Charging Policy

Review October 2026 next review October 2027

Charging and Remissions Policy – Hedworthfield Primary School

1. What this policy covers

This policy explains when Hedworthfield Primary School can:

- Charge for an activity or service.
- Ask families to make a voluntary contribution.
- Reduce or waive a charge.

The school follows sections 449 to 462 of the Education Act 1996, current Department for Education guidance on *Charging for school activities*, and South Tyneside Council's *Scheme for Financing Schools*. The governing body must have regard to any Council policy on charging. Education during school hours is free unless the law allows a charge. We will not treat a pupil differently because their parent or carer cannot, or chooses not to, make a voluntary contribution.

2. What the school provides free of charge

The school will not charge families for:

- Admission to the school.
- Education during school hours, including books, materials, instruments, equipment and required tests.
- Education outside school hours when it is part of the National Curriculum or religious education.
- Music tuition that is part of the National Curriculum or a pupil's first access to the Key Stage 2 instrumental and vocal tuition programme.
- Transport when the school or local authority has a legal duty to provide it or has arranged it so the pupil can receive education.
- Education provided on a residential visit. The school may still charge the actual cost of board and lodging, unless the family qualifies for help with the cost.
- The cost of cover for staff who join an educational visit during school hours.

3. When the school may charge

The school may charge for the following items. We will tell parents and carers before they agree to take part:

- The actual cost of board and lodging on a residential visit, unless the family qualifies for help.
- Optional activities outside school hours that are not part of the National Curriculum, religious education or a required examination course.
- Music tuition that a parent or carer asks for, unless the law says it must be free.

- Materials or ingredients when a parent or carer has agreed in advance that their child will keep the finished item.
- Extra services, such as breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and childcare.
- Community facilities or other services where the law allows a charge.

For an optional extra, we will charge no more than the actual cost of providing it. The charge may include materials, equipment, non-teaching staff, teaching staff engaged specifically for the activity, and related travel and board and lodging. We will divide the total fairly between participating pupils. We will not make a profit or require paying families to cover another pupil's share. Participation is optional, and we will obtain a parent's or carer's agreement before making a charge.

4. Examination fees

The school will not charge for entry to an approved public examination when it has prepared the pupil for that examination. It will not charge for a re-sit when it is also preparing the pupil for the re-sit. The school may charge the entry fee if the pupil was not prepared by the school, or if a parent or carer asks for an entry that the school has not recommended. It may also recover a wasted examination fee if a pupil, without good reason, does not meet an examination requirement. We will explain and agree any charge before making the entry.

5. Voluntary contributions

The school may ask families to contribute towards activities or resources that support pupils' education. Every request will explain that:

- Families do not have to contribute.
- We will not exclude or treat a pupil differently if their family does not contribute.
- Families may be able to pay in instalments.
- We may cancel the activity if contributions do not cover enough of the cost and the school cannot pay the difference.

We will not pressure families to contribute. We will not use letters, colours or other methods that could show who has not paid.

6. Residential visits and help with costs

The school will not charge for education on a residential visit when the visit takes place mainly during school hours or forms part of the National Curriculum or religious education. The school may charge the actual cost of board and lodging.

From the start of the 2026/27 academic year:

- All pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 continue to receive universal infant free school meals, regardless of family circumstances.

- Children in households receiving Universal Credit are entitled to a free school meal, regardless of earnings. Families must apply so that the school or local authority can check and record eligibility.
- **Targeted free school meals** apply where the household receives Universal Credit and has annual earned income of £7,400 or less, after tax and excluding benefits. Other qualifying groups in current Department for Education guidance, including some families with no recourse to public funds, may also qualify. Targeted eligibility can link to Pupil Premium and other support.
- **Expanded free school meals** apply where the household receives Universal Credit but does not meet the targeted threshold. This provides a free meal but does not, by itself, attract Pupil Premium or other support linked to targeted eligibility.
- Transitional protections ended at the end of the 2025/26 academic year. Eligibility is now based on current household circumstances.

Free school meal eligibility does not automatically decide whether the school must remit board and lodging charges for a residential visit. The school will apply the separate statutory remission criteria in current Department for Education charging guidance, explain how families can apply and ask only for reasonable evidence needed to confirm eligibility. Families can contact the Headteacher or school office in confidence for advice and support.

The governing body may also reduce or waive other charges when a family faces financial hardship. It will make decisions fairly, sensitively and within the funds available.

6.1 How we decide whether to reduce or waive a charge

The Governing Body will apply remission decisions consistently. It will consider the family's circumstances, the educational value of the activity, whether other funding is available and the school's available budget. Parents and carers may ask the Headteacher for help in confidence. The school will record each decision and the reason for it.

7. Music tuition

The school may charge for individual or group music tuition that a parent or carer requests. The charge will not be more than the cost of providing the tuition. We will not charge when the tuition is part of the National Curriculum, is a pupil's first access to the Key Stage 2 programme, or must be free by law. This includes tuition for a child who is looked after by a local authority.

8. Activities that partly take place in school hours

The school will use the rules in the Department for Education guidance to decide whether an activity takes place during or outside school hours. For a day activity, travel time during school hours counts, but the lunch break does not. For a residential visit, the school compares the number of school sessions with the number of half-days covered by the visit.

9. Information, support and complaints

Before asking for payment, the school will tell parents and carers:

- Whether the payment is a charge or a voluntary contribution
- What the payment covers
- How much to pay and how to pay it
- How to ask for support

We will provide information in an accessible format and make reasonable adjustments where needed. We will make fair decisions, respect each family's circumstances and keep personal information confidential. If you have a question or concern, please contact the Headteacher first. Formal complaints will be considered under the school's complaints procedure.

10. Lost or damaged property

The school may ask a parent or carer to meet some or all of the reasonable cost of replacing or repairing school property that a pupil has lost or damaged through inappropriate behaviour. Any request will be reasonable, proportionate and consistent with the school's behaviour policy. We will consider the circumstances, apply the policy fairly and discuss the matter with the family before deciding what action to take.

10.1 Lettings and community facilities

The governing body may retain income from lettings, fees, charges and fundraising where the Scheme for Financing Schools allows. Charges must follow the school's lettings policy and any Council policy or direction. Before entering a third-party arrangement to provide community facilities, the governing body must consult the Council, consider its advice and follow the approval and reporting requirements in the Scheme for Financing Schools.

10.2 Approval, income and records

- The Governing Body must approve this policy and the basis of charges and remissions.
- The Headteacher must approve each charge before the school asks for payment.
- The school must issue an official numbered receipt when required by the Council's financial procedures, bank income promptly and keep it separate from voluntary, private or unofficial funds.
- The school must not use cash or other income collected to pay expenses directly. It must bank and record the income before making payments through the approved accounting system.
- The school must record income, expenditure and VAT correctly and follow the Council's financial procedures.
- The school must keep evidence showing how it calculated charges, approved remissions and used the income.
- The Governing Body must monitor charges, debt recovery and the policy's impact as part of its financial oversight and Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) arrangements.

11. Who is responsible and when we review the policy

The governing body approves this policy and decides how the school will apply charges and provide financial help. The Headteacher puts the policy into practice. They must make sure the school approves charges, calculates them correctly, explains them clearly and keeps suitable financial records.

The governing body will review this policy every year. It will review it sooner if the law or Department for Education guidance changes.

Policy version: 2026/27

Approved by Governing Body: [Date]

Next Review Date: Autumn 2027