

Charges, Remissions and Bad Debt Policy

FLAGG NURSERY SCHOOL

June 2021

Introduction

It is the School's aim that all pupils should have an equal opportunity to benefit from school activities. This policy sets out the School's approach to charging and remissions with the intention to ensure transparency in setting charges and ensure all children are provided with the chance to access all provisions on offer.

This policy is based on the Derbyshire County Council's Charges and Remissions Policy. It therefore represents not only the School's but also the Council's Policy on Charges and Remissions.

Sections 449-462 of the Education Act 1996 (revised in 2011) sets out the law on charging for school activities in maintained schools. Parents on low incomes and in receipt of certain benefits may be eligible for support in terms of contributions requested for school visits. Additionally, families in receipt of free school meals are entitled to an exemption from paying for the cost of board and lodging on residential visits. Further guidance can be accessed at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/706830/Charging_for_school_activities.pdf

Under Section 27 (1) of the Education Act 2002 governors have control over the use of school premises, subject to the local authority's general policy that all educational premises should be available whenever possible to provide for the wider educational and recreational needs of children, young people and adults. Therefore schools with available space are permitted to approve lettings in accordance with this policy. All education during school hours is free. We do not charge for any activity undertaken as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum.

1. Day visits within or mainly within school hours

When organising school trips or visits which enrich the curriculum and educational experience of the children, the School pays for all children attending but asks for parents/ carers accompanying their children to contribute to the cost of the visit.

2. Ingredients/materials for practical activities such as cookery and craft

These will be paid for out of School Fund. Parents are encouraged to get involved with "Friends of Flagg" events in order to raise money for the school fund.

3. Breakfast Club

Parents / Carers who choose to use the School's breakfast club will be informed in advance of the charges applicable which will be reviewed on an annual basis. The charges for the current year are:

-7.45-9 am (by prior arrangement)	£7.00
-8.00-9 am	£5.00
-8.30-9 am	£2.50

4. Paid Sessions

Where parents are not entitled to funded sessions e.g. if their child is a non-funded 2 years old or if they would like more than 15 hours when their child is over 3 and they are not entitled to the 30 hour offer then a charge will be made:

Morning or afternoon session (3 hours)	3 & 4 year olds	£15.00
	2 year olds	£16.50
Full day (6 hours)	3 & 4 year olds	£30.00
	2 year olds	£33.00
Additional hours (more than 3 hours & less than 6 hours)	3 & 4 year olds	£5.00 per hour
	2 year olds	£5.50 per hour

5. School Dinners

School dinners are currently available at a charge £2.20 per day. Dinners are provided by DCC but the money is collected by Flagg Nursery School.

6. Equality

The School is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents, carers and visitors irrespective of their race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age or pregnancy and maternity.

7. Management of Private Payments

The School uses a cashless system called Parent Pay and all charges will be posted on a parent's account including school dinner charges. **Please note that all sessions booked must be paid for including when the child is unwell. Exemptions to this are when the family is in self-isolation due to a positive Covid 19 test result or due to having symptoms of Covid 19. If the school closes for training, local lockdown or adverse weather for example, then sessions will not be charged for. Charges can be waived or reduced at the discretion of the Headteacher, subject to a family's circumstances. Please also note that one month's notice is required if a child leaves nursery before the end of the school year, fees will be charged for that notice period (this only relates to private payments and not funded sessions).**

Balances should be cleared on a weekly basis. When payment has not been received after a week, the school may continue to provide the service where it is felt that this is a temporary situation e.g. lost or forgotten money, temporary hardship etc. however, details are recorded on ParentPay and the SBO will inform the head teacher. A letter/text detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school reminding parents/carers to clear their balance. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

After a month and where a child continues to require the services provided, the School must establish if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

When the debt exceeds £200 for a child or family and a payment has not been made for more than a month a formal letter must be sent to the parent/carer informing them of their required actions.

If the debt exceeds £200 for a family and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing the arrears, the School will write to the parent/carer, explaining that the School is not obliged to provide services when bad debt is not recovered.

As well as ParentPay, payments can also be made by the following methods:

- The Government backed Tax-free childcare scheme.
- Childcare vouchers, we accept the following voucher payments:
 - Busy Bees
 - Computershare
 - Edenred
 - Fideliti
 - Kiddivouchers
 - RG Childcare
 - Care-4
 - Sodexo
- Cash by prior arrangement only
- Cheque made payable to 'Derbyshire County Council' by prior arrangement. Cheques for school dinners must be paid separately to nurse sessions.
- Bank transfer to our Extended Services bank account, only in exceptional circumstances.

Payments made by tax-free childcare, childcare vouchers and bank transfer will be manually credited to your ParentPay account on receipt of the payment. It is accepted that it may not be appropriate to make such payments a weekly basis and monthly payments are considered acceptable if paying by Tax Free Childcare of Childcare vouchers.

Cash and cheques are logged once received in school and a receipt is issued.

8. **Bad Debt**

Flagg Nursery School's Charging, Remissions and Bad Debt policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers who pay for services provided by Flagg Nursery School. The Local Authority is not accountable for the administration of Paid Services, therefore the responsibility falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

Paid provision is no different to any other business in that it has to be paid for by someone. This provision is available to children, but at a cost to the parent / carer

9. Monitoring and Recovery of Extended Services Debts

At each meeting of the Governing Body/Finance Committee, the Head Teacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding debt and the current / profiled position with regard to the overall profit or loss of the provision. If the provision is running at a loss, the Governors then will have to decide on the existence of the provision in school. The aim of this policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring a referral to the Local Authority's legal services. The School does, however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding debts with the support of the Local Authority Legal Services.

Where full or part payment for Services is to be made via voucher scheme, regular reconciliations should be performed to ensure all monies due is received from the voucher company to avoid the commencement of action with the parent should there be a delay in payment from the company.

All Write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Governing Body/Finance Committee following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Example Letter One

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

Services provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the School's financial records you have not paid for sessions/dinner money for your child (pupil name). As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt of £xx.

In order that there is no detriment to the school's budget, please clear your child's debt by making arrangements for the outstanding debt to be paid immediately on ParentPay. Once you have cleared the current debt I should be grateful if you could ensure that you keep your account in credit. The current cost of this provision is xx per hour / week.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Controlled upon completion

Example – Letter 2

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

Services provided to (Pupil Name)

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding debt that is showing on your account.

Despite previous correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of provision for your child is £x per hour, £x per day or £x per week.

I would ask that you please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately and take steps to ensure your account is kept in credit in the future.

As the School's budget will have to fund any overall debt incurred through paid for provision, it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. Unfortunately, if the debt is not cleared by xxxxx the sessions/dinners will no longer be provided to your child. The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and to inform the Local Authority.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher