



Charging Policy

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What you can charge for and what you cannot is quite straightforward. Education in maintained schools (including Academies, Foundation and Trust schools) is provided free of charge during school hours. So, you cannot make a charge for these learning outside the classroom experiences. You also cannot charge if you are planning learning outside the classroom which is directly related to a statutory aspect of the National Curriculum¹, religious education or a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that pupils are being prepared for at the school. However, you may, in both circumstances, ask parents to make a voluntary contribution.

Allocating funding to learning outside the classroom as a curriculum priority is something which all schools should consider as part of their overall budgets. Learning outside the classroom should be seen as integrated in financial terms as well as in terms of learning.

Schools may fund some learning outside the classroom activities entirely or partly from their delegated core budgets. They are permitted to direct this funding towards young people in need, but are advised to do so in accordance with arrangements agreed by governors as part of the school's remissions policy. In other words, do not assume that this can happen without the prior support of the governing body.

Schools can also seek external funding. One helpful solution in this area is to define some activities as entitlement activities – central to learning and the curriculum – and to meet the costs from both within the school budget and by recourse to outside funds. Such funding might come from:

- DCSF-delegated budgets such as for personalised learning and extended schools
- Grant-giving bodies which fund volunteering work by young people
- Local charitable trusts specifically established to assist poorer families in the locality
- Councillor locality budgets enabling elected members to fund worthwhile local projects in their ward or constituency
- Fundraising
- Sponsorship
- The Youth Opportunities Fund, where young people in the 13–19 age range can ask for specific project-related funding
- Organisations who are keen to support particular types of visit; for example British Council or European Union funding supports certain foreign exchange programmes
- Bursaries where some activity and residential providers, mostly in the charitable sector, are able to offer bursaries to assist young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate.

All of these options are worth exploring. It is also important to note that parents and carers who are receiving a range of benefits including income support, jobseeker's allowance, disability allowance and tax credits can claim back the cost of any accommodation and subsistence.

It is common practice for schools to indicate the cost of a visit in the information supplied to parents, together with a request for a contribution, and a statement that the visit may not go ahead if parents are unwilling to contribute.

¹ It should be noted that 'part of the National Curriculum' is not restricted to learning outside the classroom experiences that are specifically subject based (e.g. geography or science fieldwork) and can include, for example, activities designed to fulfil requirements under the National Curriculum 'inclusion statement' (e.g. developing teamwork skills).



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As you would expect, this contribution has to be genuinely voluntary and you must be careful not to discriminate against parents and carers who do not contribute. A key issue is how to enable all young people, including those from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, to participate in and benefit from opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Nothing in law prevents you from asking for slightly more than the basic cost of the experience in order to balance your overall budget but it is good practice to be cautious where that is concerned. Some schools add a small and stated percentage to the cost of visits funded through voluntary contributions to create a 'benevolent fund' to assist families which would have difficulty in making the contribution. But ultimately it is up to parents whether, and how much, they choose to contribute.

If the experience is taking place largely outside school hours it can be considered to be an 'optional extra'. This is the case if it is not directly related to the national curriculum, religious education or a syllabus for a prescribed public examination which pupils are being prepared for at the school. These would be social or recreational visits, such as skiing or sightseeing in London, taking place at weekends or during holidays. However, if you are uncertain, take advice as to which category your planned experience falls into.

Reducing the cost

One of the most effective ways of achieving the inclusion of all young people in learning outside the classroom is by controlling the cost of the opportunities offered.

Don't overlook opportunities for learning outside the classroom on the school site including school wildlife areas, school ponds, adventure play areas, orienteering on the school site.

Consider how best to use the resources within walking distance, such as local parks or woodland, the local church or village.

Consider activities led by your own staff or volunteers, rather than instructors at a field study or activity centre.

Consider camping as an inexpensive residential opportunity, particularly when this is local, or even on your own or a neighbouring school site. Youth organisations such as the Scouts, Guides or the local youth service may be able to help with advice and equipment.

When the experience is defined as an optional extra, the parents and carers who consent to young people taking part can be charged the full cost of the experience including accommodation costs. What they must not be charged is any additional element to subsidise other young people. Parents and carers in receipt of benefits are unlikely to have their costs refunded. It is quite legitimate to explore other sources of funding for these activities. You may want to create a fund to help young people from poorer families participate in these activities – young people can feel very hurt when they miss out on activities that their more fortunate friends are able to do.

If you are charging for any activities, your governing body must draw up a charging policy which makes clear which activities you intend to charge for, and a remissions policy which sets out any circumstances in which you propose to remit those charges (e.g. for parents in receipt of certain benefits).

For further information on what schools can and cannot charge for, please see the following guidance on teachernet:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=8145



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