

POLICY: Charging & Remissions

Review

Approved by:	Board of Directors	Date:	January 2024
Last Review Date:	December 2023	Next Review Date:	December 2024

Responsibilities

School Senior Staff	Implementation of policy at school level
Governors	Check school compliance with policy and report breaches or concerns to Directors
Directors	Review and approve the policy

Material Changes to the Policy Since the Last Review

Section: Facing Financial Hardship	A new section was added outlining that schools will hold a record of local services that parents can access and how they can get this information.
---	--

Equinox Learning Trust's policy is to comply with the law and will follow the guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) on charging for school activities. Sections 449-462 of the Education Act 1996 set out the law on charging for school activities, and the Trust, through its Funding Agreement, must comply with it. Complete guidance from the DfE is available from the CEO of the Trust and can be accessed here:

[Charging for School Activities.](#)

In summary, subject to limited exceptions, schools cannot charge for education provided during school hours. The limited exceptions which will always be chargeable are:

- ❖ Any materials, books, instruments, or equipment where the child's parent wishes them to own them
- ❖ Optional extras (including education outside of school hours that is not part of the national curriculum and extended day services, e.g., breakfast, after-school and holiday club and supervised homework clubs)
- ❖ Exam Entry Fees where a pupil fails without good reason to complete the requirements of any public examination which the Trust paid or agreed to pay for
- ❖ Music and vocal tuition individually or in groups at the request of parents
- ❖ Certain early years provision
- ❖ Community facilities.

The charge for any individual pupil will be the actual cost of providing the chargeable activity, divided equally by the number of pupils participating. It will not include an element of subsidy for any other pupils or any charge for supplying teachers to cover those absent from school accompanying the pupils on the activity. Participation in any chargeable activity will be based on parental choice and a willingness to meet the charges. Parental agreement will always be the prerequisite for provision.

However, nothing in the legislation prevents Trust schools from asking for voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any school activity, including those during school hours. Where a comprehensive

programme of extracurricular activities and trips cannot be funded entirely by the school, the school will request voluntary contributions from parents.

Each school's Headteacher has delegated procedures regarding support the school may generally give for school trips and any application of its pupil premium grant funding as a replacement for parental contributions about the pupils to whom this funding has been provided. This may vary between school and over time. However, they all adhere to the following.

No child will be excluded from an educational activity within school hours for which a voluntary contribution has been requested because their parents are unable or unwilling to contribute. If insufficient contributions are made to cover the cost of the educational activity, the school may choose not to run the activity or fund it from some other source. It will consider whether to offer that activity again as part of its extracurricular programme.

The Trust delegates to the respective Headteacher of the Trust's schools the delegated authority to remit wholly or in part any charge that would otherwise be payable under this policy.

In terms of residential educational visits, there are regulations that the Trust abides by:

1) Schools cannot make any charge for:

- ❶ Education is provided on any visit that takes place during school hours (further guidance on the determination of this is in the complete DfE guidance)
- ❷ Education provided on any visit that takes place outside school hours if it is part of the national curriculum, part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school, or part of religious education
- ❸ Supply teachers to cover for those teachers who are absent from school accompanying the residential visit.

2) Schools can charge for:

- ❶ Board and lodging and the charge must not exceed the actual cost.

However, for residential trips, schools must inform, and it must be made clear that parents or children directly in receipt of the following benefits are exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging:

- ❶ Income Support
- ❷ Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- ❸ Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- ❹ Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- ❺ The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- ❻ Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- ❼ Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- ❽ Universal Credit – if you apply on or after 1 April 2018, your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get) at the time of application. If your income goes above the threshold in the future, but you remain on Universal Credit, your child will remain eligible. If you applied before 1 April 2018, Universal Credit claimants had no household income threshold.

Guidance to Parents

Qualifying for Free School Meals

Your child may be able to get free school meals if you receive any of the following:

- ❶ Income Support
- ❷ income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- ❸ income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- ❹ support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- ❺ the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- ❻ Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- ❼ Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- ❽ Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018, your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Children who get paid these benefits directly instead of through a parent or guardian can also get free school meals.

Your child may also get free school meals if you get any of these benefits and your child is both:

- ❶ younger than the [compulsory age for starting school](#)
- ❷ in full-time education.

If your child is eligible for free school meals, they'll remain eligible until they finish the phase of schooling (primary or secondary) they are in on 31 March 2024.

Facing Financial Hardship

All our schools hold a register of local support services available to families within the school community. Parents can contact the school via the school office or their class teacher in primary school and form tutor at secondary school. We recognise this situation is sensitive and will endeavour to apply care and support at the highest level for all stakeholders.