

Ben Jonson Primary School



Charging Policy

Date reviewed: October 2021

Signed: _____

Date due for review: Oct 2022

The Governing Body aims to ensure that no child is excluded from an activity because the child's parent or carer is unable or unwilling to pay.

PART A –DURING THE SCHOOL DAY AND TERM-TIME

School charges comply with the Education Reform Act 1988 and DFE Circular 2/89.

Education wholly or mainly within school hours is provided free of charge, except for individual music tuition, which is not a part of the normal delivery of the music curriculum. Parents /carers may be asked to contribute in part or whole to the cost of individual music tuition and may also be asked to provide, or contribute to the cost of, musical instruments, music scores and associated items.

A charge may be made for activities which take place partly or wholly outside school hours, to supplement and support formal learning in curriculum areas and to provide further experiences to enable children to develop their full potential.

Optional Items

The School will not make any charge for books and materials for use in connection with education provided within school hours. Parents/carers may occasionally be invited to provide or buy particular items on a voluntary basis (e.g. book bags)

Clothing

Parents/carers are asked to provide the official school uniform. Where they encounter difficulties the School will attempt to assist where possible, through our second hand clothing supply. The School will supply essential protective clothing when necessary, e.g. safety goggles.

Overnight School Journeys

The School will normally ask for a voluntary contribution for board and lodging, as well as travel, for those pupils involved in residential journeys. All other costs of the journey will be borne by the School as the residential journey is a part of the school curriculum and is taking place in term time; this is in line with sections 29-35 of DFE Circular 2/89.

The school will at its discretion offer a discounted rate, depending on parents' financial circumstances. No child will be prevented from taking part in a residential journey because parents are unable to pay.

Day Educational Visits

At Ben Jonson School we understand the importance of providing our pupils with quality educational visits to extend and enhance their learning experiences. Although some of these trips are free (to both school and therefore parents), in order to provide the very best range of experiences throughout the child's time at our school, some may incur costs.

As the school budget is unable to cover these costs and in order to make these trips both possible and sustainable, parents/carers will be asked for a voluntary contribution set at a flat rate of £7 per child, per academic year, in year groups 1 to 6 (no charge is levied for reception as trips are of far lower cost in this phase) towards the cost of trips and in-school workshops taking place that year.. No child will be prevented from taking part in the outing because parents are unable to pay. However, if there are insufficient contributions the school may have to reduce the range of trips and workshops on offer in subsequent years. This will be made clear to parents in the letter advising details of the annual charge.

Ingredients & Materials for Practical Subjects

Normally all ingredients and materials are provided by the School. However in cases where a child wishes to retain the finished products, a small charge may be made, at the Headteacher's discretion.

Damage or Loss of Equipment

A charge may be made for damage or loss caused by a pupil, at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Extended Leave

Parents taking their children out of school during term-time, often for extended periods is a significant problem for the school. These pupils' academic progress is often substantially impeded and so, in order to dissuade parents from this practice, the School has adopted the LBTH Penalty Notice Scheme Protocol Sept 2013.

PART B – BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS AND EXTENDED SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Parents/carers may be asked to pay a charge for their child to attend a before or after school club or to take part in extended school activities.

Adults and young people in the community may also be asked to pay a charge if they participate in extended school activities.

The Headteacher is responsible for determining the charges for attendance at before or after school club activities or extended school activities subject to approval by the GOVERNING BODY. Such charges will be reviewed by the GOVERNING BODY annually.

The level of charges will be set to cover some of the cost of the provision of the activities, but never set to make a profit. All club & childcare charges may be reviewed at staff discretion.

The current charges applying for before and after school activities and for extended school activities are as follows as from 1st September 2019:

Daily charge for children for breakfast club	£2 per child
	(no longer offered)
Daily charge for after school clubs:	£3 per club per child
charge for Super Tuesday and Community Language Clubs (if provided free to the school.)	No charge (as integrated into interventions and children are selected)

Children collected late from clubs after 5 p.m. (Monday-Thursday)	£10 per child (At this stage the school may start to follow Child Protection procedure for non-collected children)
Children collected late from clubs on more than 3 occasions.	Club membership will be forfeited for the following term.

PART C – LETTINGS & USERS OF THE PREMISES

The Governing Body has no agreed policy for Lettings Regulations & Conditions of Hire and Use at present.

PART D – Debt management arrangements

Definition

To ensure that debt write offs are kept to a minimum by taking all reasonable steps to recover money owed to the school. However, there will be situations where the debt recovery process fails to recover all or some of the debt and in such cases, the debt needs to be recommended for write off. The writing off of debts, should only be considered where appropriate recovery action has been exhausted or a cost benefit analysis indicates this to be uneconomic.

General requirements

The governing body and school will take all reasonable measures to collect debts as part of its management of public funds. A debt will be written off only after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it. The school's charging policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the Scheme for Financing Schools and any other legal requirements.

In particular:

- The formal agreement of the Local Authority's Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer) will be obtained before a debt exceeding £1,000 is written off. (If any debtor has a number of debts, which together exceed the write-off limit, then these will be treated as a total amount).
- Debts greater than £10,000 can only be written off by the Executive member for finance on advice of the section 151 officer.
- A formal record of any debts above £1,000 written off will be maintained and this will be retained for 7 years (the form of this record is specified below).
- The school will not initiate any legal action to recover debts, but will refer any debts which it has not been able to collect (unless a decision to write-off the debt is deemed a reasonable course of action) to the Council's Legal Services section to consider taking legal or other action to recover the debt.

Acceptable 'credit period'

Invoices

In general payment for all goods and services supplied by the School should be collected in advance or at least within 30 days upon receipt of an invoice.

Breakfast and After School Care

As per the agreement and offer letter signed by the parent/carer, we recommend that payment is made a minimum of one week in advance and a credit balance is maintained at all times. Payment is required for all days booked even if the child does not attend, the exceptions being when school is closed. Should the child no longer require a place the parent/carer is to advise the School office at least one week in advance, otherwise the parent/carer is still liable for charges. Should the parent/carer fall into arrears, the club will withdraw the child's place.

Reporting of outstanding debt levels

The Headteacher/School Business Manager will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is regularly monitored. Suitable records will be maintained to detail individual debts and the total value of debt to the school.

Debt Recovery Procedures

Where payment from the parent/carer has not been received within the above acceptable credit period the following process should be applied.

First 'outstanding payment' reminder letter

An initial reminder letter will be sent home requesting the account be credited with one week's full amount within 5 days. Warning that their child's club/lunch will be cancelled.

Second 'outstanding payment' reminder letter which invites parents in to discuss the outstanding debts with the Headteacher ASAP sent out after the initial 5 day period

Negotiation of repayment terms

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the initial '*overdue payment*' reminder.

However, if people are unable to pay;

The School may reduce or cancel a debt in certain circumstances. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be carried out, taking the following factors into account:

- Hardship – where paying the debt would cause financial hardship.
- Ill health – where our recovery action might cause further ill health.
- Time – where the debt is so large compared to the person's income that it would take an unreasonable length of time to pay it all off.
- Cost – where the value of the debt is less than the cost of recovering it.
- Multiple debt – where someone owes more than one debt to the School.

In this situation an attempt to agree one repayment plan to include all debts will be established. If a debtor requests for '*repayment terms*' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Headteacher. A record of all such agreements entered into, will be retained. In all cases, a letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms for repayment. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable. The Headteacher will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further '*credit*' and in future will be required to pay in advance.

Costs of debt recovery

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Headteacher will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor. The debtor will be formally advised in writing that they will be required to pay the additional costs incurred by the school in recovering the debt. This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Resources Committee.