THAMESFIELD COLLEGE

CHANGING LIVES | CREATING FUTURES

Charging and Remissions Policy

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Changing Lives | Creating Futures

Policy statement

Thamesfield College protects access to education. This policy explains which costs must be met by the school, when a lawful charge may be considered, and how families can seek remission or help with costs.

Document control information

Policy name	Charging and Remissions Policy
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1. Purpose and current arrangements

Thamesfield College aims to ensure that financial circumstances do not prevent pupils from learning, participating or preparing for the next stage of their life or education. Charging decisions must be lawful, clear, fair and consistent with the school's values of Integrity, Respect and Perseverance.

The school currently makes no compulsory charges for pupil educational activities. This policy does not introduce an activity fee or a schedule of new charges. Where the school considers a future charge, the activity and charging arrangements must first be approved under this policy and explained to parents and carers before they agree to take part.

This policy applies at both sites and to school-organised activities. It covers charges to parents and carers. Payments by referring schools or the local authority for commissioned provision, and community lettings, are governed by separate agreements.

A charge is a compulsory payment for a specifically permitted item or service. A remission is a full or partial waiver of an otherwise lawful charge. A voluntary contribution is a donation: it is not a charge or a condition of participation.

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Management Committee determines and keeps under review the charging and remissions arrangements, approves this policy and any material change to the school's charging approach, and monitors its implementation. The Headteacher implements the policy, approves individual activities within the agreed arrangements and authorises discretionary support within delegated financial limits.

The School Business Manager checks the legal basis and calculation of proposed charges, confirms remission eligibility, maintains confidential financial records and ensures that communications distinguish charges from voluntary contributions. Staff must obtain approval before requesting money and refer any uncertainty to the Headteacher or School Business Manager. Parents and carers are encouraged to raise questions or financial difficulties privately at the earliest opportunity.

3. Education and activities provided free

The school will not charge for:

- Admission applications or access to a school place.
- Education provided during school hours, including the materials, books, equipment and instruments needed to take part.
- Education outside school hours where it is part of the National Curriculum where applicable, a syllabus for a prescribed public examination for which the school is preparing the pupil, or religious education.
- Entry to a prescribed public examination, or a resit, where the school has prepared or is preparing the pupil for that examination, subject only to the limited wasted-fee provision in section 6.
- Required transport to or from school where the local authority has a statutory duty to provide it; transport to other premises where the school or local authority has arranged the pupil's education; and transport needed to meet an examination requirement for which the school has prepared the pupil.
- Transport incidental to education that must be provided free, including qualifying educational visits, or supply cover for teachers accompanying a residential visit.

The cost of reasonable adjustments and support required to meet the school's duties to a disabled pupil will not be passed to the family as a condition of participation. No pupil will be denied required education or essential learning materials because a payment is outstanding.

4. Permitted charges and optional extras

Materials and optional activities

A charge may be considered for materials, books, instruments, equipment or a finished product where the parent or carer freely chooses to own the item. For example, a parent may agree in advance to purchase a product made in a practical subject. Payment must not be a condition of participating in the lesson, and the school will provide the resources needed for learning.

An optional extra is a genuinely optional service or activity for which charging is permitted. This may include education wholly or mainly outside school hours that is not protected by section 3; examination entry where the school has not prepared the pupil; permitted optional transport; residential board and lodging; or an optional extended-day service.

Before any optional charge is introduced, families will receive the purpose of the activity, the amount and calculation of the charge, any available remission, payment and cancellation arrangements, and the choices available. Participation requires parental agreement. An existing free service will not become chargeable simply because it appears among these examples.

Calculating a charge

A charge must not exceed the actual permitted cost of providing the optional extra, divided equally among the participating pupils. Permitted costs can include materials, accommodation, non-teaching staff and staff specifically contracted to provide that optional activity, within the statutory rules. The school will not make a profit or add a compulsory subsidy for pupils whose families do not pay. Charges must not include the cost of alternative provision for non-participants or ordinary supply cover for accompanying teachers.

Instrumental and vocal tuition

Where offered and specifically requested by a parent or carer, individual or group instrumental or vocal tuition may be charged for within the legal exceptions. A charge must not exceed the cost of provision. There will be no charge where tuition must be provided free as part of the curriculum or examination preparation, under the first-access Key Stage 2 programme, or for a pupil looked after by a local authority.

5. Residential visits

Education on a residential visit must be free where it takes place during school hours or otherwise falls within the protected education described in section 3. Board and lodging may lawfully be charged at no more than actual cost, subject to the school's decision to introduce a charge and the remission rules in section 8. The school will identify board and lodging separately from other costs.

Visits partly during school hours

For a non-residential activity, if 50% or more of the activity takes place during school hours, it is treated as taking place during school hours. Travel during school hours counts in that calculation; the midday break does not count as school hours.

For a residential visit, compare the number of school sessions taken up by the visit with the number of half-days spent on it. If school sessions equal or exceed 50% of the half-days, the visit is treated as taking place during school hours. A school day has two sessions; a half-day is a 12-hour period ending at noon or midnight. The School Business Manager will check the classification before any charge is proposed. Education required to be free remains free even where a visit is classified outside school hours.

6. Examinations

The school will pay the entry fee for a prescribed public examination where the pupil has been prepared for that syllabus at the school, including a resit for which the school is preparing the pupil. The school will not request a deposit or refundable fee because of concerns about future attendance, conduct or compliance with examination rules.

Under section 453 of the Education Act 1996, the school may recover an entry fee it has paid or is liable to pay only where the pupil has failed, without good reason, to meet an examination requirement for that syllabus. Recovery is considered after the failure, case by case, and is limited to the fee permitted by that section. It is not a fine or a general behaviour sanction.

Before deciding that a fee should be recovered, the Headteacher will establish the facts, invite the pupil's and parent's explanation, consider relevant evidence and determine whether there was good reason. Illness, mental health, SEND, bereavement, safeguarding circumstances and whether appropriate support or adjustments were in place must be considered where relevant. The school will explain the decision and amount in writing. Families may ask the Headteacher to review it and may use the school's Complaints Policy if the matter remains unresolved.

An entry for which the school has not prepared the pupil may be chargeable only where the law permits, the cost has been explained and the parent or carer has agreed in advance. This does not create an entitlement to enter any examination or override examination-board requirements.

7. Voluntary contributions

The school may invite voluntary contributions towards an activity or the wider benefit of the school. Every request will state clearly that payment is voluntary, that there is no obligation to contribute, and that a pupil will have an equal opportunity to take part whether or not their family contributes.

Staff will not pressure families, treat contributions as a debt, publish who has paid or exclude a pupil because a contribution has not been made. Where places are limited, the allocation method will be explained in advance and will not favour contributing families.

If an activity depends on sufficient contributions, families will be told this at the outset. The school will consider other funding before cancelling the activity for everyone. Unused contributions will be returned where appropriate; retaining them for another purpose requires the contributor's agreement.

8. Remissions and help with costs

Statutory residential remission

Where the education on a residential visit must be provided free, the school will remit the full board-and-lodging charge for a pupil whose parent meets the qualifying benefit conditions under section 457(4) of the Education Act 1996 and the applicable regulations. This is an entitlement, not a discretionary hardship award.

Qualifying categories include Universal Credit in the circumstances prescribed for residential remissions; Income Support; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; income-related Employment and Support Allowance; and any other prescribed benefit or support, including qualifying asylum support and the guarantee element of Pension Credit. Eligibility must relate to a period wholly or partly within the time spent on the trip.

The School Business Manager will check the current statutory conditions, including any earnings test or other prescribed circumstances, before a board-and-lodging charge is requested. School-meal or pupil-premium records may help identify families, but do not replace that check. Changes to free-school-meal eligibility must not be assumed to change residential-remission rules automatically. Families will be told about their

entitlement when the visit is offered and helped to establish eligibility confidentially. Only necessary evidence will be requested.

Discretionary help and confidentiality

The school will also consider full or partial remission, a subsidy or instalments where a family faces financial hardship, a sudden change in circumstances or another significant barrier to participation, whether or not the statutory benefit criteria are met. Families should contact the School Business Manager or Headteacher privately. Staff may raise a concern on a family's behalf with appropriate sensitivity.

The Headteacher decides discretionary assistance within the approved budget and financial delegation; a decision outside those limits is referred through the Management Committee's financial arrangements. Decisions and reasons are recorded confidentially and applied fairly. The school will not recover the cost of remissions through a compulsory extra charge to other participating families.

9. Damage and loss

Where property is lost or damaged, the school may seek a reasonable contribution towards evidenced repair or replacement costs after establishing what happened and considering the circumstances. Any request must be proportionate and have a lawful basis; it must not be described as a charge for education or an automatic fine.

The pupil and family will have an opportunity to respond. The Headteacher will consider age, understanding, SEND, accidental damage, the school's own arrangements and hardship. Any amount sought will be limited to the actual reasonable cost, allowing for the condition and age of the item. A pupil's access to education, required materials or examinations will not depend on payment. Behaviour and safeguarding responses are handled under the relevant policies.

10. Administration, publication and review

The School Business Manager will retain activity approvals, cost calculations, parental agreements, remission decisions, receipts and any refund arrangements in line with the school's financial procedures and retention schedule. Families will receive clear payment information and a record of payments. Cancellations and refunds will be dealt with fairly under the terms communicated before agreement and applicable consumer law.

Queries about an amount or remission should first be raised with the School Business Manager, then the Headteacher. Unresolved concerns may be raised through the school's published Complaints Policy. Information about a family's finances will be restricted to staff who need it to administer support and will not be shared with other families.

This policy is published on the school website and is available on request, including in an accessible format. The Headteacher and School Business Manager will review it annually, with Management Committee approval of the policy and material changes. The next review is November 2027, or sooner if the law, guidance or school arrangements change. A future charging schedule must be approved and communicated before it is used.

Legal framework and reference documents

Education Act 1996, sections 449–462, particularly sections 451–457; the Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007; the regulations prescribing benefit conditions for residential remissions; and the Equality Act 2010.

DfE, Charging for school activities (May 2018; current published edition checked 13 November 2026): https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charging-for-school-activities

DfE, What maintained schools must or should publish online: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online

Legislation: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/part/VI/chapter/III