

BLACK COUNTRY FEDERATION

CHARGING AND REMISSIONS POLICY

Brockmoor Primary School • Brierley Hill Primary School

POLICY OWNER	School Business Manager / Executive Directors
APPROVED BY	Governing Body
APPROVAL DATE	September 2026
REVIEW DATE	September 2027 or earlier if legislation/guidance changes
REVIEW CYCLE	Annual BCF review

Aspiration and opportunity for every child

1. Purpose

This policy sets out when Black Country Federation (BCF) may make a charge, when it may request a voluntary contribution, and when a charge will be remitted or reduced. It applies to Brockmoor Primary School and Brierley Hill Primary School.

BCF's starting point is simple: no pupil should be excluded from their statutory education because their family cannot or does not pay a charge that the law does not permit. Where charges are lawful, decisions will be transparent, reasonable and consistent.

2. Legal and guidance framework

BCF is a federation of local-authority-maintained community schools. The Governing Body must comply with sections 449 to 462 of the Education Act 1996. This policy has been written with regard to the Department for Education's current 'Charging for school activities' guidance and the current maintained-schools governance and online-publication guidance.

The Governing Body is responsible for approving this charging and remissions policy. The Executive Directors and School Business Manager are responsible for ensuring that it is implemented consistently. The policy will be published on both school websites.

The withdrawn DfE list of statutory policies is not relied upon as the current source of requirements. BCF uses the live legislation and current topic-specific DfE guidance.

3. Core principles

- Education provided during school hours is free, except where legislation specifically permits a charge.
- No charge will be made for admission to either school.
- BCF will distinguish clearly between a charge and a voluntary contribution.
- A pupil will not be treated differently because their parent or carer has not made a voluntary contribution.
- Where an activity cannot proceed without sufficient voluntary contributions, parents and carers will be told this clearly before commitments are made.
- Any lawful charge for an optional extra will be based on the actual cost of providing that activity and will not be used to subsidise another pupil.
- BCF will actively tell eligible low-income families about statutory remission of residential board and lodging and will consider additional discretionary support where resources allow.
- Charging decisions will support inclusion and access to opportunity, while remaining financially responsible.

4. Education for which BCF will not charge

Subject to the detailed statutory rules, BCF will not charge for:

- education provided during school hours, including materials, books, instruments or equipment needed for that education;
- education outside school hours where it forms part of the National Curriculum, religious education, or a prescribed public examination syllabus for which the pupil is being prepared at school;
- tuition in playing a musical instrument or vocal tuition where it is required as part of the National Curriculum, religious education or a prescribed public examination syllabus;
- entry for a prescribed public examination where the pupil has been prepared for it at school, subject to the statutory rules on examination entry and re-sits;
- education provided on a school trip during school hours;
- education provided on a trip outside school hours where the trip is required as part of the National Curriculum, religious education or a prescribed examination syllabus;
- supply-teacher cover for teachers accompanying pupils on residential visits;
- transport where charging is prohibited by the Education Act 1996, including transport the local authority is statutorily required to provide and transport arranged by the school or local authority to premises where a pupil is being educated.

5. Voluntary contributions

BCF may invite voluntary contributions to enrich the curriculum, including for visits, visitors, performances and experiences. A request for a voluntary contribution is not a charge.

- There is no obligation to contribute.
- No pupil will be excluded from an activity simply because their parent or carer is unwilling or unable to make a voluntary contribution.
- Pupils whose families do not contribute will not be treated differently.
- Requests will make the voluntary nature of the contribution clear.
- Parents and carers may be told that an activity may have to be cancelled if insufficient voluntary contributions are received.
- Where appropriate, BCF may use school funds, grants or other funding to subsidise an activity, but this is not guaranteed.
- Parents and carers may ask the school for information about how an activity is funded.

Activities supported by voluntary contributions may include museums, theatres, sporting visits, outdoor activities, curriculum visitors, workshops and other educational experiences. These are examples, not a list of chargeable optional extras.

6. Optional extras for which a charge may be made

BCF may charge for an optional extra where the law permits this and parental agreement has been obtained. Optional extras may include:

- education provided outside school hours that is not part of the National Curriculum, religious education or a prescribed public examination syllabus;
- certain examination entry fees where the pupil has not been prepared for the examination at school;
- transport that is not transport for which charging is prohibited;
- board and lodging on residential visits, subject to the statutory remission arrangements in section 8;
- extended-day services such as breakfast clubs, after-school childcare or other optional provision;
- materials, books, instruments or equipment where a parent or carer wishes their child to own the finished product or item;
- optional instrumental or vocal tuition where charging is permitted under the relevant regulations;
- other optional activities where a lawful charge is permitted.

7. Calculating charges

A charge for an optional extra will not exceed the actual cost attributable to providing that activity. BCF will not build a profit into charges.

- Permitted costs may include materials, books, instruments or equipment; buildings and accommodation; non-teaching staff; and appropriately engaged teaching staff where the charging rules permit this.
- The charge for an individual pupil will not include an element to subsidise pupils whose parents are unwilling or unable to pay.
- Where only a small proportion of an activity takes place during school hours, the charge will not include the cost of alternative provision for pupils who do not participate.
- Parental agreement is required before a pupil is provided with an optional extra for which a charge will be made.
- BCF may choose to subsidise a lawful charge from other permissible funding where this is affordable and consistent with the conditions attached to that funding.

8. Residential visits and statutory remission

Where a residential visit takes place during school hours, or is required as part of the National Curriculum, religious education or a prescribed examination syllabus, BCF will not charge for the education provided. A charge may be made for board and lodging, but it must not exceed the actual cost.

Parents and carers who can demonstrate that they are in receipt of a qualifying benefit are entitled to remission of the board and lodging charge for a residential visit where the statutory conditions are met. BCF will use the current qualifying-benefit list in DfE guidance and legislation at the time of the visit rather than hard-code income thresholds that may become outdated.

The current DfE categories include qualifying means-tested benefits such as Income Support; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; income-related Employment and Support Allowance; support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; the guarantee element of Pension Credit; and qualifying Child Tax Credit or Universal Credit arrangements, subject to the current statutory thresholds and conditions.

When BCF requests payment or contributions for a residential visit, it will make families aware that remission may be available and explain confidentially how to ask for support.

9. Additional BCF remission and financial support

Beyond statutory remission, BCF may wholly or partly remit a lawful charge where the Governing Body's policy, available resources or the circumstances of an individual family justify this. Discretionary remission is not an automatic entitlement and will be considered consistently and confidentially.

- Families experiencing financial hardship are encouraged to contact the school rather than withdraw a pupil from an opportunity.
- BCF may consider support from appropriate school funds or grants where their conditions allow.
- BCF will not state that Pupil Premium or PE and Sport Premium can automatically be used for a purpose unless that use is consistent with the current conditions and guidance for the funding.
- Any sibling reduction or discretionary subsidy will be determined for the particular activity rather than promised as a fixed federation-wide entitlement unless the Governing Body formally adopts such an arrangement.

10. Music tuition

Music provided as part of the ordinary curriculum is free. Charging for instrumental or vocal tuition will follow the Education Act 1996 and the current regulations and DfE guidance.

Where tuition is provided through Dudley Performing Arts or another external provider, the provider may operate its own lawful charging arrangements. Families will be given clear information about who is providing the tuition, what is included, the charge, any instrument-hire arrangements and any available remission or support before they agree to participate.

BCF will not retain historic provider-specific promises in this policy where the provider's offer or charging arrangements may change from year to year.

11. Swimming

Swimming and water-safety instruction provided as part of the National Curriculum will not be charged for. BCF may seek a voluntary contribution towards associated costs where lawful, but non-payment of a voluntary contribution will not exclude a pupil from their statutory curriculum entitlement.

12. Clubs, wraparound care and extended services

BCF may make charges for optional extended services and extra-curricular activities where charging is lawful. The price and terms will be made clear before a parent or carer agrees to the provision.

A club taking place outside school hours is not automatically chargeable: leaders must first consider whether the activity is part of the National Curriculum, religious education or prescribed examination provision and whether any other statutory restriction applies.

13. Materials, finished products and equipment

BCF will provide materials, books, instruments and equipment required for education where charging is prohibited. Where a parent or carer wishes to own a finished product, the school may charge for the materials or ingredients used, provided the legal conditions are met and the arrangement is made clear in advance.

14. Loss, damage and school property

BCF may seek payment for loss of or damage to school property where this has resulted from a pupil's wilful or negligent behaviour, provided the circumstances are considered fairly and any request is reasonable and consistent with applicable law and local-authority arrangements. This will not be used as a punitive charge.

Where damage raises a behaviour or safeguarding issue, this will be addressed separately through the appropriate policy and not reduced to a financial matter.

15. Examinations

BCF is a primary federation, so examination charging will rarely arise. If it does, the federation will follow the statutory rules in force at the time. No charge will be made for entry to a prescribed public examination where the pupil has been prepared for it at school, except where legislation permits a charge in specific circumstances.

16. Equality, SEND and inclusion

Charging and contribution arrangements will be applied fairly and in accordance with BCF's equality duties. Leaders will consider whether the way an activity is organised creates an avoidable barrier for a disabled pupil, a pupil with SEND or a family experiencing financial hardship.

The purpose of remission is not simply administrative compliance. Leaders should consider whether pupils are actually accessing the curriculum and wider opportunities. Where patterns show that cost is preventing participation, BCF will examine what can reasonably be changed.

17. Responsibilities and authorisation

Governing Body	Approve the policy; ensure charging arrangements comply with the law; determine the federation's remission framework; receive appropriate assurance.
Executive Directors	Ensure the policy is implemented consistently across both schools and that proposed charges are lawful.
School Business Manager	Provide operational and financial oversight; advise staff; ensure charges reflect actual costs; maintain appropriate records.
Staff organising activities	Check the charging basis before communicating with families; use approved wording; do not imply a voluntary contribution is compulsory.
Parents and carers	Provide agreement where a chargeable optional extra is offered and contact the school confidentially where remission or financial support may be relevant.

18. Complaints and queries

Questions about a proposed charge, voluntary contribution or remission should be raised with the school office or School Business Manager in the first instance. Complaints about the application of this policy will be considered through the BCF Complaints Policy and Procedure.

19. Publication, monitoring and review

Maintained schools must publish both their charging policy and their remissions policy. BCF combines these requirements in this single Charging and Remissions Policy and will publish the current version on the websites of both Brockmoor Primary School and Brierley Hill Primary School. A paper copy will be provided free of charge to a parent or carer on request.

BCF will review this policy annually as a federation control and sooner where legislation, DfE guidance, Dudley local-authority arrangements or BCF provision changes. Annual review is a BCF governance standard; the legal requirement is to have and publish compliant charging and remission arrangements.

The School Business Manager and Executive Directors will also review the operation of the policy where a new type of charge is proposed or evidence suggests that cost is becoming a barrier to participation.

20. Key sources

- Education Act 1996, sections 449 to 462.
- DfE: Charging for school activities.
- DfE: What maintained schools must or should publish online.
- DfE: Maintained schools governance guide.
- Current regulations governing charging for music tuition where applicable.
- Dudley local-authority financial and governance arrangements where applicable to maintained community schools.