

Badgerbrook Primary School

Charging for Activities & Materials Incorporating School Meals Payment Policy



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Introduction

This charging policy informs staff and parents about charging for school activities and conforms to Sections 449-462 of the Education Act 1996 and the Department for Education advice updated May 2018. It has been agreed by the Governors and will be reviewed annually.

The school aims to provide a range of experiences which add excitement and enjoyment to children's learning and personal development. All pupils have an equal opportunity to benefit from school visits, curricular and extra-curricular activities. However, many of these activities have a cost associated with them. This policy sets out which activities will be charged for, when voluntary contributions will be invited and what assistance is available to parents with limited incomes. No child will be excluded from an activity because of a family's inability to pay.

1. Education

Education provided during school hours is free. 'School hours' are those when the school is actually in session and do not include the break in the middle of the school day.

The school cannot charge for activities which are part of the normal school day or part of the National Curriculum except for musical instrument tuition for individuals or small groups and some optional extras such as board and lodging for residential visits and extended day services.

2. Voluntary Contributions

However, the school can invite voluntary contributions towards any aspect of the school's work. Children of parents who do not contribute voluntarily will not be treated differently from children of parents who do make voluntary contributions and the child will not be excluded from the activity if a contribution is not made. When voluntary contributions are insufficient to make the activity possible, the activity will be cancelled. The Headteacher is responsible for determining the level of voluntary contributions required to make an activity financially viable.

3. Educational Visits

When organising school trips or visits which enrich the curriculum and educational experience of the children, the school invites parents to contribute to the cost of the trip. All contributions are voluntary. The amount requested as a voluntary contribution will not exceed the actual cost of the activity per pupil.

If insufficient voluntary contributions are received, we may have to cancel the trip. If a trip goes ahead, it may include children whose parents have not paid any contribution. We do not treat these children differently from any others. Any family experiencing financial difficulties is always invited to contact the Headteacher as additional help may be available.

The following are examples of additional activities organised by the school, where voluntary contributions from parents are invited:

- visits to museums;
- sporting activities which require transport expenses;
- outdoor adventure activities;

- visits to the theatre;
- school trips;
- musical events;
- theatre companies visiting school;
- workshops delivered by visiting companies.

Reimbursement will only be possible when a child is absent from school and the entrance fee is not charged by the venue. Transport charges cannot be reimbursed as the cost of the trip will have been worked out on the expected numbers traveling.

4. Residential Visits

When the school organises a residential visit in school time or mainly school time, which is to provide education directly related to the National Curriculum, no charge is made for the education. However, we do make a charge to cover the costs of board and lodging and we invite parents to make a voluntary contribution to cover the full cost of the travel and activity expenses, as these are beyond the scope of our main school budget. A non-returnable deposit is requested to secure a place and the costings are worked out on the number of pupils participating in the residential visit. Arrangements are made to enable parents to join a savings plan and pay in instalments before the trip takes place.

Children of parents who do not contribute voluntarily will not be treated differently from children of parents who do make voluntary contributions and the child will not be excluded from the residential visit if a contribution is not made. When voluntary contributions are insufficient to make the residential visit possible, it will be cancelled for all pupils. The Headteacher is responsible for determining the level of voluntary contributions required to make the residential visit financially viable.

Please see Section 9 for details of eligibility of remission of fees.

Requests for help towards costs are considered each year by the Governing Body.

5. Music Lessons

The provision of tuition in the playing of a musical instrument is an exception to the rule relating to charges during the school day (Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007). These regulations allow a charge to be made in respect of tuition if it is provided at the request of parents. There is no charge for National Curriculum music teaching. No charge is made in respect of any pupil who is looked after by the local authority.

Where children receive music tuition from independent tutors the contract is directly between parents and the tutor and they will be invoiced accordingly. Any family experiencing financial difficulties is always invited to contact the Headteacher as additional help may be available.

6. Swimming

We organise swimming lessons for children in Year 4 and parents are asked for voluntary contributions towards the costs of hiring the pool, the instructors and the transport. Contributions are only refunded if a child is absent from school due to illness.

7. Afterschool Activities

Charges may be made for activities that happen outside school hours which the legislation defines as 'optional extras', eg sports clubs run by other organisations, pantomime visits etc. Any charges made will be to cover the costs of using the premises (heating & lighting), staff costs, insurance etc. Occasionally we may make a small charge to pupils attending after school activities run by members of staff to cover the cost of materials or transport.

Where organisations hire the school facilities to provide extracurricular activities such as sports or arts activities outside school hours the contract will be between the parents and that organisation and there is likely to be a charge.

Badgerbrook Before and After School Club (Wrap Around Care) is run by Badgerbrook and sessions are chargeable. Parents will be invoiced accordingly.

Hiring charges are agreed annually by the Governing Body.

8. Materials etc

We may make a small charge for:

- Materials used in technology if your child is expecting to bring the finished product home
- Cookery ingredients if your child will bring the result home
- Books and materials that the parent wishes the child to keep

If a child does deliberate damage to, or loses school equipment, (including library books or other school books on loan to the child) the parent is expected to make a contribution for its repair or replacement. Each incident will be dealt with on its own merit and at the Headteacher's discretion.

9. Remissions

Where charges are made children whose parents are in receipt of the following support payments will, in addition to having a free school lunch entitlement, also be entitled to the remission of charges:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- 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)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- 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)

The Headteacher will advise all parents that anyone in receipt of the support payments is entitled to claim remission. Parents who are in receipt of the support payments will be invited to make a voluntary contribution.

10. Financial support

Whenever a charge is made or a voluntary contribution is invited families experiencing financial problems are invited to contact the Headteacher as additional help may be available. This is at the discretion of the Headteacher, in line with the criteria above.

Badgerbrook Primary School

School Meals Payment Policy

Badgerbrook Primary School has adopted the School Food Support Service's no debt policy relating to the school meal service.

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school meals. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and outlines clearly what is expected of parents.

Rationale

The school meals service is no different from any other business and meals taken must be paid for. The Free School Meals system supports parents who need financial assistance.

Currently, through the Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) scheme the school is reimbursed for the cost of meals for all Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils so no payment is required for pupils in Years 1, 2 and Foundation. School meals can be ordered daily.

School meals for pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 & 6) can be ordered daily and should be paid for in advance or on the day they are taken. Payments must be made through ParentPay and can be for individual meals or block payments in advance.

Parents of pupils in Year 3 and above who believe that their child may qualify for entitlement to free school meals (FSM) should contact the school office for more details or access the appropriate page on the Leicestershire County Council website:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/social-care-and-supporting-families/free-school-meals>

The Free School Meals allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify.

Key information

- All parents will be provided of a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school
- All school meals must be paid for in advance (apart from those eligible for UIFSM or FSM)
- Parents of Key Stage 2 children should not expect their child to be given a meal if there is no money in their ParentPay account
- Parents who don't want their child to have a school meal should provide a healthy packed lunch
- The Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt.

Debt policy implementation

The ParentPay dinner money system highlights debt immediately. It is very time consuming for staff have to chase parents for payment. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

The following information explains what steps will be taken if debts are incurred:

- If a parent incurs debts for unpaid dinner money the school will send an email reminder via ParentPay to the parent during the week. The email will ask parents to pay the debt as soon as possible.
- If parents do not pay the debt and/or the debt continues to rise a further text message will be sent.
- If the debt remains unpaid parents will be contacted by phone to agree payment details.
- If the debt still remains unpaid a final reminder letter will be emailed – this will include a reminder that failure to bring the ParentPay account up to date could result in the child being denied a meal and that the school will begin proceedings against the parent to recover the debt.
- If there is no response to this email the Headteacher or a senior member of staff will phone parents to request that they provide a packed lunch from home until the account is in credit.

Monitoring and Review

This policy was reviewed in March 2024 and will be reviewed annually as part of the Charging for Activities Policy. The success of the debt policy will be monitored termly by the Headteacher and the School Office Manager.

Free School Meals eligibility

Where parents are in receipt of the following support payments they are likely to be entitled to a free school lunch entitlement. The criteria as at 25.03.24 is as follows:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- 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)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- 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)