Charging and Remissions Policy

Author/Reviewing member of staff	Mrs D Evans
Date updated	Autumn 2026
Reviewing Committee	Finance and Strategic Planning (FSP)
Proposed approval date	19 October 2026
Date of next review	Autumn 2027

Aims

Westacre Middle School aims to offer an enriching range of visits, residential experiences, clubs and activities for pupils in Years 5–7 while minimising financial barriers to participation. This policy explains when the school may charge, when contributions are voluntary and how families can access financial support.

Westacre will make arrangements clear, apply them consistently and treat concerns about affordability sensitively and confidentially. Our approach supports the school vision: Inspire, Challenge, Achieve.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is informed by Department for Education guidance on charging for school activities; sections 449–462 of the Education Act 1996, including section 457; the Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007; and relevant current guidance on free school meals and residential-visit remissions. It will be reviewed if applicable legal or governance arrangements change.

Definitions

Charge: a required payment for an activity or service for which charging is legally permitted.

Voluntary contribution: a payment requested but not required; non-payment cannot be used to exclude an eligible pupil from the activity.

Remission: full or partial cancellation of a charge which would otherwise be payable.

Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Governing body and FSP Committee

The governing body has overall responsibility for this policy. Approval and oversight are delegated to the Finance and Strategic Planning (FSP) Committee in accordance with Westacre's governance arrangements.

4.2 Headteacher, Business Lead and staff

The headteacher ensures that staff understand and consistently apply this policy. The headteacher and Business Lead monitor requests for payment, charges and remissions. Staff must explain whether a request is a charge or a voluntary contribution and refer unclear circumstances to the headteacher.

4.3 Parents and carers

At the start of the school year, Westacre will share an indicative calendar of trips and events so families can anticipate potential costs. Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school promptly and confidentially with queries or affordability concerns.

Where charges cannot be made

5.1 Education

Admission applications and education provided during school hours, including required materials, books, instruments and equipment.

Education outside normal school hours that is part of the National Curriculum, religious education or a prescribed public examination syllabus for which the school is preparing the pupil.

Instrumental or vocal tuition unless charging is expressly permitted, for example where tuition is requested by a parent or carer.

Entry for a prescribed public examination where the pupil has been prepared at school, and re-sits where the pupil is being prepared for the re-sit at school.

5.2 Transport

Home-to-school transport where the local authority has a statutory duty to provide it.

Transport to other premises where the local authority or governing body has arranged for pupils to receive education.

Transport necessary to meet an examination requirement where the school has prepared the pupil.

Transport provided in connection with an educational visit where charging is prohibited.

5.3 Residential visits

Education provided during school hours, or outside school hours where it is required curriculum, religious education or prescribed examination preparation.

The cost of supply teachers covering staff who are accompanying pupils on residential visits.

Where charges may be made

Westacre may make a charge only where permitted by law, including for materials that parents wish their child to own, certain optional extras, appropriate music tuition, board and lodging on residential visits, and community facilities or lettings under separate arrangements.

6.1 Optional extras

Optional extras can include education outside school hours which is not part of the National Curriculum, religious education or a prescribed examination syllabus; an examination entry fee where the school has not prepared a pupil for that examination; permitted transport; board and lodging on a residential visit; and optional after-school clubs and wraparound care.

Charges for optional extras will be no greater than the actual cost attributable to the activity per participating pupil. Costs can include relevant materials, equipment, premises or accommodation, non-teaching staff and staff contracted specifically to provide an optional extra. Where permitted, they may also include relevant costs of instrumental or vocal tuition.

No charge will include a subsidy for another pupil, the cost of alternative provision for non-participants or cover for teachers accompanying a residential visit. Parents must agree to their child participating in any chargeable optional extra and to the charge beforehand.

6.2 Music tuition

The school may charge for individual or group instrumental or vocal tuition requested by a parent or carer, up to the actual cost of provision. Charges will not be made where tuition is essential to the National Curriculum, provided through the Key Stage 2 first-access instrumental and vocal programme, or given to a child looked after by a local authority.

6.3 Residential visits

For residential visits, the school may charge no more than the actual cost of board and lodging. The board and lodging charge will be identified separately from any request for voluntary contributions towards other costs, and families will be told about statutory remission arrangements at the point the visit is offered.

Where a visit includes education for which charging is prohibited, no pupil will be excluded merely because a parent cannot or will not make a voluntary contribution. Westacre will consider available school funding and fundraising if an activity faces a shortfall and may need to cancel an activity if it cannot be financed.

6.4 Damage or loss to property

The headteacher may request a reasonable contribution towards repair or replacement of school or third-party property deliberately damaged, or lost or damaged through negligence, where the school bears the cost. Each case will be considered individually, including any relevant special educational needs or disabilities, circumstances and affordability; an amount may be reduced or waived.

Voluntary contributions

Westacre may request voluntary contributions to support visits, curriculum enrichment, entrance fees, educational transport and other activities that could not otherwise be offered. Swimming teaching arranged by school is free; a voluntary contribution may be sought towards associated transport where appropriate.

All communications will clearly say that contributions are voluntary and that there is no obligation to pay.

No pupil will be excluded or disadvantaged because their family cannot or chooses not to contribute.

The school will explain any fair arrangements for allocating places before requesting payment.

Where an activity depends on receiving sufficient contributions, this will be made clear at the outset. The school will first consider alternative funding; if insufficient funding is available, it may cancel the activity and promptly refund contributions.

Westacre will not pressure families through repeated or differential payment communications.

Activities and payment arrangements

8.1 Free Breakfast Club

Westacre is an early adopter of the Department for Education free breakfast club programme. Breakfast Club is available on school mornings from 7.45am to 8.15am at no charge. The free offer includes cereal, toast, fresh fruit, juice and water. Optional hot food choices may be purchased at separately published prices; purchase is not a condition of attendance. Current attendance arrangements and food choices are published by the school.

8.2 After-school clubs and wraparound care

Charges may apply to optional after-school clubs and wraparound care outside normal school hours. The school publishes current charges and booking conditions separately and confirms any charge before attendance. Where an external provider operates a club, parents will be informed about who sets and receives the payment.

8.3 Payments

Payments and voluntary contributions should normally be made through Arbor. Families unable to use Arbor should contact the school office for an alternative. Every payment request must identify whether it is a charge, a voluntary contribution or an optional purchase.

Remissions and financial support

9.1 Statutory residential-visit remission

Where a residential visit includes education for which charging is prohibited under the Education Act 1996, Westacre Middle School will provide full remission of board and lodging charges where a parent or carer meets the qualifying benefits criteria set out in section 457 of the Act and associated regulations. This is a statutory entitlement, not a discretionary discount.

The school will check eligibility against the statutory criteria applicable at the time of the visit, including relevant qualifying benefits and prescribed Universal Credit circumstances. Parents and carers will be informed of these arrangements when the visit is offered and will be able to provide evidence confidentially. Free school meals eligibility will not automatically be taken as proof of entitlement to residential remission; the applicable statutory criteria will be checked. Where entitlement is confirmed before a visit and the relevant charge has already been paid, the school will arrange reimbursement.

9.2 Discretionary financial support

In addition to statutory entitlements, the headteacher may authorise full or partial assistance for families facing financial hardship, within delegated financial authority and available funds. Decisions will reflect individual circumstances, the educational value of the activity and available funding, and will be recorded securely. Discretionary decisions do not reduce statutory entitlements.

Parents and carers may contact the headteacher or Business Lead in confidence where costs risk preventing participation.

9.3 School uniform support

Westacre has a stock of good-quality pre-loved school uniform and PE kit to support families. Parents and carers may enquire confidentially at Reception.

9.4 Free school meals registration

Parents are encouraged to check current free school meals eligibility and apply through Worcestershire County Council. The school office can support families with the process. Eligibility, associated pupil premium funding and any expanded entitlement are governed by the criteria in force at the time and must not be assumed to confer identical residential remission rights.

Monitoring and review

The headteacher and Business Lead will review how the school implements charges, voluntary contributions and remissions. The FSP Committee will review this policy annually, or earlier if legislation, provision or governance arrangements change. Following approval, the policy will be published on the school website and provided on request.

Reference documents

DfE: Charging for school activities

Education Act 1996, sections 449–462 (including section 457)

Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007

Current DfE and Worcestershire County Council guidance on free school meals

Westacre breakfast club, wraparound care and visits information