Charging and Remissions Policy

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Date of last review:

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1. Introduction

Ashton Primary School is committed to providing a broad, balanced, ambitious and inclusive education for all pupils.

The school recognises the valuable contribution that educational visits, visitors, practical experiences, enrichment activities, clubs, music tuition and residential experiences can make to pupils' education and personal development.

At the same time, the school recognises that the cost of school activities can place pressure on families. No pupil should be disadvantaged, embarrassed or excluded from an educational opportunity because their family is unable or unwilling to make a voluntary contribution.

This policy explains:

- activities for which the school cannot charge;
- circumstances in which charges may be made;
- arrangements for voluntary contributions;
- optional extras;
- educational visits and residential visits;
- music tuition;
- extended services;
- materials and equipment;
- remission of charges; and
- support available to families experiencing financial difficulty.

2. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with regard to:

- sections 449–462 of the Education Act 1996;
- the Education Act 2002;
- the Education (Prescribed Public Examinations) Regulations;
- the Education (Charges for Early Years Provision) Regulations 2012;
- current Department for Education guidance on *Charging for school activities*;
- current Department for Education guidance on free school meals; and

- relevant Lancashire County Council guidance and financial procedures.

The Governing Body is responsible for determining the school's charging and remissions policy.

No charge will be made unless it is permitted by law and by this policy.

3. Principles

Ashton Primary School will apply the following principles:

- education provided during school hours will normally be free;
- pupils will not be treated differently according to whether their parents make a voluntary contribution;
- no pupil will be excluded from an activity taking place during school hours because their parent is unwilling or unable to make a voluntary contribution;
- requests for voluntary contributions will clearly state that they are voluntary;
- charges will not exceed the actual cost of providing the activity;
- the school will seek to keep costs to families reasonable;
- arrangements will take account of families experiencing financial hardship;
- remission arrangements will be applied fairly and confidentially; and
- the school will comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

EDUCATION PROVIDED FREE OF CHARGE

4. Education During School Hours

There will be **no charge for education provided wholly or mainly during school hours**, except where legislation specifically permits a charge.

This includes the cost of:

- teaching;
- materials;
- books;
- instruments;
- resources;

- equipment; and
- transport provided during school hours to take pupils between the school and an educational activity where the school is responsible for providing that education.

Parents will not be required to purchase resources that are necessary for their child to access the curriculum.

This maintains the principle contained within Ashton's previous policy that education and the necessary materials, books, instruments and equipment provided during school hours should be free.

5. Education Outside School Hours

There will be no charge for education provided outside school hours where it is:

- part of the National Curriculum;
- part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination for which the pupil is being prepared by the school; or
- part of statutory religious education.

Whether an activity taking place outside normal school hours is chargeable will therefore depend upon the nature and purpose of the activity.

6. School Curriculum Resources

The school will provide without charge books, materials, equipment and other resources necessary for pupils to access education for which the school is prohibited from charging.

This may include, as appropriate:

- exercise books;
- textbooks;
- reading books;
- stationery required for a particular activity;
- art materials;
- DT materials;
- computing equipment;
- mathematical equipment;

- musical instruments used as part of curriculum provision;
- science resources; and
- other curriculum materials.

The school may invite parents to provide optional personal equipment where appropriate, but a pupil will not be disadvantaged where their parent does not do so.

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

7. Voluntary Contributions

The school may ask parents and carers for a **voluntary contribution** towards the cost of activities or experiences which enhance pupils' education.

This may include contributions towards:

- educational visits;
- visiting performers;
- workshops;
- theatre visits;
- museums;
- transport;
- enrichment experiences;
- special events; and
- other activities.

Any request will make clear that the contribution is **voluntary**.

There is no legal obligation for a parent or carer to contribute.

8. Pupils Whose Parents Do Not Contribute

A pupil will not be:

- excluded from an activity;
- treated differently;
- prevented from participating;
- made to feel embarrassed;

- identified to other pupils or parents; or
- provided with a different educational experience

because their parent or carer has not made a voluntary contribution.

Staff must handle information about contributions sensitively and confidentially.

9. Insufficient Voluntary Contributions

Some activities may only be financially viable if sufficient voluntary contributions are received.

Where this applies, communication with parents will explain that although contributions are voluntary, the activity may not be able to proceed if insufficient funding is received and the school cannot meet the shortfall from another source.

If insufficient contributions are received, the school may:

- subsidise the activity where appropriate funding is available;
- seek alternative funding;
- amend the activity to reduce the cost;
- postpone the activity; or
- cancel the activity.

This does not change the voluntary nature of the contribution.

This principle was included in Ashton's previous policy and remains appropriate.

10. Suggested Contributions

Where a voluntary contribution is requested, the school may suggest an amount based upon the anticipated cost of the activity.

The amount requested will be calculated reasonably and transparently.

A suggested contribution must not be presented as a compulsory charge where the law requires it to be voluntary.

Parents may choose to contribute:

- the suggested amount;
- a smaller amount;
- a larger amount; or

- nothing.

CHARGES

11. Activities for Which the School May Charge

Subject to the requirements of the Education Act 1996 and this policy, the school may make charges for:

- certain optional extras;
- residential visits;
- certain music tuition;
- materials or equipment which parents wish their child to own;
- certain extended services;
- certain activities provided outside school hours;
- damage to or loss of school property in appropriate circumstances; and
- other activities where charging is expressly permitted by law.

Any charge will be reasonable and will not exceed the cost permitted by legislation.

12. Optional Extras

Charges may be made for certain activities which are regarded as **optional extras**.

This may include education provided outside school hours which is not:

- part of the National Curriculum;
- part of a prescribed examination syllabus for which the pupil is being prepared by the school; or
- part of statutory religious education.

Other permitted optional extras may include:

- transport which is not required to enable a pupil to receive education;
- board and lodging on residential visits;
- certain extended-day services; and
- other activities permitted under charging legislation.

Where an optional extra is chargeable, parental agreement will be obtained before the pupil participates where required.

13. Calculating Charges for Optional Extras

Where a charge is made for an optional extra, it may include an appropriate amount towards the cost of:

- materials;
- books;
- instruments;
- equipment;
- buildings and accommodation;
- non-teaching staff;
- teaching staff engaged specifically to provide the optional extra under a contract for services;
- supply teachers engaged specifically to provide the optional extra; and
- relevant music tuition where legislation permits.

The charge for an individual pupil will not exceed the actual cost attributable to providing the optional extra.

The school will not seek to make a profit from charges made to parents.

Nor will the school increase the charge to one family simply to recover costs resulting from another family being unable or unwilling to participate.

EDUCATIONAL VISITS

14. Educational Visits During School Hours

Where an educational visit takes place during school hours and forms part of the education provided by the school, parents will not be charged for the education provided.

The school may, however, request a **voluntary contribution** towards costs such as:

- admission;
- transport;
- workshops;

- activities; and
- other costs associated with the visit.

No pupil will be excluded because their parent does not make the voluntary contribution.

Where insufficient voluntary contributions are received, the visit may be cancelled if the school cannot reasonably fund the shortfall.

15. Transport for Educational Activities

No charge will be made for transport where the school or local authority is legally required to provide it to enable a pupil to receive education.

Where transport forms part of a school-time educational visit, the school may request a voluntary contribution towards the cost where appropriate.

Charges may be made for transport connected with an optional extra where legislation permits.

RESIDENTIAL VISITS

16. Residential Visits

Where the school arranges a residential visit, different charging arrangements may apply to the educational element and the cost of board and lodging.

Where the residential visit takes place wholly or mainly during school hours, the school will not charge for education provided as part of the visit.

The school may request voluntary contributions towards other eligible costs.

17. Board and Lodging

The school may make a charge for the actual cost of **board and lodging** during a residential visit.

The charge will not exceed the actual cost incurred.

Where statutory remission arrangements apply, eligible parents will not be required to pay the board and lodging charge.

Parents will be informed of available remission arrangements when details of a residential visit are provided.

REMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

18. Remission of Residential Board and Lodging Charges

Parents and carers who meet the relevant statutory criteria are entitled to remission of charges for board and lodging on qualifying residential visits.

Eligibility will be determined in accordance with the **current statutory criteria in force at the time of the visit**.

This is important because eligibility criteria may change nationally.

The school will make parents aware of the availability of remission and how they can request support.

19. Free School Meals and the 2026 Changes

From the beginning of the **2026–2027 academic year**, eligibility for free school meals has been expanded nationally.

All children from households receiving **Universal Credit** are now entitled to free school meals, regardless of household earnings, subject to the required claim and verification process. Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils also continue to receive Universal Infant Free School Meals.

However, not every entitlement or additional source of support uses exactly the same eligibility test.

For example, the Government continues to distinguish between expanded free school meal eligibility and **targeted free school meal eligibility** for some other forms of support and funding.

The school will therefore apply the **current statutory eligibility criteria relevant to the particular remission**, rather than assuming that receipt of any form of free school meal automatically creates every other entitlement.

20. Additional Remission by Ashton Primary School

The Governing Body recognises that some families may experience financial hardship even where they do not meet statutory remission criteria.

The school may therefore, subject to available funding, choose to:

- remit a charge completely;
- reduce a charge;

- subsidise an activity;
- use appropriate school funding;
- use Pupil Premium funding where expenditure is consistent with the purpose and conditions of that funding;
- seek charitable or other funding; or
- agree an appropriate payment arrangement.

Any additional remission will be considered according to the individual circumstances and available school resources.

There is no automatic entitlement to discretionary remission unless a statutory entitlement applies.

21. Families Experiencing Financial Difficulty

Ashton Primary School does not want financial hardship to prevent a child from benefiting from school opportunities.

Parents who are concerned about the cost of an activity are encouraged to speak confidentially to the school.

The school will consider whether support can reasonably be provided.

Requests will be handled:

- sensitively;
- respectfully;
- confidentially; and
- without drawing unnecessary attention to the pupil.

Children should never be made to feel responsible for their family's financial circumstances.

22. Pupil Premium

Pupil Premium funding is allocated to schools to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. It is **not an individual personal budget for each eligible pupil**.

The school may use Pupil Premium funding to support participation in educational or enrichment opportunities where this is consistent with the school's Pupil Premium strategy and applicable funding conditions.

Eligibility for Pupil Premium does not automatically mean that every charge or voluntary contribution will be paid by the school.

MUSIC

23. Music Tuition

There will be no charge for instrumental or vocal tuition where charging is prohibited by law.

Charges may be made for certain instrumental or vocal tuition provided individually or in groups where:

- the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent; and
- charging is permitted by current legislation.

The school will make parents aware of the cost before tuition begins.

Where music tuition forms part of the National Curriculum or falls within another statutory exemption, no charge will be made.

24. Musical Instruments

Where school-owned musical instruments are provided for use as part of free curriculum provision, no charge will normally be made for their use.

Where optional music tuition, instrument hire or another additional music service is provided, a charge may be made where permitted.

Any arrangements will be communicated clearly to parents before they agree to participate.

MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT AND PROPERTY

25. Materials and Finished Products

The school will provide materials necessary for curriculum education free of charge.

However, where a parent wishes their child to **own a finished product**, the school may charge for the materials or ingredients used in producing it where permitted by law.

Examples might include a particular DT or craft item which the pupil takes home.

Any such arrangement will be made clear before the activity.

No pupil will be prevented from participating in the educational element of an activity because their parent does not wish to purchase the finished product.

26. Ingredients for Food and Cooking Activities

Where food preparation or cooking forms part of curriculum education, the school will ensure that pupils can participate without a compulsory charge for necessary ingredients.

The school may:

- provide ingredients;
- invite parents to provide ingredients voluntarily; or
- request a voluntary contribution towards ingredients.

Where parents wish their child to take home and own the finished product, the school may make an appropriate charge for ingredients where permitted.

27. Damage to or Loss of School Property

The school may seek payment from parents where school property has been:

- wilfully damaged;
- deliberately destroyed;
- lost as a result of inappropriate behaviour; or
- damaged or lost in circumstances where it is reasonable to seek recovery of the cost.

This may include:

- books;
- equipment;
- computing devices;
- musical instruments;
- furniture; or
- other school property.

Any request for payment will be reasonable and proportionate and will take account of:

- the circumstances;
- the pupil's age;
- SEND;
- whether the damage was deliberate;

- the actual cost of repair or replacement; and
- any relevant family circumstances.

The school will not automatically charge for accidental damage resulting from ordinary use.

EXTENDED AND ADDITIONAL SERVICES

28. Breakfast and After-School Provision

The school may charge for extended services provided outside the free educational entitlement where legislation permits.

This may include:

- breakfast clubs;
- after-school childcare;
- additional supervised activities; and
- other extended services.

Any charges will be communicated clearly to parents.

Where a service is provided by an external organisation, that organisation may operate its own charging arrangements.

29. Extra-Curricular Clubs

Some extra-curricular clubs may be provided without charge.

A charge may be made where a club:

- constitutes an optional extra;
- is provided by an external organisation;
- involves additional specialist tuition;
- requires specific resources; or
- otherwise falls within an area where charging is legally permitted.

Parents will be informed of any charge before registering their child.

The school will consider reasonable arrangements to support disadvantaged pupils where appropriate and where funding permits.

OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

30. School Meals

Charges may be made for school meals where pupils are not entitled to receive them free of charge.

No charge will be made where a pupil has an entitlement to a free school meal under current national arrangements.

From September 2026, all children in households receiving Universal Credit qualify for free school meals once eligibility has been appropriately claimed and verified.

Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils continue to be entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals.

Meal charges, where applicable, will be communicated separately to parents.

31. School Photographs

Where an external photography company provides individual or class photographs, parents may choose whether to purchase them.

Purchase is entirely optional.

The photographer or school may collect payment according to the arrangements agreed with the provider.

32. Activities Provided by External Organisations

Where an external organisation provides an optional activity independently of the school's statutory educational provision, the organisation may make a charge.

The school will make clear to parents where:

- the activity is optional;
- an external provider is responsible;
- a charge applies; and
- participation requires parental agreement.

33. Lettings and Community Use

The Governing Body may make charges for the use of school premises, facilities or services by external organisations or members of the community in accordance with the school's Lettings Policy and relevant financial arrangements.

Such charges are separate from charges made to parents for pupils' education.

34. Equality and Inclusion

The school will ensure that charging arrangements do not unlawfully discriminate against pupils.

Particular consideration will be given to:

- pupils with SEND;
- disabled pupils;
- disadvantaged pupils;
- looked-after and previously looked-after children;
- pupils experiencing temporary family hardship; and
- other pupils who may face barriers to participation.

Reasonable adjustments required under the Equality Act 2010 will not be treated as optional extras for which a disabled pupil is charged simply because they require an adjustment.

35. Confidentiality

Information concerning:

- financial hardship;
- benefits;
- free school meals;
- remission applications; and
- inability or unwillingness to make voluntary contributions

will be treated sensitively.

Staff will not discuss a family's financial circumstances with other pupils or parents.

Pupils should not be used to pursue unpaid contributions or charges in a manner which could cause embarrassment.

36. Refunds

Where parents have paid a charge for an activity which is subsequently cancelled, the school will normally refund the amount paid, subject to any unavoidable non-refundable costs where parents were informed of these arrangements in advance.

Where a pupil is unable to participate after payment has been made, refunds will depend upon whether the school can recover or avoid the relevant costs.

Refund arrangements will be communicated appropriately.

37. Governing Body Responsibilities

The Governing Body will:

- approve the Charging and Remissions Policy;
- ensure charging arrangements comply with legislation;
- determine the school's remission arrangements;
- ensure statutory entitlements are protected;
- monitor the financial impact of school activities where appropriate;
- ensure pupils are not unfairly disadvantaged by charging arrangements; and
- review the policy regularly.

The Governing Body may delegate appropriate operational decisions in accordance with its scheme of delegation.

38. Headteacher Responsibilities

The Headteacher will:

- ensure this policy is implemented consistently;
- ensure staff understand which activities may and may not be charged for;
- ensure communications with parents distinguish clearly between charges and voluntary contributions;
- ensure appropriate remission arrangements are applied;
- ensure families experiencing hardship are treated sensitively;
- ensure charges are reasonable and lawful;

- oversee appropriate financial procedures; and
- refer significant or unusual charging decisions to the Governing Body where appropriate.

39. Staff Responsibilities

Staff organising activities must establish before communicating with parents whether:

- the activity is part of free educational provision;
- a voluntary contribution may be requested;
- a compulsory charge is legally permitted;
- remission arrangements apply;
- additional financial support may be available; and
- appropriate approval has been obtained.

Staff must not describe a voluntary contribution as a compulsory payment.

40. Complaints

Parents or carers who believe that a charge has been made incorrectly should contact the school in the first instance.

The school will review the charge against this policy and current legislation.

Where the matter cannot be resolved informally, parents may use the school's Complaints Policy.

41. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Educational Visits Policy;
- Equality Policy;
- SEND Policy;
- Pupil Premium Strategy;
- Lettings Policy;
- Complaints Policy; and

- relevant financial procedures.

42. Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body will keep the school's charging and remission arrangements under review.

This policy will be formally reviewed **annually**, or sooner where:

- legislation changes;
- Department for Education guidance changes;
- national eligibility criteria change;
- Lancashire County Council arrangements change; or
- school provision changes significantly.

The next scheduled review will take place in **September 2027**.