the actual cost (per pupil) of provision.

4.2 Optional extras are:

- education provided outside of school time that is not:
  - *Part of the national curriculum*
  - *Part of religious education*

- Transport (other than transport to take the pupil to school)
- Board and lodgings for a pupil on a residential visit
- Extended day services (eg breakfast club, after school clubs)

4.3 In calculating the cost of optional extras an amount may be included in relation to:

- any materials, books, instruments, or equipment provided in connection with the optional extra;
- the cost of buildings and accommodation;
- non-teaching staff;
- teaching staff engaged under contracts for services purely to provide an optional extra, this includes supply teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra; and
- the cost, or an appropriate proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide tuition in playing a musical instrument, or vocal tuition, where the tuition is an optional extra.

5 What will Sonning Common Primary School charge parents/carers/guardians for?

5.1 Sonning Common Primary School can make charges for activities as indicated below. Parental/carer/guardian agreement will be obtained before a charge is made.

Activity	Details	Help available?
Charges may be made for any materials, books, instruments, or equipment, ***where a parent/carer/guardian wishes their child to own them***;	eg clay model – a charge to cover the cost of the clay.	Voluntary contribution
Charges may be made for vocal or instrumental tuition provided either individually, or to groups of any size, provided that the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent/carer/guardian.	eg children learning an instrument with Music for Schools or with the piano or guitar tutor	Remission for targeted free school meals (see section 7)
Charges will be made for the board and lodging component of residential trips	Eg Year 4 and Year 6 residential trips with overnight stays	Remission for targeted free school meals (see section 7

6 Remissions

6.1 To remove financial barriers from 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 depending on parents/carers/guardians' circumstances. This section sets out the circumstances in which such charges will be waived.

6.2 Where a school activity requires pupils to spend nights away from home, the school is allowed to make a charge for board and lodging. This is with the exception of pupils who are eligible for targeted free school meals. The head teacher will inform all parents/carers/guardians of the right to claim free board and lodging if they are receiving these benefits.

7 Families qualifying for remission or help with charges

7.1 From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit attending these schools will be entitled to receive a free meal so now there are 2 categories of benefits-based free school meals:

- ***Targeted FSM**, which continues to be based on the existing threshold, covering pupils in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of £7,400 or less*
- ***Expanded FSM**, a new category covering pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit*

7.2 If remission or help is available in relation to a particular charge it is indicated in the right hand column of the table above. Children entitled to **Targeted Free School Meals** (NOT Expanded or Universal Free School Meals) will qualify for remission.

7.3 Your child qualifies for **Targeted FSM** (which unlocks additional school funding like **Pupil Premium** and the **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme**) if your household receives one of the qualifying benefits and meets the low-income threshold:

- ***Universal Credit:** Household net earned income of **£7,400 or less** per year (after tax and not including benefits) (roughly £617 or less per month).*
- ***Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)***
- ***Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)***
- ***Income Support***
- ***Guarantee element of Pension Credit***
- ***Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999***
- ***Child Tax Credit** (provided you are **not** also receiving Working Tax Credit and have an annual taxable income of £16,105 or less)*
- ***Working Tax Credit run-on** (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)*

7.4 Your child does not qualify for remission if they are only eligible for Expanded FSMs

- ***Universal Credit Expansion:** All children in state-funded schools whose households receive **Universal Credit** qualify for a free school meal, **regardless of household income**.*
- *Important distinction: If your Universal Credit earnings are **above £7,400**, your child receives the **meal only** (Expanded FSM). It **does not** attract extra Pupil Premium funding or HAF eligibility for the school and does not qualify for remission from charges.*

8 Is a school visit in or out of school time?

8.1 Where an activity takes place partly during and partly outside school hours, there is a basis for determining whether it is deemed to take place either inside or outside school hours. However, a charge can only be made for the activity outside school hours if it is not part of the national curriculum.

8.2 For non residential activities, if 50% or more of the time spent on the activity occurs during school hours, it is deemed to take place during school hours. Time spent on travel counts in this calculation if the travel itself occurs during school hours. School hours do not include the break in the middle of the day. Where less than 50% of the time spent on an activity falls during school hours, it is deemed to have taken place outside school hours. For example, an excursion might require pupils to leave school an hour before the school day ends, but the activity does not end until late in the evening.

8.3 For residential visits if the number of school sessions on a school visit is equal to or greater than 50% of the number of half days spent on the visit 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 2 sessions. A "half day" means any period of 12 hours ending with noon or midnight on any day.

9 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/carers/guardians can plan ahead
- We have established a system for parents/carers/guardians 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
- 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.

10 Dissemination

The Policy is available on the school web site and a paper copy of the policy is available from the school admin office on request.

11 Reviewing the Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head teacher and monitored by the Governing Body to ensure that the Policy is relevant and up to date.