



Oakridge Schools Federation Charging and Remissions Policy

Approved by:	Full Governing Body
Review frequency:	Every 3 years
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Next review date due:	Autumn 2029

This policy sets out Oakridge Schools Federation approach to charging for school activities and to remitting charges for pupils who cannot afford them.

It complies with the Education Act 1996 (sections 449–462) and follow-up guidance for maintained schools, and the Department for Education guidance on charging for school activities. As a maintained school, the governing body is responsible for setting and approving this policy.

Purpose

- Ensure clarity, transparency and fairness in applying charges and remissions.
- Ensure that no pupil is denied access to a broad and balanced curriculum because of inability to pay.
- Set out roles, responsibilities and procedures for implementing charges and remissions.

Scope

Applies to all pupils registered at Oakridge Schools Federation and to any activity organised by the school or on behalf of the school, whether in or out of school hours.

Covers:

- Education provided during school hours
- Activities partly or wholly outside school hours
- Materials and ingredients for practical subjects
- Residential visits
- Transport
- Lettings and community use
- Music tuition
- Optional extras and voluntary contributions

Principles

- Education provided during school hours is free and compulsory education for registered pupils.
- The school may charge for optional extras, residential activities that are not essential to the curriculum, and some extended services.
- The school will make clear which activities are chargeable and which are not.
- No child will be prevented from taking part in an activity because their parents cannot or will not pay; remissions will be applied as set out below.
- Charging decisions will be consistent, transparent, and compliant with law.

Definitions

- Charge: a fee the school asks parents/carers to pay for school activities.
- Remission: full or partial cancellation of a charge for pupils who meet eligibility criteria.
- Optional extra: an activity that is not part of the national curriculum, is not required for religious education, and is not part of a prescribed examination syllabus.
- Voluntary contribution: a payment requested from parents to support an activity; voluntary contributions are not compulsory.

Charging – what the school will charge for

1. Education provided during school hours
 - No charge will be made for tuition or instruction that is part of the national curriculum, statutory religious education, or for examination entries where the pupil has been prepared by the school.
2. Voluntary contributions
 - The school may ask for voluntary contributions for activities that take place in school hours (e.g., visits, special events). Such contributions:
 - Must be genuinely voluntary.
 - Must not be a condition of a pupil's participation.
 - Will be used to fund the activity and explained in advance.
 - If insufficient voluntary contributions are received, activities may be cancelled.
3. Optional extras
 - The school may charge for optional extras, which include:
 - Activities outside school hours (or inside where not part of the national curriculum) such as clubs run by external providers.
 - Residential visits are mainly for leisure or not essential to the curriculum.
 - Music tuition where provided individually or to small groups and is not part of the national curriculum.
 - Charges will cover the cost of provision (staffing, travel, board and lodging, materials, insurance, etc.) but will not exceed the actual cost per pupil.
4. Residential visits
 - Charges will be made for board, lodging and travel for visits where more than 50% of the time is outside school hours and where the visit is not essential to the curriculum.
 - Where the visit is within school hours and essential to the curriculum, no charge will be made for education or travel, though voluntary contributions may be requested.
 - Pupils whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits are entitled to remission for board and lodging costs; see Remissions section.
5. Materials, ingredients and equipment
 - The school may charge for materials if parents have indicated they wish to own the finished product (e.g., textiles, design and technology projects).
6. Breakages and damage
 - The school may charge parents for the cost of replacing damage caused deliberately or negligently by a pupil, or for lost or damaged school property (including devices loaned to pupils).
7. Transport
 - The school will not charge for transporting registered pupils to or from school where the transport is required by law.
 - Charges may be made for transport on optional activities or non-statutory visits.

8. Lettings and community use

- The school will charge for hire of premises outside school hours in line with the governing body's lettings policy and local charging schedule.
- Charges will cover utilities, staffing, cleaning and wear-and-tear.

Remissions – when charges will be reduced or waived

- The school will offer full or partial remission to parents in financial hardship and other eligible groups to ensure access to activities for all pupils.
- Eligibility for full remissions:
 - Pupils whose parents/carers are in receipt of:
 - Universal Credit (with a net household income threshold as set by DfE guidance at review time),
 - Income Support,
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance,
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance,
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999,
 - Guaranteed State Pension Credit,
 - Child Tax Credit (provided they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit) with income below the current threshold,
 - Working Tax Credit run-on (as applicable), or
 - Other qualifying benefits as set out in DfE guidance.
 - Pupils who are looked after by the local authority (CLA).
- Discretionary remissions:
 - The Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors (or a nominated committee), may grant partial or full remission in other cases of family hardship.
 - Remissions may cover part or whole of the charge (e.g., board and lodging for residential trips).
- Process for applying for remissions:
 - Parents must meet with the Headteacher, providing evidence of eligibility (benefit letters, free school meal eligibility, etc.).
 - Applications will be handled confidentially and sympathetically.
 - Decisions will be discussed with an explanation of the remission applied.

Payment, invoicing and refunds

- Payment methods:
 - The school will provide secure payment methods (online payments, cash, cheques where accepted) and will communicate accepted methods to families.
- Payment timescales:
 - Timetabled payment deadlines will be published for each chargeable activity.
 - If payments are not received by the due date, the school will follow up with reminders. The school reserves the right to refuse participation where full payment is not received, except where remissions apply.

- Refunds:
 - Refunds will be made if an activity is cancelled by the school, or in other exceptional circumstances.
 - If a pupil withdraws, refunds will be discretionary and depend on irrecoverable costs incurred.
 - The school's charging letters will clearly explain the refund policy for each activity.
- Debt recovery:

The school will adopt a fair but firm approach to recovering outstanding charges. Persistent non-payment without reasonable cause will be escalated to governors and may involve the local authority.

Voluntary contributions, fundraising and subsidies

- The school will actively seek voluntary contributions and fundraising to enrich the curriculum and subsidise activities for disadvantaged pupils.
- The school will ensure transparency about how contributions are used and report on use of funds where appropriate.
- Pupils will not be identified publicly as not contributing or as benefiting from remissions.

Approvals and costings

- Teachers or lead staff planning activities must submit a proposed budget to the School Business Manager sufficiently in advance to allow accurate price-setting.
- Costings must include all relevant elements (travel, insurance, staff costs, entrance fees, materials, VAT if applicable).
- For subsidised activities, the school will identify potential sources of funding (Pupil Premium, PTA, LA grants).

Handling sensitive cases

- Staff must avoid identifying or stigmatising pupils receiving remissions.
- Where confidentiality is crucial (e.g., pupils on benefits), relevant staff will have access on a need-to-know basis only.

Record keeping and audit

- The school will maintain accurate records of:
 - All charges raised and collected
 - All voluntary contributions received and how they were spent
 - All remissions granted and the evidence provided (stored securely)
- These records will be available for internal audit, governors and local authority review.

Equality, inclusion and safeguarding

- The school is committed to equality of opportunity and inclusion. Charging and remissions arrangements will be applied consistently and fairly.
- No pupil will be refused access to a school activity due to inability to pay.
- Safeguarding:
 - Where activities involve external providers, the school will ensure appropriate safeguarding checks and insurance are in place; charging arrangements will include these costs where applicable.

Complaints and appeals

- Any complaint about charging or remission decisions should be made in writing to the Headteacher in the first instance.

If unresolved, the matter may be referred to the Chair of Governors and then to the governing body complaints procedure