

Elsley Primary School



Charging, Remissions and Debt Recovery Policy

Approved by: Finance and Resources Committee **Written:** March 2025

Last reviewed on: March 2026

Next review due by: March 2027

1. Introduction

The law on charging in connection with education in maintained schools is set out in Sections 449–462 of the Education Act 1996. Section 457 requires the Governing Body to determine and keep under review a policy in respect of both charging and remission arrangements. No charge may be made by the school unless it has drawn up a statement of its policy.

As a maintained school with delegated financial responsibility, charging and remission arrangements are determined by the Governing Body, subject to statutory requirements.

This policy also sets out the school's approach to payment expectations and debt recovery, ensuring that public funds are managed responsibly and proportionately.

2. Charging Principles

2.1 Education During School Hours

Education provided during school hours is free of charge, except in circumstances permitted by law.

2.2 Individual Music Tuition

Charges may be made for individual or small-group music tuition where the teaching is not:

- Part of the National Curriculum
- Part of a public examination syllabus
- Part of the first access Wider Opportunities programme

Any charges will reflect the actual cost of provision.

2.3 Optional Extras

Charges may be made for activities defined as “optional extras”, including:

- Education provided outside school time that is not part of the National Curriculum, a public examination syllabus, or religious education
- Examination entry fees (where the pupil has not been prepared at the school)
- Transport not required to access education arranged by the Local Authority or Governing Body
- Board and lodging on residential visits

Charges will not exceed the actual cost of provision and will not include any subsidy for other pupils.

Participation in optional extras is voluntary and subject to parental agreement.

3. Voluntary Contributions

The school may request voluntary contributions for activities that take place during school hours.

Parents will be informed:

- That contributions are voluntary
- That there is no obligation to contribute
- That no child will be excluded on the basis of non-payment

Requests for contributions will be made sensitively and without pressure. Where insufficient voluntary contributions are received to make an activity viable, the activity may be cancelled.

4. Residential Visits

4.1 Charges

The school will not charge for:

- Education provided during school hours
- Education outside school hours where it forms part of the National Curriculum, public examination syllabus or religious education
- Supply teachers covering staff on residential visits

The school may charge for board and lodging, which will not exceed the actual cost.

4.2 Remissions

Parents who can demonstrate receipt of qualifying benefits will be exempt from paying board and lodging costs for residential visits, in accordance with statutory guidance.

Qualifying benefits include those specified by current Department for Education guidance, including Universal Credit (subject to eligibility thresholds).

Each residential visit will be reviewed to determine affordability and viability where remissions apply.

5. School Meals

All pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals. Currently, pupils in Years 3–6 are also funded for school meals under the Mayor of London scheme. Should this arrangement change in future, the school will review payment arrangements accordingly.

Where meals are chargeable, payment will be required in advance through the school's approved online payment system. The school does not accept cash payments.

6. Payment Expectations (Clubs, Trips and Activities)

Bookings for breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and chargeable activities must be made in advance. Payment is expected at the point of booking unless otherwise agreed.

The school aims to avoid debt wherever possible in order to ensure that funds allocated for education are not diverted to cover unpaid charges.

7. Debt Recovery Procedures

It is recognised that occasional arrears may arise for a variety of reasons. However, debts must not be allowed to accumulate.

The following staged approach will be applied:

Stage 1 – Informal Reminder

Parents will receive a reminder in person, by text or in writing where a balance is outstanding.

Stage 2 – First Reminder Letter

If payment is not received, a formal reminder will be issued. Parents will be invited to contact the school to agree a payment plan if necessary. Where appropriate, service provision may be paused until arrears are addressed.

Stage 3 – Formal Meeting

Where debts remain outstanding, a member of the Senior Leadership Team may meet with the parent to agree a repayment plan. Failure to engage may result in further recovery action in line with the school's financial procedures and delegated authority arrangements.

8. Safeguarding Considerations

The school recognises that financial hardship may be linked to safeguarding or welfare concerns. Debt recovery procedures will be applied sensitively and proportionately. Where appropriate, families may be signposted to support services.

Where concerns arise regarding a child's welfare, these will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required due to legislative changes or changes to funding arrangements.