

St. Mark's Catholic School



CHARGING AND REMISSIONS POLICY

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Our Mission:

St Mark's is a Catholic community inspired by Gospel values where relationships are rooted in love. At the heart of our mission is a commitment to live out our faith and a dedication to embrace excellence in all that we do. We believe in education that instils possibilities, transforms lives and enables all to fulfil their potential.

The essence of the Education Reform Act 1988 (and in accordance with the Education Act 1996 sections 449-462 and Charging for school activities 2018) is

- School governing bodies and local authorities, subject to the limited exceptions referred to in this advice, cannot charge for education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments or other equipment).
- Schools must ensure that they inform parents on low incomes and in receipt of the benefits listed at the end of this document of the support available to them when being asked for contributions towards the cost of school visits.

School governing bodies and local authorities, cannot charge for:

- an admission application to any state funded;
- 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, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- instrumental or vocal tuition, for pupils learning individually or in groups, unless the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent;
- entry for a prescribed public examination, if the pupil has been prepared for it at the school; and
- examination re-sit(s) if the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit(s) at the school.

Schools and local authorities can charge for:

- any materials, books, instruments, or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him/her to own them;
- optional extras (see page below);
- music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances (see page 6);
- community facilities

Optional extras

Charges may be made for some activities that are known as 'optional extras'. Where an optional extra is being provided, a charge can be made for providing materials, books, instruments, or equipment. Optional extras are:

- education provided outside of school time that is not:
 - a) part of the national curriculum;
 - b) part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school;
 - c) part of religious education.
- examination entry fee(s) if the registered pupil has not been prepared for the examination(s) at the school;
- transport (other than transport that is required to take the pupil to school or to other premises where the local authority/governing body have arranged for the pupil to be provided with education);
- board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit;
- extended day services offered to pupils (for example breakfast club, after-school clubs, tea and supervised homework sessions).

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.

Any charge made in respect of individual pupils must not exceed the actual cost of providing the optional extra activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating. It must not therefore include an element of subsidy for any other pupils wishing to participate in the activity whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge.

Furthermore, in cases where a small proportion of the activity takes place during school hours the charge cannot include the cost of alternative provision for those pupils who do not wish to participate. Therefore, no charge can be made for supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential visit.

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 prerequisite for the provision of an optional extra where charges will be made.

Voluntary contributions

Nothing in legislation prevents a school governing body or local authority from asking for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any school activities. However, if the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, the governing body or head teacher should make this clear to parents at the outset. The governing body or head teacher must also make it clear to parents that there is no obligation to make any contribution.

It is important to note that no child should be excluded from an activity simply because his or her parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund a visit, or the school cannot fund it from some other source, then it must be cancelled. Schools must ensure that they make this clear to parents. If a parent is unwilling or unable to pay, their child must still be given an equal chance to go on the visit. School will make it clear to parents at the outset what their policy for allocating places on school visits will be.

When making requests for voluntary contributions, parents must not be made to feel pressurised into paying as it is voluntary and not compulsory. Schools should avoid sending colour coded letters to parents as a reminder to make payments and direct debit or standing order mandates should not be sent to parents when requesting contributions.

Music Tuition

Although the law states that, in general, all education provided during school hours must be free, instrumental and vocal music tuition is an exception to that rule.

The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007 set out the circumstances in which charges can be made for tuition in playing a musical instrument, including vocal tuition.

They allow charging for tuition in larger groups than was previously the case. Charges may now 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. Charges may not exceed the cost of the provision, including the cost of the staff who provide the tuition.

The regulations make clear that charging may not be made if the teaching is either an essential part of the national curriculum. They also make clear that no charge may be made in respect of a pupil who is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).

Transport

Schools cannot charge for:

- transporting registered pupils to or from the school premises, where the local education authority has a statutory obligation to provide transport;
- transporting registered pupils to other premises where the governing body or local authority has arranged for pupils to be educated;
- transport that enables a pupil to

meet an examination requirement when he has been prepared for that examination at the school; and

- transport provided in connection with an educational visit.

Charging and remissions policies

The remissions policy will be set out in any circumstances in which the school or local authority propose to remit (wholly or partly) any charge which would otherwise be payable to them in accordance with their charging policy. For example, a school may decide to provide an Italian language evening class as an optional extra. The governing body may decide to reduce the cost for those children whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits.

Residential visits

Schools cannot charge for:

- education provided on any visit that takes place during school hours;
- education provided on any visit that takes place outside school hours if it is part of the national curriculum, or part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education;
- supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying pupils on a residential visit. Schools can charge for:
- board and lodging and the charge must not exceed the actual cost. When a school informs parents about a forthcoming visit, they should make it clear that parents who can prove they are in receipt of certain benefits will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging. (see list at the end of this policy)

Education partly during school hours

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, not part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school and not part of religious education.

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.

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.

Residential visits

If the number of school sessions taken up by the 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.

Example 1

Pupils are away from noon on Wednesday to 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 9 half days including 5 school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place during school hours.

Example 2

Pupils are away from school from noon on Thursday until 9pm on Sunday. This counts as 7 half days including 3 school sessions, so the visit is deemed to have taken place outside school hours.

Costing of Trips/Visits

In some instances, the School need to predict the full cost of a trip/visit, this is due to a number of factors e.g. emergencies, medical care, travel, exchange rate variances.

We will endeavour to do our best to keep costs to a minimum and always source the "Best Value" option available to minimise costs to parents.

In cases where funds are surplus after all invoices and expenses have been paid the remainder will be credited back to the parents if the sum is over £5.00 per head. When the sum calculates to below £5.00 per head surplus, the School will move the monies to the "School Fund". This fund is used for educational material that benefits all pupils.

The School reserves the right to spend the "School Fund" as seen as appropriate by School Leaders and Governors.

Terms & Conditions for Educational Trips & Visits

Surcharges

Please be aware that travel companies often reserve the right to apply a surcharge for a trip after payment has been received. This tends to be for expenses such as increase in fuel costs, airport taxes etc. This very rarely happens, however if this is the case School may pass this cost on to parents/carers in order that the trip remains financially viable.

Insurance

Students and staff going on trips are automatically covered by School insurance and on residential trips additional insurance is often included through the travel company the school have booked with. For details of the School insurance for further details please contact the school directly if you would like a paper copy. Should a claim need to be made against the insurance for any reason, it is the parents/carers who are responsible for paying the excess that applies to the policy.

Cancellations

Please note that refunds for trips & visits will automatically be made should a trip be cancelled by School. If a parent chooses to withdraw a student from a trip or visit, then any refund is awarded on a discretionary basis by the Governors - Trips and parents will need to write directly to the Chair of Governors - Trips to request the refund. Refunds cannot be dealt with by other members of school staff without the Chair of Governors first having received the written request. There may be some instances where deposits are non-refundable and an admin fee for cancellation may apply. The school may have incurred direct costs which are non-recoverable in including the child on the trip (for example, purchase of a ticket which cannot be returned) then any such refund will be discretionary.

Oversubscribed Activities

The information letter will include a deadline by when the reply should be received by the school. In the event that the activity is over-subscribed (and the school is unable to increase the number of participants) the following criteria will be used, in the order given, to select successful applicants:

- Students who have not taken part or have had less participation in other activities in this academic year
- Random selection of students with payment attached to their application.
- The remaining unsuccessful students who had payment attached to their application will be placed in random order on the reserve list.
- Students, with payment attached to their application, but received by the Student Services after the deadline will be placed next on the reserve list.
- Students, without payments attached to their application, will go last on the reserve list.

Misbehaviour before an activity

At the sole discretion of the Headteacher, a student who has applied for a planned activity and has been accepted may be barred from attending if his or her behaviour in the period before the activity is unacceptable. Any returned contribution, as set out above, will be at the discretion of the school.

Contact Telephone Numbers and Medical Information

It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the school has received correct and current telephone contact and medical data which is relevant for overnight trips as well as day only trips.

Practical Subjects – Requirements in Kind

Where ingredients, materials, equipment, etc. are needed for practical subjects such as Technology, parents will be asked in advance for their agreement to take ownership of the finished product and will therefore be expected to supply the essential materials etc.

Breakages and Fines

Resulting from a pupil's behaviour, parents may be charged the cost of any wilful damage to school property or the loss or damage of any books or material supplied by the school.

List of Benefits

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £19,995)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit – this varies according to eligibility and government guidelines