



The Circle Trust Document: **Charging and Remissions Policy**

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Approver:	Trustees
Owner:	Finance Trustees
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Changes History:

Version	Date	Amended by:	Substantive changes:	Purpose
1.0	18.9.18	Exec Head	New Document	First release
1.1	25.1.21	Exec Head	Exemption for materials to be owned by parents/carers	Updated
1.1	21.6.21	SBM	Adapt and Adopt for the Emmbrook School	Adaption
1.1	29.6.21	Local Advisory Board	No further changes made	Approval by the Local Advisory Board

1. Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1. The position of The Circle Trust is clear, that a child or young person's education should not be compromised by the ability of their parents or carers to pay.
- 1.2. The Circle Trust is committed to work with absolute financial integrity and recognises the importance of proper stewardship of public funds.
- 1.3. Schools are required by law to publish a policy on charging for activities. The Education Act 1996 establishes the basic principle that the education provided should be free of charge. This basic underlying principle requires that there should be no school admission charge and no charge for any related activity which takes place during school time.
- 1.4. Exceptions agreed by the Local Advisory Board of each school to this general statement are set out in Section 5 of this policy
- 1.5. The Circle Trust adheres to the DfE guidance 'Charging for School Activities'
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/706830/Charging_for_school_activities.pdf

2. The Aims and Objectives of the Charging and Remissions Policy

- 2.1. The Circle Trust had developed this policy to be clear about our attitude to charging or remissions. This policy:
 - 2.1.1. Shows all stakeholders that The Circle Trust manages its finances in a fair, transparent, consistent, considered and responsible way
 - 2.1.2. Gives clarity regarding the responsibilities of Trustees, the Executive Headteacher, Local Advisory Boards and Headteachers

3. The Benefits of an effective Charging and Remissions Policy

- 3.1. An effective Charging and Remissions Policy will add value to The Circle Trust, supporting the Trust's objectives by:
 - 3.1.1. Acting in accordance with our Trust's core value of inclusion
 - 3.1.2. Ensuring appropriate stewardship of all Trust finances
 - 3.1.3. Protecting the Trust's reputation
 - 3.1.4. Ensuring compliance with all legislation

4. Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1. The Trustees have a fundamental role to:
 - 4.1.1. Approve the Charging and Remissions Adapt and Adopt Policy ensuring the policy is in line with The Circle Trust's core values

- 4.1.2. Ensure the policy complies with current legislation
- 4.1.3. Regularly review the Charging and Remissions Policy, approve changes or improvements to key elements of its processes and procedures
- 4.2. The Executive Headteacher will:
 - 4.2.1. Operationally adhere to the Charging and Remissions Policy
 - 4.2.2. Monitor and review the implementation of the Charging and Remissions Policy across the Trust
 - 4.2.3. Provide a mechanism for any changes to the Charging and Remissions Policy to be disseminated and discussed by Local Advisors and Headteachers
- 4.3. The Local Advisors will:
 - 4.3.1. Adapt and adopt the Trust Charging and Remissions Policy for their school
 - 4.3.2. Adhere to the Charging and Remissions Policy and ensure it is properly implemented
- 4.4. The Headteacher will:
 - 4.4.1. Operationally adhere to the Charging and Remissions Policy

5. Charging and Remissions

- 5.1. The Education Act 1996 establishes the basic principle that the education provided by any school for its registered pupils should be free of charge. This basic underlying principle requires that there should be no school admission charge and no charge for any related activity, which takes place during school time.
- 5.2. Exceptions to this general statement are as follows:
 - In relation to instrumental lessons. Although the law states that, in general, all education provided during school hours must be free, instrumental and vocal music tuition is an exception to that rule
 - Where parents have indicated that they wish to have the finished product from a particular lesson e.g. individual craft items
 - The school can charge for materials where the pupil's parent wishes them to own the materials e.g. for the use and purchase of an electronic device
 - An examination entry fee may be charged to parents if: a pupil fails without good reason to complete the requirements of any public examination where the school paid the entry fee
- 5.3. Within the Education Act it is possible for schools to ask for voluntary contributions from parents/carers
- 5.4. Any charge voluntary or otherwise must not exceed the actual cost of providing the activity divided equally by the number of children or young people participating. It must not therefore include an element of subsidy for any other pupils wishing to participate in the activity whose parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay the full charge

- 5.5. The Circle Trust therefore agrees that in respect of educational visits and/or special events:
- 5.6. If the activity cannot be funded without voluntary contributions, the Headteacher will make this clear to parents/carers at the outset there is no obligation to make any contribution.
- 5.7. No child or young person should be excluded from an activity simply because his or her parents are unwilling or unable to pay. If insufficient voluntary contributions can be raised to fund a special event or educational visit, or the school cannot fund it from some other source, then it must be cancelled.
- 5.8. Voluntary contributions can be invited from parents/carers towards the cost of the special events or educational visits, which are related to the curriculum. Such contributions will be genuinely voluntary. When making requests for voluntary contributions, parents must not be made to feel pressurised into paying as it is voluntary and not compulsory
- 5.9. Requests for voluntary contribution will be set out by letter to parents/carers.
- 5.10. The letter, asking for support, will outline the proposed visit or special event, cost, educational value and its relationship to the curriculum.
- 5.11. If insufficient voluntary contributions are received and the educational visit or special event is considered by the Headteacher to not be financially viable then it will be cancelled and any monies received will be returned.
- 5.12. Where a child or young person's family is experiencing financial hardship such that they would not be able to participate in the activity, limited support may be available from the school. Any such support will be at the discretion of the Headteacher.
- 5.13. The Circle Trust therefore agrees that in respect to other charges:
- 5.13.1. Optional visits or special events occurring outside of school hours will be charged for in full.
- 5.13.2. Charges may be made by the school for damages caused by a child or young person for example: furniture or fitting such as broken windows or the defacement or damage to text books
- 5.14. The Circle Trust is empowered to recover this loss and resultant costs as a civil debt.
- 5.15. Unpaid charges legally recoverable will also be recouped, together with resultant costs, as a civil debt.
- 5.9 Where a student qualifies for the Pupil Premium Grant the Local Advisors will offer to support that student's family with a voluntary contribution towards the trip or special event as follows:

Parents who can prove they are in receipt of any of the following benefits will be exempt from paying the cost of board and lodging for residential visits:

- 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 guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided that Working Tax Credit is not also received and the family's annual gross income does not exceed £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on (this is paid for 4 weeks after an individual stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit (if the application was made on or after 1 April 2018, the family's income must be less than £7,400 per year – after tax and not including any benefits)

Where a student qualifies for the Pupil Premium Grant the Local Advisors will offer to support that student's family with the costs of other activities on a case by case basis.

6. Charging and Remissions in respect to Nurseries

- 6.1. A nursery in addition to free hours of entitlement may also offer additional sessions that can be paid for by parents/carers including lunch provision.
- 6.2. The Circle Trust charges for additional sessions and lunch provision in advance to prevent parental debt to the school.
- 6.3. If a debt were to accumulate, The Circle Trust will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debts as part of our management of public funds.
- 6.4. A deposit is required on accepting a place in a charged session at a school. The place cannot be secured without the deposit and a signed agreement. The contract details the dates that payments are due for the academic year and the amounts to be paid. The payments are all made in advance, for the term ahead.
- 6.5. In cases of loss, damage or breakages of nursery books or activity packs on loan to parents/carers the school can make a charge to cover the cost of replacements.

7. Debt recovery

- 7.1. The debt recovery process will observe the relevant financial regulations in accordance with the Education Reform Act 1996 and guidance set out in the Scheme for the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and Schedule 14 to the Act, School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2014 and any other legal requirements.

7.2. **Difficulties with payment.** Debtors are expected, whenever possible, to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue payment' reminder. As part of our charging process, parents are offered an opportunity to discuss difficulties with making a payment with the Headteacher. It may be possible for the school to break the payments down into more manageable chunks through a payment plan, in some cases, a letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms for repayment. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be carried out, taking the following factors into account:

- **Hardship** where paying the debt would cause financial hardship.
- **Ill health** where our recovery action might cause further ill health.
- **Time** where the debt is so large compared to the person's income that it would take an unreasonable length of time to pay it all off.
- **Cost** where the value of the debt is less than the cost of recovering it.
- **Multiple debt** where someone owes more than one debt to the School. In this situation an attempt to agree one repayment plan to include all debts will be established.

7.3. **Failure to Settle Debts**

7.4. **Initial 'overdue payment' reminder and first written 'overdue payment' reminder.** If a payment has not been received by the allocated date, the Headteacher will contact the parents within 2 working days. An email will then be sent to parents to re-iterate this information, and a copy will be kept in the school files.

7.5. **Second written 'overdue payment' reminder** Within a week of an outstanding balance not being received, an email will be sent to parents reminding them of the balance owed and setting a new deadline for payment of 2 weeks after the original deadline for payment. A copy of this email will be kept in the school's files. At this point parents will be offered the opportunity to talk to the Headteacher about the remissions procedures. Parents will be informed at this stage that their child's space in the additional paid sessions will be offered to another family if the balance is not received.

7.6. **Final steps to settle the debt.** Should the balance remain outstanding by the extended deadline the child will not be able to attend the charges sessions at the nursery, and the deposit will not be refunded. A letter will be sent to parents from the Headteacher informing them of this, and a copy of the letter will be kept in the school's files and reported to The Circle Trust's Finance Trustees.

7.7. **Reporting of outstanding debt levels** The Chief Finance Officer with the School Business Manager will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is monitored each half term. Records will be maintained to detail individual debts and the total value of debt to the school