CHARGES, REFUNDS AND REMISSIONS POLICY

1. Introduction

Hitchin Girls' School is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all students, regardless of financial circumstances, and has established the following policy and procedures to ensure that no child is discriminated against by our offering of school trips, activities and educational extras.

With the exception of individual music tuition no compulsory charge will be made for any curriculum related activities where more than 50% of the time for that activity is within normal school hours, nor will any charge be made for any essential material or equipment used as part of the normal school curriculum.

There will be some trips or activities which the school cannot charge for but which the school considers would be beneficial to the students. In this case the school may ask for voluntary contributions. No student will be excluded from the activity or treated differently because they, their parents or carers cannot or do not make a contribution. However, if voluntary contributions are not sufficient then it may be that the planned activity or trip cannot go ahead.

In the case of residential visits, parents are asked to pay for the cost of board and lodging even if they occur mainly during school time and to make voluntary contributions to cover travel and tuition costs.

School funds are inadequate to cover all the school's many activities and outings. Parents, therefore, are asked to make voluntary contributions for visits or materials where they wish to own the product.

2. Charging: Curriculum-related activities taking place mainly during school hours

2.1 Voluntary contributions – parents can be asked to make a voluntary contribution for:

- Travel costs and tuition costs for any activity or visit
- Material costs for any activity – a general contribution could be requested to support funding the cost of art or technology projects, for example, and the actual cost charged if parents wish to retain the finished product.

No student will disadvantaged because of lack of voluntary contribution but the school reserves the right to determine which projects will be undertaken by groups of students

2.2. Charges may be made for the following:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment, where they will be owned by the student or parent
- Optional extras (see section 3)
- Music and vocational tuition (see section 7)
- Loss of or damage to school property

3. Optional Extras

3.1 We may charge parents for the following optional extras:

- Activities taking place mainly outside school hours (including the lunch hour) that is not:
    - Part of the national curriculum.
    - Part of a syllabus for a prescribed public examination that the pupil is being prepared for at the school.
    - Religious education.
- Examination entry fees where the pupil has not been prepared for the examinations at the school
- Transport, other than that arranged by the Local Authority for the pupil to be provided with education
- Board and lodging for a pupil on a residential visit

3.2 When calculating the cost of optional extras, the school will take into account the following:

- Materials, books, instruments or equipment provided in relation to the optional extra
- The cost of buildings and accommodation
- Non-teaching staff costs
- Teaching staff (including teaching assistants) costs where they are engaged under a contract for services purely to provide an optional extra
- The cost, or an appropriate proportion of the costs, for teaching staff employed to provide vocal tuition or tuition in playing a musical instrument

3.3 Voluntary contributions may be requested for optional extras. These costs may include the travel expenses of accompanying teachers.

3.3 The school will aim only to cover costs but is not obliged to refund any surplus above actual costs. It may do so if it wishes; otherwise any surpluses which may arise will be applied to the School General Account to assist with other activities.

3.4 Participation in any optional activity will be on the basis of parental choice and a willingness to meet such charges as are made.

4. School Trips and Visits

4.1 No student is ever excluded from an activity for financial reasons and there is remission of charges in cases of financial difficulty. Each case is judged on its individual merits. Where a residential trip takes place wholly, or mainly, during school hours, students whose parents are in receipt of the following support payments will, in addition to having a free school lunch entitlement, also be entitled to the remission of the charge for board and lodging:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support;
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- Child Tax Credit, provided the parent is not entitled to Working Tax Credit and their annual income, assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs does not exceed the annual limit
- The Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit*
- An income related employment and support allowance

* These allowances were those appropriate at the time of ratification of this policy by the Governors but may alter from time to time as a result of changes in legislation or government policy.

5. Refunds for school trips and Visits

5.1 If after completion of a trip or journey a surplus exists, the money will be applied as follows:

1) If the surplus is greater than 5% of the contribution per head, subject to a minimum of £5, then a refund of the full amount of the surplus will be offered to parents.
2) If the surplus is less than 5% of the contribution per head or less than £5, the surplus will be placed in the school fund.

6. Public Examinations

6.1 No charges are made for entering students for public examinations that are set out in regulations (which include GCSEs and A Levels).

However, an examination entry fee may be charged to parents if:

- the examination is on the set list, but the student was not prepared for it at the school;
- the examination is not on the set list, but the school arranges for the student to take it;
- a student fails without good reason to complete the requirements of any public examination where the Governing Body or Local Authority originally paid or agreed to pay the entry fee.

If the school agrees to accept an external candidate for an examination, a £50 administration fee will be charged, along with the cost of any additional invigilation that is required.

A fee will also be applied for examination retakes. Further details are available from the Examinations Officer.

6.2 Examination re-marks
If a student or their parents consider it to be in the best interests of the student to request that an examination is re-marked, any fees involved must be covered by the student or their parents. If the awarding body changes the overall grade of the result, the school will not be charged by the awarding body and the parent/student will have their fees refunded.

7. Music Tuition

7.1. Music tuition is the only exception to the rule that all education provided during school hours must be free. The Charges for Music Tuition (England) Regulations 2007 allow for charges to be made for vocal or instrumental tuition provided either individually or to groups of any size – provided that the tuition is at the request of the student's parents.

7.2 Remission of music fees

50% remission of music fees is given on half-hour G.C.S.E. lessons and one-hour A Level lessons which are arranged through the Hertfordshire Music Service and which take place at the North Herts. Music Centre during the school day. Further information is available from the School Bursar. Remission of music fees may be available for students having individual tuition whose parents are in receipt of the benefits shown above. Parents should contact Hertfordshire Music Service for further information.

8. Damaged or lost items

The school may charge parents for the cost of replacing items broken, damaged or lost due to their child's behaviour.

NB: The Hitchin Education Foundation responds generously to requests from the school to fund a wide range of activities, both in and out of school, for groups and individuals.

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