Harlow Fields School & College Charging Refunds & Remissions Policy

POLICY TITLE:	**Charging Refunds & Remissions**
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Signed by Chair of IEB:	Interim Executive Board (IEB)

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1.0 AIMS, LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

The school aims to have a clear, robust process in place for charging, refunds, and remissions; this policy clearly sets out the activities that are chargeable, when charges will and will not be made, the management of refunds and the process for claiming remission.

Clearly set out the types of activity that can be charged for and when charges will and will not be made.

Offer a range of activities and visits whilst minimising the financial barriers that may prevent some students from taking full advantage of these opportunities

The IEB has overall responsibility for approving and monitoring the implementation of this policy but can delegate to a sub-committee according to their terms of reference and the school's financial regulations.
The headteacher is responsible for ensuring all staff are familiar with the content of this policy and that it is being applied consistently.
Staff are responsible for implementing this policy and notifying the headteacher of any specific circumstances where they are unsure of that implementation.

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on charging for school activities and the Education Act 1996, sections 449 to 462 of which set out the law on charging for school activities in England.

2.1 Definitions

Charge: the fee payable for a specifically defined activity
Refund: the return of monies previously paid for a specifically defined activity.
Remission: the cancellation of / exemption from a charge that would normally be payable.

2.0 CHARGING POLICY

2.1 School Meals

The charge for a school meal will be set annually by the SIB following consideration of the Catering Business Plan as part of the annual budget setting process.

All meals taken by pupils who are not eligible for free school meals will be chargeable, parents/carers are expected to make prompt payment. Where payments are not made in advance of the meal being taken, parents/carers will be reminded of their debt by email/ letter.

There is no charge for pupils who are entitled to free school meals or universal infant free school meals.

2.2 Educational visits:

The school:

- will seek voluntary contributions from parents/carers where applicable
- will not exclude a child from participating in an activity during the school day on financial grounds

Where 10% or more of parents decline to make the requested voluntary contribution (their identity will remain confidential), or the contributions shortfall is £50 or more, then the visit or activity will not take place.

2.3 Residential activities:

The costs of residential activities can be high and such activities may only continue to be available if sufficient costs are recovered.

Charges that apply:

- travel costs – transport to and from the residential activity
- board and lodging
    - full cost of board and lodging on residential trips whether or not it takes place during school hours
    - parents / carers will be informed of the cost before the activity takes place
- costs of supply staff engaged to cover the staff accompanying pupils on a residential trip where the trip takes place during term time
- full cost recovery for residential activities that take place outside of school hours

NB> The school will subsidise the cost of any residential trip for children of families claiming free school meals at £100 per pupil

No charge applies:

- where parents / carers in receipt of certain benefits may claim exemption in accordance with the Remissions guidance below
- for education costs incurred on any visit during school hours
- for education costs incurred on any visit outside school hours if it is part of the school's curriculum

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3.0 Other areas:

Charges apply:

- books and materials belonging to the school that a pupil has lost
- books and materials that a parent wishes a pupil to keep after having been advised of the cost
- activities taking place outside school hours that are not
    - part of the school's curriculum
    - part of the school's basic religious education
- property damage – each individual case to be decided upon by the Headteacher
    - full repair costs incurred as a result of wilful or reckless damage to school property by a pupil or parent/carer
    - full recovery of costs incurred by the school as a result of damage caused by a pupil to third party property

No charge applies:

- for activities taking place during school hours except any of those listed above
- for transport during school hours for school-organised activities except for educational visits as detailed above
- for activities outside school hours that are part of the
    - set curriculum including sports matches against other schools / academies
    - syllabus for a public examination that the pupil is being prepared for by the school

    - school's basic religious education syllabus
- for admissions

4.0 Voluntary contributions

The school may, from time to time, ask parents/carers for voluntary contributions to the school's general funds in order to assist with the provision of resources to enhance their children's education. There will be no pressure exerted and any contribution will be gratefully received.

Where the voluntary contribution applies to an educational visit or extra-curricular activity, there is no obligation for parents/carers to make any contribution and no child will be excluded from an activity if their parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay. However, if the sufficient level of total contributions is not achieved, that activity will be cancelled, and any monies already collected will be refunded to the relevant parents/carers.

5.0 DBS checks

The school will cover the cost of DBS checks for all employed staff.
The school will cover the cost of DBS checks for volunteers.

6.0 REFUNDS POLICY

6.1 School meals

- Where payment for a school meal is received in advance and the pupil is absent due to illness, the funds will be retained to be used for future meals.
- If the school has to cancel meal provision for a short time, the income received in advance will be recorded against each individual pupil to be used to cover future meals; where that amount exceeds £30 for any one pupil, the parent/carer may request a refund.
- When a pupil leaves the school and income has been received but meals not taken, the parent is entitled to request a refund where the figure exceeds £10, or amounts will be retained in school funds.

6.2 Educational visits

- When a pupil is absent due to illness and does not attend an educational visit, the transport/entrance cost will not be refunded, where already committed. However, where possible, the school will endeavour to recover costs related to that activity and, if successful, will then refund the parent/carer.
- If a trip has to be cancelled by the school, parental contributions will be refunded, less any initial deposits withheld by the venue.

- Where contributions for an activity exceed the final total cost by more than £5 per pupil, a refund will be given. Excess income less than £5 per pupil will be retained in school funds. Excess expenditure will be paid from school funds.

6.3 Residential activities

- If a pupil does not attend a residential activity due to illness, the school will endeavour to recover costs, through the trip insurance and, if successful, will then pass this refund onto the parent/carer; please note that initial deposits may be retained by the travel company.
- Where a residential trip is cancelled by the travel company, the school will endeavour to recover full refunds which, upon receipt, will be passed onto the parents/carers.
- Where a residential trip is cancelled by the school, parental contributions already received will be refunded, less any initial deposits withheld by the venue.

6.4 Extra-curricular activities

- If a pupil does not attend an activity due to illness, no refund applies.
- Where curriculum related clubs are cancelled by the school, the income received will be held to cover the cost of the next round. Where pupils are not taking part in the future, parents/carers are entitled to request a refund.

6.5 Outside of school hours activities - not part of the curriculum, or public examination syllabus or part of the school's basic religious education

- If a pupil does not attend an activity due to illness, no refund applies.
- Where the activity is cancelled by the school, the income received will be held to cover the cost of the next round. Where pupils are not taking part in the future, parents/carers are entitled to request a refund.
- Where the activity is arranged by the school but has been cancelled by external organisers/tutors/sports coaches, the school will endeavour to obtain refunds which, upon receipt, will be passed onto the parents/carers.
- Where an activity arranged by external organisers directly with parents/carers is cancelled, the parents/carers must contact the organisers to obtain a refund in accordance with the separate booking agreement.

7.0 REMISSIONS POLICY

The Headteacher and Chair of he IEB will authorise the remission of charges in all cases.

The school will consider the remission of charges to parents or carers who receive the relevant support payments (in accordance with the current DfE listing) which make their child/children eligible for free school meals and for children in care.

All claims for remission of charges should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be dealt with confidentially.

The school may decide to subsidise part or all of the payment of some charges for certain activities and pupils; each event or case will be considered individually by the Headteacher and the IEB.