

# Manor Park Primary

## Charging, Remission & Debt Policy

### Statement for Equality

*Manor Park Primary is committed to gender, racial, religious and disability equality in every part of school life*

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

This policy has been drawn up to conform to the charging arrangements for Maintained Schools as set out in the Education Act 1996.

The Governing Body recognises that the Act prohibits charges for school activities that take place within school hours and/or are part of the school curriculum. This Policy reinforces that principle, whilst setting out those school activities for which a charge may be made or a voluntary contribution requested, and those circumstances in which charges may be remitted.

All education during school hours is free. We do not charge for any activity undertaken as part of the National Curriculum with the exception of individual or group music tuition.

#### 2. VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

'School Hours' are defined as those during which the school is in session but excluding the midday break. Education provided during school hours will be free of charge.

Voluntary contributions may be requested to enable the School to run extra activities (including trips and visits) which are deemed educationally desirable. The school will make it clear in its communications to parents that these contributions are voluntary and that no pupil will be treated differently according to whether or not a contribution has been made.

If we do not receive sufficient voluntary contributions, we may cancel a trip or event. If a trip or event goes ahead, it may include children whose parents have not made any contribution as we do not treat these children differently from others.

If a parent wishes their child to take part in a school trip or event, but is unwilling or unable to make a voluntary contribution, we do allow the child to participate fully in the trip or activity. Sometimes the school pays additional costs in order to support the visit. Parents have a right to know how each trip is funded and this information may be provided on request. If a child is absent on the day of the educational visit then the school will refund parents any costs that are payable on the day; such as entrance fees.

The following is a list of additional activities organised by the school, which require voluntary contributions from parents. These activities are known as 'optional extras'. The list is not exhaustive.

- Visits to museums, galleries and other places of interest
- Outdoor adventure activities
- Sporting activities which require transport expenses
- Theatre visits
- Musical events
- Enrichment events e.g. Science theatre, musical workshops

### **3. RESIDENTIAL VISITS**

Where the school organises a residential visit in school time (or mainly school time) which is to provide education directly related to the National Curriculum, we ask parents for a contribution to cover the cost of the education or travel expenses. We also make a charge to cover the costs of board and lodging.

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 for board and lodging:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Employment Support Allowance (income based)
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit provided the parent is not entitled to Working Tax Credit and their annual income does not exceed the government's agreed level
- Guaranteed State Pension Credit

The charge should not subsidise any other pupil participating. Any remission of charges for individual students should be met from the School Funds. If insufficient funds are received to cover the cost of the activity, it may be cancelled.

### **4. MUSIC TUITION**

All children study music as part of the normal school curriculum. No charge is made.

There is a charge for individual or group music tuition if this is not part of the National Curriculum. Lessons are taught by peripatetic music teachers and there is a charge for these lessons.

### **5. SWIMMING**

The school organises swimming lessons for all children in Key Stage 2. These take place in school time and are part of the National Curriculum. A voluntary charge may be made for the transport to the swimming pool if necessary.

## **6. CLUBS RUN BY SCHOOL STAFF**

There is no charge for clubs run by school staff.

## **7. CLUBS RUN BY EXTERNAL PROVIDERS**

A variety of clubs are run by external providers, using the school's facilities. The providers charge parents directly for attendance.

## **8. SCHOOL MEAL AND DEBT POLICY**

Charges are made for school meals and milk (unless a pupil is entitled to free school meals). The school has adopted a strict no debt policy relating to the school meal service.

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 parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support. No parent would take a child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school.

If parents believe that their children may qualify for Free School Meals they should contact the school office for more details on how to apply via the London Borough of Sutton. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important it is used if a parent qualifies. The free meal entitlement will apply from the date given on the notification from the borough to the school.

Parents/carers must pay in advance for a school lunch using Parentpay or by cash at a Paypoint shop.

Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those who are entitled to free school meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one meal. However, this debt must be paid the next day and future meals must be paid for in advance before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received, nor a packed lunch provided, the school will phone the parent to ask them to provide a packed lunch before lunchtime.

If payment of the debt is not received the next day, the school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Children's Services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

## **9. UNIFORM**

A variety of items, including coats, PE tops, ties, book bags etc, are available from the online suppliers.

## **10. PHOTOGRAPHS**

Individual and class photographs taken by the school's appointed photographer or by the school are offered for sale from time to time.

## **11. LOSS OR DAMAGE TO SCHOOL PROPERTY**

Loss of, damage to, or breakage of school property, e.g. books, windows, furniture etc will be charged for if caused by carelessness, negligence, deliberate act or repeated loss. The charge will be the cost of replacement or repair, or such lower cost as the Head teacher may decide.

Similarly a charge will be levied in respect of willful damage, neglect or loss of property belonging to a third party, where the cost has been recharged to the school.

## **12. OTHER CHARGES**

The School may levy a charge for miscellaneous services up to the cost of providing such services, e.g. copy of an Ofsted report, **provision of pupil testimonials to independent/ grammar schools.**

## **DEBT RECOVERY POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Governing Body has a responsibility for ensuring that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the School to receive all income to which it is entitled.

The introduction of cashless payment systems make it more transparent when parents have not paid their accounts for school meals promptly. For this reason it is important that schools ensure they have a policy for dealing with any debts, especially in relation to school meals.

Parents are made aware of this policy by receiving a letter as shown in Appendix 1, and information is on our website.

1. The School will actively pursue parents for the collection of monies owed to it.
2. The School Business Manager is required to ensure that:
  - all letters requesting monies outstanding are accurately recorded and maintained
  - there is documentary evidence of all the steps undertaken by the school to recover the debt. This includes recording the dates that letters and statements were distributed, and/or phone calls that have been sent to debtors
  - for all outstanding debts, a final statement (stamped final notice) is issued to all persons liable for the charge.
  - Each case will be judged on the individual circumstances of the family and the amount outstanding as to the length of time before legal action is started.
3. The Governing Body must:
  - consider the arrangements for debt recovery (see 4)
  - recommend the maximum level of debt which any family would be able to incur (1 lunch)
  - approve the school undertaking legal action
  - include in the minutes of their meeting, their approval to pursue any outstanding debt
  - ensure the anonymity of the families involved is preserved at all times
4. Pursuance of Debt  
The School should:
  - explore all possible avenues to support parents/carers to repay the debt
  - not pass onto the debtor any costs incurred in pursuing the outstanding debt
  - give the debtor appropriate notification and time to pay the outstanding charge
  - send the debtor as a minimum a final statement, which states that this is the final notice and that further action will be taken

5. Waiving of Debt

The Headteacher can waive or reduce the debt, where it is believed the debtor is experiencing financial hardship.

A debt may be written off by resolution of the Governing Body on the recommendation of the Headteacher.

A recommendation to write off a debt can be made when all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted, and where it is not cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action.

6. Any action related to an outstanding debt or the waiving/reducing of a debt should be dealt with confidentially between the debtor and and a member of the senior management team.

**Dear Parents**

### **School Meals Debt Policy for Parents**

As from March 2011 Manor Park Primary **Academy** has adopted a strict NO DEBT policy relating to the provision of school meals. This means all money for school meals need to be paid in advance.

Most parents/carers manage to pay for their child's meals in advance as they are required to do. However, a small number of parents/carers fall behind with their payments and this can quickly lead to an unmanageable debt to the school. This policy is to ensure that suitable controls are in place so that this cannot happen.

If debts are incurred, then the School will need to consider how the debt can be managed which may mean money which should be spent on your child(ren)'s education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

Parent/s must pay in advance for school meals using the payment methods outlined below:

- Credit/Debit cards online using ParentPay
- PayPoint cards (please ask in the school office about PayPoint payments if you are a cash based family) or Bar-coded letter

If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals then please contact the office for further information. The allowance for Free School Meal is a statutory entitlement and should be claimed if your child qualifies. In order to qualify, you will be required to provide any evidence which may be requested. Free school meal entitlement will only apply from the date the evidence has been received, it cannot be backdated. If you need any advice with Free School Meal claims, the school office can help with this.

Children will only be entitled to a school lunch if it is paid for in advance or the child is entitled to a free school meal, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one meal. However, this debt must be paid the next day and future meals must be paid for in advance before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received, nor a packed lunch provided, the school will phone the parent to ask them to provide a packed lunch before lunchtime.

If payment of the debt is not received the next day, the school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Children's Services may also be informed that

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these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are able to help parents manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available.

You can access your parent pay account at the local 'Pay Point' if paying by cash or on the Parent Pay website if paying by credit/debit card. Please ask at the office if you need any assistance.

If you have any concerns please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs D Rowsome  
School Business Manager