



CHARGES POLICY

Manager: J Doyle (head teacher)

Reviewed September 2024

Approved by Governors: September 2024

Next Review: September 2026

Introduction

This policy is the Governing Board of Shawclough School's response to the requirement and responsibility placed upon it by the Education Act 1988, Section 106 - 111 and 117 - 118 which sets out the law on charges in general. The provisions took effect from April 1989.

The aims of a policy on charging provisions are:

- to maintain the right to free school education;
- to establish that education offered within normal teaching time should be available to all pupils regardless of parents ability or willingness to help meet the costs;
- to emphasise that school does have the discretion to charge for optional activities provided outside of school hours;
- to confirm the right of school to invite voluntary contributions in support of any activity organised by the school whether during or outside school hours.

It should be noted that whilst the Governing Board aims to offer the highest quality of education free of charge it believes that education should broaden experience, expand horizons and present a wide range of opportunities for first-hand experience of the pupils in its care. It further believes that educational achievement and fulfilment should not hinge upon the ability or willingness of parents to provide the necessary funds. However the provisions of the Act with regard to charging will inevitably put the Governors in conflict with its belief that education should be free because a financial donation will be required for some school activities. The Governors will endeavour to always work within the requirements of the Act.

The Requirement

There are five requirements in the Act. They are:

1. No charge is to be made for education provided during school hours.
2. Charging is never a statutory requirement
3. Where charging is permissible it must be administered within the guidelines laid out by the Governors.
4. Charges cannot be applied until the Governing Body has drawn up a statement of policy

5. When charges are made they must not include any element of subsidy for other pupils engaging in the same activity.

Education During School Hours

At Shawclough education that is organised during the school day (that is education that takes place wholly or mainly during the school pupil day) is and shall be free of charge. Further to that, no charge will be made for incidental materials or equipment or other items which the children need for educational purposes.

The mid-day break is not regarded as part of the school day.

The Act does allow some exceptions to the above of which the Governing Body may, from time to time, take advantage:

1. Individual music tuition.
2. Transport provided by the school (see paragraph 16 of DfEE circular 2/89).
3. Ingredients and materials for practical subjects where the parents have indicated in advance they wish to own the completed product e.g. items of pottery, food products, and battery operated electric circuits.

Education Outside of School Hours

No charge will be made for education outside the school hours where it fulfils statutory duties relating to the National Curriculum or those relating to Religious Education.

Where a school activity requires pupils to spend nights away from home the school is allowed to make a charge for board and lodging.

All other activities undertaken outside school hours become “optional extras” for which charges may be made under the following conditions:

1. Participation will be subject to parental choice. Parents must have previously agreed to pay.
2. No child whose parents have agreed to pay will be excluded provided that space is available for the child.
3. Charges will not exceed the actual costs divided by the number of pupils willing to participate. Nor will any element in that charge be used for subsidising other pupils wishing to participate but whose parents are unwilling or unable to afford the full charge.

The cost of optional extras can and may include:

- pupils travel cost
- pupils board and lodging
- materials
- non teaching staff costs
- entrance fees
- insurance costs
- teaching-staff costs

(See para 24 DfEE circular 2/89) “ ... any charge may also take into account the cost of engaging teaching staff specifically for the purpose of providing the activity ... but not of staff already employed at the school.”

Charges will be made for breakfast club and tea time club as an optional extra, current charging rates are available from the school office and include the provision of a snack or breakfast.

Education Partly During the School Day

Where an activity takes place partly during and partly outside school hours the Acts prescribe a basis for determining whether it is deemed to take place in or out of school hours. This makes clear whether the cost can be charged or not, or it is simply a contribution which can be asked for.

Out of school activities are those deemed to take place *during school hours* only if fifty per cent or more of the activity period occurs during school hours. Due to this definition the school will, when charging for an activity, state the start and return times in advance and make participant's parents aware of the matter.

When the activity takes place outside school hours, that is when the activity takes place mostly outside school hours (and visits overnight will be included in this), a charge (see section above) can be made, whereas if it takes place during school hours only a donation can be requested.

If the activity is deemed within school hours the only permissible charges are for board and lodging. Again parents will be made aware of this at the onset.

Voluntary Contributions

It is clear that school cannot charge for school time activity but it can and will invite parents and others to make voluntary contributions at any time. These contributions will be genuinely voluntary and children will not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents have contributed.

Paragraph 58 of the DfEE circular states "... if the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contribution, the Governing Board or Headteacher would make this clear to parents at the outset." With reference to that statement all letters requesting voluntary contribution that are sent out by the school will include such information and will give an indication of where those costs will be incurred.

The level and use of the contribution will be for the school to decide. For example, subsidising pupils from low-income families or the cost of travel for accompanying teachers or helpers can be included in the suggested contribution.

Miscellaneous

Breakage and "fines" are not covered by the Act.

At Shawclough it has been decided that parents may be requested from time to time to pay for damage or loss of school property or equipment including library books, which is caused by their child's misbehaviour or wilful act.

It is also clear in the Act that those sums payable for previously agreed optional extras or for board and lodging are retrievable by civil debt procedures.

Music tuition is the only activity which can take place during the school day and for which a charge can be made.

School clubs are organised at various times of the day, before and after the school day as well as at lunchtime. Some of these clubs may make charges for example for resources and materials taken, awards achieved or for prizes, the cost of coaches or tutors. Those charges will be made clear to the users before the children enrol at the start of the club.

Nursery charges can be levied for hours outside of free entitlement, current scale charges are in appendix A and are reviewed annually.

School meal charges can also be levied for the provision of a school meal.

'Keep the Change'

The Governors have approved a change to the charging policy from September 2019, following a suggestion from parents.

Many parents round payments up to the nearest pound when paying for items, especially school trips and music. Governors have agreed that on all voluntary contributions parents may now tick for school to 'keep the change'. Any monies kept through 'keep the change' initiative will be banked as a donation into school fund and be used for reasons described in the school fund section. Any letter that falls into this category where there are odd amounts will now have an option for the parent to tick for school to keep the change.

Any monies paid for early start, tea time and dinner money will be allocated in full to the child's account.

REMISSIONS

The Governing Body may remit in full or in part the cost of any activity for particular groups of parents, for example, in the case of family hardship. When arranging a chargeable activity such parents will be invited to apply, in confidence, for the remission of charges in full or in part. Authorisation for such remission will be made by the Headteacher in consultation with the Chair of Governors. The Governing body is aware that the school budget cannot be used for this purpose and that any remission will involve utilising private/voluntary funding which may be available.