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# Charging and Remissions Policy

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## Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is clarity regarding both charging and remissions. The policy has been informed by DfE guidelines.

In accordance with these guidelines St James' CE Primary School:

- Will not charge for books, materials, equipment and transport provided during school hours by the Local Authority (LA) or by the school to carry pupils between the school and an activity.
- Will not charge for any activities which take place in school time, apart from instrumental tuition for individual pupils or pupils in groups of up to four.
- May charge for school-time activities (including visits out of school and visitors into school) by inviting parents/carers to make voluntary contributions to enable school funds go further. Children of parents who do not contribute will not be treated differently from those who do make contributions.
- Will have the right to cancel an activity if there are insufficient voluntary contributions to make the activity possible.
- May charge for board and lodgings on residential courses, except for pupils whose parents are receiving:
  - Income Support;
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
  - Child Tax Credit (providing that they are not entitled to Working Tax credits and have an annual income, assessed by HM Revenue & Customs, that does not exceed the current threshold)
  - Guarantee element of State Pension Credit.

The Headteacher will inform parents of the right to claim free activities if they are receiving these benefits.

- May permit organisations to charge parents when such an organisation is acting independently of the School or the LA, to arrange an activity to take place during school hours and parents want their children to join in the activity.
- May charge for activities (optional extras), which happen outside School hours when these activities are not necessary part of the National Curriculum.
- Parents are asked to make a contribution towards replacing damaged or lost school property caused wilfully or negligently by their children.

## 1. Responsibilities

### a) The School Business Manager is required to ensure that:

- i. All invoices outstanding are accurately recorded and maintained.
- ii. The *Late Payment* procedure is followed.
- iii. There is documentary evidence of all the steps undertaken by the school to recover the debt.
- iv. For all outstanding debts, a final statement/letter is issued to all persons liable for the charge, which states further action will be taken if this account remains outstanding.

### b) The Governing Body will:

- i. **Review** where necessary the arrangements for debt recovery **annually**.
- ii. **Recommend** the maximum level of debt, which any family would be able to **incur to be a maximum of three weeks payments of usual services**.
- iii. Approve the School undertaking legal action.
- iv. Include in the minutes of the Governing Body meeting their approval to pursue any outstanding debt.
- v. Ensure the anonymity of the families involved is preserved at all times.

## 2. Pursuance of Debt:

The School **will**:

- Not pass onto the debtor any costs incurred in pursuing the outstanding debt.
- Give the debtor appropriate notification and time to pay the outstanding charge.
- Send the debtor as a minimum a final statement/letter, which states that this is the final notice and that further action will be taken.

## 3. Waiving of Debt

The Headteacher can waive or reduce the debt, where it is believed the debtor:

- Is experiencing genuine financial hardship and is able to provide supporting evidence to confirm this.
- A recommendation to write off a debt can be made when all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted, and where it is not cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action.
- Any action related to an outstanding debt or the waiving/reducing of a debt should be dealt with confidentially between the debtor and the School Business Manager and/or Headteacher.

## **Appendix 1: Payment Process for Parents/Carers- School Lunches**

1. Parents are notified of the termly amount prior to the start of each term.
2. All parents are made aware of the expectation to pay for school lunches on a Monday in advance, either weekly or termly, via the Newsletter.
3. All parents are required to make their payments using the online system.
4. Payments are uploaded on a Friday for the following week; alternatively parents may use the top-up function to pay a different amount.

### **Late Payment Process**

1. Any parents whose accounts are still unpaid by Thursday are sent a text message as a polite reminder that they have not settled their account.
2. Accounts that remain in serious arrears (of more than three weeks of usual services) are followed up either by telephone or in person to determine the reason and to negotiate a timescale to make payment.
3. If an account remains unpaid after the agreed timescale then a letter will be sent home to the parent/carer requesting either immediate payment or that the child brings a packed lunch until the arrears are settled. A meeting maybe requested by school (see Appendix 3 for information on meeting format)
4. In the case of repeated serious late payment the School reserves the right to request that the parent provides a packed lunch for their child indefinitely.
5. At the start of each term, parents who have an outstanding amount on their account, without following an agreed payment plan in place, may have this provision withdrawn and will be referred to the Governing Body (this information will be shared whilst preserving anonymity).
6. A service<sup>1</sup> will not resume until the full debt is cleared. This means that if there is unpaid debt relating to school lunches the child/children will not be able to return to school lunches until all the debt is cleared.

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<sup>1</sup> "service" this relates to school lunch, breakfast club and after school club (Jammy Dodgers)

## **Appendix 2: Payment Process for Parents/Carers-After School Club/Breakfast Club Accounts:**

When parents sign up for place at the either ASC or BC they are informed of the procedure for making payments. Places are offered subject to parents' agreement of these terms.

1. Parents are notified of the cost of sessions when they sign the agreement for extended services.
2. All parents are made aware of the expectation to pay for their booked sessions, even in the event of absence, either weekly or termly on a Monday in advance of the week.
3. Payments are uploaded to online accounts during the first week of term.
4. Any parents whose accounts are still unpaid by Thursday are then sent a text message as a polite reminder and to encourage payment.
5. Accounts that remain in arrears of three weeks usual service are followed up either by telephone or in person to determine the reason and to negotiate a timescale to make payment.
6. If an account remains unpaid after the agreed timescale then a letter will be sent home to the parent/carer requesting either immediate payment otherwise the service will be withdrawn.
7. In the case of repeated serious late payments the School reserves the right to withdraw the service.
8. At the start of each term, any parents who have an outstanding amount on their Extended Schools account, without an agreed payment plan in place, may have the service withdrawn. The service will not resume until the full debt is cleared in full.

**Appendix 3: Meeting between school and parent/carer relating to debt**

1. The purpose of this meeting will be to ascertain the financial situation and offer a suitable solution to the problem.
2. Depending on the situation there could be a variety of different next steps. These will be discussed in full at the meeting. In extreme cases of hardship the Headteacher will decide the course of action.
3. After the meeting a letter detailing the agreements will be sent.