

MEOLE BRACE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL - CHARGING, REMISSION AND DEBT POLICY

February 2018

Introduction

We recognise the valuable contribution that the wide range of additional activities, including trips, clubs and residential experiences can make towards pupils' education. We aim to promote and provide such activities as part of a broad and balanced curriculum for the pupils of the school and as additional optional activities. We believe that all our pupils should have an equal opportunity to benefit from school activities and visits (curricular and extra-curricular) independent of their parents'/carers' financial means. This policy describes how we will do our best to ensure a good range of visits and activities is offered and, at the same time, try to minimise the financial barriers which may prevent some pupils taking full advantage of the opportunities.

Charging Policy

Any charges made by the school must meet the requirements of the Education Act 1996. The governors endorse the guiding principles contained in the Act, in particular that no child should have his/her access to the curriculum limited by charges.

Charges

There are two types of financial contributions for which parents can be asked in relation to educational activities:

- Voluntary contributions
- Permitted charges

Online Payments

Our School uses an online cashless system through www.schoolmoney.co.uk to collect income due to school. Please be reassured that all of your card details are not stored and so all confidential information is secure.

The Governing Body reserves the right to make a charge in the following circumstances;

Voluntary Contributions

Visits

The Governing Body will ask parents for a voluntary contribution towards the cost of any activity that takes place during school hours. Parents are under no obligation to make any contribution and the children of parents who are unable or unwilling to contribute will not be discriminated against. In the event of insufficient voluntary

contributions being made some visits/activities may have to be cancelled and voluntary contributions refunded to parents/carers.

Permitted Charges

Extra-Curricular Clubs

These clubs run each term and the cost is usually £1.50 per week, the payment is collected in advance and there is no remission of fees.

Music Lessons

Although the law states that all education provided during school hours must be free, music lessons are an exception to this rule and therefore the school can make a charge. The current charge is £6.00 per lesson. There is 50% remission of fees for children who claim Free School Meals and 25% remission if parents are in receipt of certain benefits (see support available below).

Uniform

The school has sweatshirts and sweat cardigans for sale, other school uniform has been chosen to allow parents to obtain best value and can be bought locally from supermarkets and other stores.

School Lunches

Parents are responsible for providing a lunch for their child(ren), this may be a paid meal, application of a free meal entitlement or a packed lunch from home. The current cost of a hot lunch is £2.20.

Our school has a clear set procedures for the payment and collection of school meal money and any arrears that occur.

- Dinner money should be paid in advance of the meal in all instances on Monday of each week online using www.schoolmoney.co.uk
- If you do not have internet access at home you are able to pay with a debit or credit card in school at the office.
- Reminders will be sent to parents who have not paid for school meals on the Monday after the week ends using our text messaging service.
- **No pupil is permitted to take more than 2 weeks of lunches without any payment being received, which will limit the debt for any one parent/carer. We will not allow a child a lunch in the third week until the arrears have been settled.**
- If your child is absent from school and meals have been paid for, these will be carried forward as credits and the following weeks payments will be adjusted accordingly.

Nursery Additional Sessions, Breakfast Club, After School Care (Sandcastles) and School Dinners

Our Nursery runs extended provision from 8.00am until 9.00am for Breakfast Club and from 3.00pm until 6.00pm for Sandcastles (after school care). Some parents may be eligible for an extended free entitlement of 15 hours for their child which is in addition to the current 15 hours. On top of this Parents/Carers can also request additional paid nursery sessions during the school day. These sessions are charged at £4.00 per hour.

Any additional booked paid sessions will need to be paid for in advance there is no facility to build up arrears, therefore if the payment is not received then your child will not be able to attend the extra session/s. Children are also able to order a School Dinner at a cost of £2.20 (this is free for children who are entitled to Free School Meals if they attend Nursery for the whole day), please also ensure that you make a payment in the dinner section for any lunch that your child may have during the week. Payment should be made online through www.schoolmoney.co.uk.

If you are late collecting your child from the Nursery we reserve the right to make an additional charge for Sandcastles, after school club.

Breakfast Club and After School Club

The school offers extended schools provision from 8.00am until 9.00am and from 3.00pm until 6.00pm. The cost is; £3.50 for breakfast club and after school (discounts apply for siblings and 3 hour sessions).

Parents/Carers will need to login to www.schoolmoney.co.uk to **pre book and any sessions required** for all children. Full details of 'how to book clubs online' is included in the parent user guide found in the top right corner when you login to school money. You will need to go into the 'club' tab and select the sessions that you will need in advance. You will see that there are ten different costs which include different costs for siblings and a lower cost if your child goes to after school activities before going to Lighthouse (you will have already paid for after school activity clubs in advance).

Please note;

- You can see the amount of credit you have in the top row alongside your child's name, underneath this is an option to put a 'top up amount' onto your account before booking any sessions.
- The daily register will be checked, if your child is off sick the pre booked session/s will be cancelled and any payment made will sit as a credit on your child's account.
- If you are later than expected collecting your child, the additional payment will be added and will need to be paid within 24hours.

- There will still be the opportunity to book your child onto these sessions on the day but we will require the payment to be made over the phone at the time of booking.
- You have the option to book and pay for up to 6 weeks in advance but please ensure that you book any sessions before midnight the night before.

If parents/Carers are late (past 6.00pm) collecting their child/ren a full hours charge will be made.

Late Collection from Nursery or After School Club

If you expect to be late collecting your child please notify the nursery or after school club as soon as possible. If notified, the additional time will be charged at the standard hourly rate. Un-notified late collection will be charged at a rate of £10 per hour or part hour to cover emergency staffing and other arrangements.

Support Available

In order to remove financial barriers from disadvantaged pupils, the governing body has agreed a reduced charge to parents/carers in particular circumstances. This remissions policy sets out the circumstances in which charges will be waived.

Criteria for qualification for remission are given below.

Parents/carers in receipt of

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit, provided that Working Tax Credit is not also received and the family's income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs) does not exceed £16,190
- Guaranteed State Pension
- Universal Credit in Prescribed circumstances - this is referring to the planned rollout of free hot meals for Reception and KS1 children from September 2014

Where a parent does not receive an eligible benefit the school will nonetheless consider sympathetically requests for assistance in the phasing of contributions, provided that all such phased contributions have been made by the time the trip or event takes place.

Bad Debt Policy

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parent/carer. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

Where possible, income due will be collected before or at the time the relevant sale or service is provided.

Uniform must be paid for at the point of sale, or goods can be held in the school office for collection when the payment is made on School Money.

For all other payments, a payment request will be added to School Money with a date to pay. A text will be sent to parents requesting payment to be made which gives the due date. Further text reminders will be sent to ensure that all income is collected promptly.

If the payment is not made online within two weeks of the due date the following will apply:

- The service may be withdrawn and will not be reinstated until the debt is cleared.
- A £5.00 late payment fee will be added to the account every Monday for all arrears that are overdue.
- Non-payment will be followed up by issuing reminders as outlined below.

1st reminder:

These are made by phone or letter and notes made of the conversation/call and outcome.

2nd final reminder:

If a debt is outstanding after one month the parent is given an appointment to meet with the Headteacher or Business Manager to agree how and when the debt will be cleared.

Throughout this process our intention is that the situation is discussed amicably and the payment made without causing distress on either side.

Persistent Debt

The school purchases Legal Support from the local Authority which includes debt recovery. The school has the option to involve the Legal Services Department of the County Council who will write to the parents/carers and expect payment within 7 days. Legal Services have the ability to issue legal proceedings should the family fail to pay by the deadline.

Writing off Debt

If after every effort has been made to collect the debt and legal action is considered impractical or has been unsuccessful, individual bad (irrecoverable) debts may be written off in accordance with the following procedures:

Debts up to a value of £100 are to be approved by the Headteacher and reported to the next meeting of the Governors Finance Committee. Those exceeding £100 will be referred to the Governors Finance Committee for approval.

Publication of Information

This policy can be found on the school's website and hard copies are available from reception for parents to view.

Review and amendments

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governors Finance Committee who may, from time to time recommend amendments to the categories for which a charge maybe made, this will be brought to the full Governing Body for ratification. However, the Governing Body reserve the right to review the Charging and Remissions Policy as necessary.

Updated: February 2018