Charging and Remissions Policy

Approved by	Headteacher	Date Approved	
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1 Rationale

St Martin's C of E Schools aims to provide equality and excellence for all in order to promote the highest possible standards therefore no child will be disadvantaged, in terms of their statutory entitlement, by their parents' or guardians' inability or unwillingness to pay.

This policy statement is drawn up in accordance with the requirements of the Education (School Sessions and Charges and Remissions Policies) (Information) (England) Regulations 1999 and sections 449 – 462 of the Education Act 1996. Reference has been made to DfE guidance on charging for school activities (revised May 2018). It will assist and support staff in the organisation of school activities by providing clear guidance on procedures and will assure parents of consistent practice.

2 Definitions

Charge – an amount the school can legally expect a parent to pay to cover the cost of activities itemised at section 3 below

Remission – a reduction in the amount chargeable, usually due to hardship. In some cases, particularly statutory remission, the amount of the charge maybe reduced to zero

Statutory – required by law

Voluntary Contribution - an amount the parent chooses to pay for the benefit of the school or in support of a school activity

3 Charging

a. No charge will be made for admission applications, books, materials, equipment, instruments or incidental transport provided in connection with the National Curriculum, statutory religious education or in preparation for Public Examinations.

b. Charges may be made to parents or guardians for the following:

- Board and lodging on residential visits, except where families are entitled to statutory remission (see section below Statutory Remission and Hardship).

- Activities wholly or mainly (in excess of 50%) outside school hours, except where provided in connection with the National Curriculum, statutory religious education or in preparation for public examinations.
- Public examinations where:
    - the examination is on the set list, but the student was not prepared for it at the school,
    - the examination is not on the set list, but the school arranges for the student to take it,
    - a student fails, without good reason, to complete the requirements of any public examination where the governing body or LA originally paid or agreed to pay the entry fee, (this can include failure to attend the exam).
- Individual music tuition, unless required on a syllabus for a public examination.
- The costs of repairing damaged or replacing lost school property caused by a student's carelessness or vandalism.
- Transport costs to and from optional extra activities and work experience placements.
- Requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act or under the Data Protection Act. The charges will be in line with the relevant regulations and guidance.

c. Staff costs may be included where a separate contract exists to provide an activity as an optional extra.

d. Charges will only be made for actual costs. It will not include any element of subsidy for any other students.

e. Participation in any optional extra activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement is therefore a necessary pre-requisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

Please see Appendix 1 for specific examples of activities that may incur charges.

4 Statutory Remission and Hardship

a. When charges are normally payable, no student is to be disadvantaged by their parents' or guardians' inability to pay.

- Families in receipt of the following benefits are entitled to statutory remission and therefore are exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging on residential trips. Published by HMRC for current tax year:
- Universal Credit - if you apply your household income must be less than the published annual threshold (after tax and not including any benefits you get)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit provided the parent is not entitled to Working Tax Credit and their annual income does not exceed the published annual threshold

- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Working tax credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after qualification for Working tax credit stops

This is the same criteria as eligibility for free school meals.

c. The Headteacher has delegated authority to remit some or all of the charges in cases of genuine hardship. Any request for exemption from charges must be made in writing, in the first instance, to the Headteacher. When requests are considered the school will take into account the following criteria, and decisions will be made on a case by case basis:
   - Qualify for statutory remission (see section 2),
   - Any monies owed by the family to the school from previous trips, visits or activities,
   - Student participation in school activities.

d. Decisions regarding remissions due to hardship will be at the discretion of the Headteacher, who may award full or part remission, personalised payment plan or a mixture of part remission and a personalised payment plan. Funding from the school in cases of hardship will only be awarded once documentary evidence (where appropriate) of statutory remission has been obtained. Once finalised, decisions regarding remission or variations to charges and/or voluntary contributions will be confirmed by the school in writing.

5 Voluntary Contributions

a. This policy does not restrict the school from seeking voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or in support of any school activity, whether during or outside school hours, residential or non-residential.

b. Requests for contributions will clearly state:
   - that the contribution is voluntary,
   - the purpose for which the contribution is being requested,
   - that students will not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents or guardians have made any contribution in response to the request.

c. If an activity/trip etc. cannot be funded without certain voluntary contributions and these are not forthcoming, the activity/trip might not take place.

d. Parents and guardians may be asked if they wish to make regular voluntary contributions to school funds. The choice to make regular payments by standing order will be offered however, the request letter will clearly state that this is optional and can be cancelled at any time.

e. Where a contribution is requested for trips or visits a breakdown of the costs will be given to parents at the time the activity is proposed and may include transport, entry fees, tuition, insurance, additional staffing costs, administrative costs at 5% (includes transaction fee and trip administration fee) and an amount to cover emergencies agreed by the Headteacher.

f. The contributions sought will not exceed the estimated costs of the activity and all monies received will be used for the purpose for which they have been requested. They could be used to subsidise students from low-income families, or the cost of travel for accompanying teachers at the discretion of the Headteacher.

g. Final accounts must be submitted to the Business Leader or Educational Visits Co-ordinator and made available to parents on request, within three months of completion of the trip.

6 Refunds

a. Refunds, where the actual costs of the trip are less than anticipated, will be made automatically if the difference is in excess £10.00 per student.

b. Refunds, should a trip be cancelled by the school, will be made automatically.

c. All other requests for refunds must be made in writing to the Headteacher by the parent/guardian.

d. The decision regarding any refund will be at the discretion of the Headteacher who may award a full or part refund.

e. Refunds for students withdrawing from chargeable activities may be made as long as the overall running of the activity has not been affected. Refunds will not be made on non-refundable deposits paid and an administration cost may be incurred when refunds are requested. A breakdown of the calculation of a refund will be given to parents.

f. Refunds will be paid by electronic transfer where possible (cheques may be used as alternative)unless a request to transfer the refund to another school event and/or catering account is received.

g. Refunds may be subject to receipt of documentary evidence, where appropriate, if a case of hardship applies at the time of the trip or if the reason for withdrawal is medical. Where a refund is requested due to hardship please see the section on statutory remission and hardship for the criteria which will be used to determine the decision.

7 Unpaid Charges

a. Implementation of this policy ensures that:

- all charges are clearly laid out in communications with parents or guardians; by returning consent or order forms a parent/guardian is agreeing to meet these charges in full,
- no student is to be disadvantaged by their parents or guardian's inability to pay; see section 4 for the details of hardship provision,
- any variations to payment arrangements are to be agreed with the school in advance of the activity and confirmed by the school in writing, as detailed in section 4.

b. Where charges have not been met, the school reserves the right to refuse to allow participation in future chargeable activities or make purchases from the school until the outstanding balance has been cleared.

c. This does not affect a student's statutory entitlement.

d. The school reserves the right to apply an admin charge of £10.00 for cheques returned from the bank as unpaid (bounced cheques)

8 Monitoring

a. The Headteacher or the Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) will have responsibility for checking and authorising all correspondence involving requests for payments or voluntary contributions before they are sent to parents or guardians.

b. The accounts for all activities involving either charges or voluntary contributions will be signed off by either the Head teacher or the Educational Visits Co-ordinator.

9 Complaints

Any comments or complaints will be dealt with through the school's normal complaints procedure.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School Lettings Policy.

10 Contribution to School Fund

The school fund exists to enhance the learning experiences of the children at the schools. It could be used to provide, for example, visits from theatre companies, or curriculum related workshops.

Contributions to the school fund are made for example by, local charities and the Church, or commission payments from uniform sales or the school photographer.

Parents may be asked to make voluntary contributions to the School Fund. All pupils will be treated equally regardless of whether the school receive contributions: the suggested voluntary contribution may vary by school. For St Martin's C of E Schools , the suggested voluntary contribution is £25 per pupil or £40 per family.

Appendix 1 Further examples of items/activities the school will/may charge for

Possible Primary List

- Uniform
- School meals
- Stationary
- Leavers Hoodies
- Plays
- Enrichment activities
- Lost/damaged books and equipment

Hire of facilities – see Lettings Policy