



**St John's C of E Primary School**

**Charging, Refunds,  
Remissions and  
Dinner Money Arrears Policy**

Model Juniper Education Policy	Updated November 2025
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To be reviewed	To be reviewed when notified of updates

## Change Log

Section	Changes
2.5	Swimming Pool charges rephrased as 'voluntary contribution'
Appendix A-D	Dinner Money Debt Collection Process and Model Letters

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# St John's C of E Primary School

## Charging, Refunds, Remissions and Dinner Money Arrears Policy

### Our Vision

Learn Together • Achieve Together • Celebrate Together  
“and let your light shine” Matthew 5:16

### Our Mission Statement

To enable all children to achieve their true potential in a caring and inclusive community based on Christian values.

### Our Values

Respect • Responsibility • Kindness • Truthfulness • Perseverance

## 1.0 AIMS, LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

The school aims to have a clear, robust process in place for charging, refunds, and remissions; this policy clearly sets out the activities that are chargeable, when charges will and will not be made, the management of refunds and the process for claiming remission.

Clearly set out the types of activity that can be charged for and when charges will and will not be made.

Offer a range of activities and visits whilst minimising the financial barriers that may prevent some students from taking full advantage of these opportunities

The governing body has overall responsibility for approving and monitoring the implementation of this policy but can delegate to a sub-committee according to their terms of reference and the school's financial regulations.

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring all staff are familiar with the content of this policy and that it is being applied consistently.

Staff are responsible for implementing this policy and notifying the headteacher of any specific circumstances where they are unsure of that implementation.

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on charging for school activities and the Education Act 1996, sections 449 to 462 of which set out the law on charging for school activities in England.

### 1.1 Definitions

**Charge:** the fee payable for a specifically defined activity

**Refund:** the return of monies previously paid for a specifically defined activity.

**Remission:** the cancellation of / exemption from a charge that would normally be payable.

## 2.0 CHARGING POLICY

### 2.1 School Meals

The charge for a school meal will be set annually by the governing body following consideration of the Catering Business Plan as part of the annual budget setting process.

All meals taken by pupils who are not eligible for free school meals will be chargeable. Parents/carers are expected to make prompt payment using the school's online payment system.

School meals should be paid for in advance. Where payments are not received and accounts fall into arrears, the school will follow its **Dinner Money Debt Recovery Procedure (Appendix A)** to ensure that arrears do not accumulate and that parents/carers are supported in resolving any outstanding balance.

Where appropriate, the school may contact parents/carers to discuss outstanding balances and agree suitable repayment arrangements. A sensitive and supportive approach will always be taken where families may be experiencing financial difficulty.

If arrears are not resolved within the timescales set out in the Dinner Money Debt Recovery Procedure, the school may withdraw the provision of school meals and request that a packed lunch is provided until the balance is cleared.

There is no charge for pupils who are entitled to Free School Meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals.

## **2.2 Educational visits**

The school:

- will seek voluntary contributions from parents/carers where applicable
- will not exclude a child from participating in an activity during the school day on financial grounds

Where 10% or more of parents decline to make the requested voluntary contribution (their identity will remain confidential), or the contributions shortfall is £50.00 or more, then the visit or activity will not take place.

## **2.3 Residential activities**

The costs of residential activities can be high and such activities may only continue to be available if sufficient costs are recovered.

Charges that apply:

- travel costs – transport to and from the residential activity
- board and lodging
  - full cost of board and lodging on residential trips whether or not it takes place during school hours
  - parents / carers will be informed of the cost before the activity takes place
- costs of supply staff engaged to cover the staff accompanying pupils on a residential trip where the trip takes place during term time
- full cost recovery for residential activities that take place outside of school hours

The school can subsidise the cost of any residential trip for children of families claiming free school meals.

No charge applies:

- where parents / carers in receipt of certain benefits may claim exemption in accordance with the Remissions guidance below
- for education costs incurred on any visit during school hours
- for education costs incurred on any visit outside school hours if it is part of the school's curriculum

## **2.4 Music Tuition**

Instrumental tuition or singing lessons do not form part of the curriculum but are an additional activity arranged by the school and delivered by specialist tutors either on an individual basis or as part of a group, following parental request. The cost of such lessons is dependent on the charges applied by the tutors, the size of the group, the duration and frequency of each lesson.

The school operates on full cost recovery basis. However, in order to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils, charges for music tuition within school hours for pupils eligible for free school meals or children in care will be considered for remission in accordance with this policy (see remissions section).

## 2.5 Swimming Lessons

Swimming forms part of the National Curriculum for primary schools and the school therefore does not charge for the teaching of swimming which takes place during school hours.

However, St John's maintains its own on-site swimming pool. The ongoing operation, maintenance, heating and staffing of the pool represents a significant cost to the school.

In order to support the sustainability of this provision, the governing body sets an annual **suggested voluntary contribution towards swimming pool provision** following consideration of the Swimming Pool Plan as part of the annual budget setting process.

Parents/carers are invited to make this voluntary contribution using the school's online payment system. No pupil will be excluded from swimming lessons if their parents/carers are unable or unwilling to contribute. However, parents/carers should be aware that the continued operation of the swimming pool is dependent upon sufficient voluntary contributions being received. If contributions are insufficient to support the running costs of the pool, the governing body may be required to review the sustainability of providing on-site swimming provision.

**Swimming provision is reviewed annually by the governing body as part of the school's financial planning.**

Where voluntary contributions have been indicated but not received, the school may contact parents/carers to discuss the outstanding balance and offer support where appropriate.

The school may subsidise swimming provision for pupils eligible for free school meals in accordance with the Remissions Policy.

## 3.0 EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

### 3.1 Curriculum Related Clubs

Where these activities run outside of normal school hours, (i.e. sports clubs, homework club, art club) a charge may be made to cover costs of equipment, teaching or non-teaching staff, specialist staff /coaches or materials used.

Parents/carers will be advised of any such costs before their child is allowed to undertake any such activity and participation will be based on the parent's willingness to pay the charges.

Parents/carers can claim remission from such charges in accordance with the guidance in section 10.

## 4.0 OTHER AREAS

### Charges Apply

- books and materials belonging to the school that a pupil has lost
- books and materials that a parent wishes a pupil to keep after having been advised of the cost
- activities taking place outside school hours that are not
  - part of the school's curriculum
  - part of a syllabus for a public examination that the pupil is being prepared for by the school
  - part of the school's basic religious education
- property damage – each individual case to be decided upon by the Headteacher

- full repair costs incurred as a result of wilful or reckless damage to school property by a pupil or parent/carer
- full recovery of costs incurred by the school as a result of damage caused by a pupil to third party property

### **No Charge Applies**

- for activities taking place during school hours except any of those listed above
- for transport during school hours for school-organised activities except for educational visits as detailed above
- for activities outside school hours that are part of the set curriculum including sports matches against other schools / academies

## **5.0 VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS**

The school may, from time to time, ask parents/carers for voluntary contributions to the school's general funds to assist with the provision of resources to enhance their children's education. There will be no pressure exerted, and any contribution will be gratefully received.

Where the voluntary contribution applies to an educational visit or extra-curricular activity, there is no obligation for parents/carers to make any contribution, and no child will be excluded from an activity if their parents/carers are unwilling or unable to pay. However, if the sufficient level of total contributions is not achieved, that activity will be cancelled, and any monies already collected will be refunded to the relevant parents/carers.

## **6.0 DBS CHECKS**

The school will cover the cost of DBS checks for all employed staff.  
The school will cover the cost of DBS checks for volunteers.

## **7.0 REFUNDS POLICY**

### **7.1 School Meals**

- Where payment for a school meal is received in advance and the pupil is absent due to illness, the funds will be retained to be used for future meals.
- If the school must cancel meal provision for a short time, the income received in advance will be recorded against each individual pupil to be used to cover future meals; where that amount exceeds £30 for any one pupil, the parent/carer may request a refund.
- When a pupil leaves the school and Parentpay income has been received but meals not taken, the parent is entitled to request a refund.

### **7.2 Educational Visits**

- When a pupil is absent due to illness and does not attend an educational visit, the transport/entrance cost will not be refunded, where already committed. However, where possible, the school will endeavour to recover costs related to that activity and, if successful, will then refund the parent/carer.
- If a trip must be cancelled by the school, parental contributions will be refunded, less any initial deposits withheld by the venue.
- Where contributions for an activity exceed the final total cost by more than £5.00 a refund will be given. Excess income less than £5.00 will be retained in school funds. Excess expenditure will be paid from the school funds.

### **7.3 Residential Activities**

- If a pupil does not attend a residential activity due to illness, the school will endeavour to recover costs, through the trip insurance and, if successful, will then pass this refund onto the parent/carer; please note that initial deposits may be retained by the travel company.
- Where a residential trip is cancelled by the travel company, the school will endeavour to recover full refunds which, upon receipt, will be passed onto the parents/carers.
- Where a residential trip is cancelled by the school, parental contributions already received will be refunded, less any initial deposits withheld by the venue.

### **7.4 Music Tuition**

- Where Instrumental or singing lessons are cancelled by the tutor or the school, and payment has already been received, the school will transfer the funds to cover future lessons taken by the relevant pupil. If lessons are not being continued in the following term, the parent/carer may request a refund.
- Where a pupil fails to attend a pre-booked lesson, refunds do not apply.

### **7.5 Extra-curricular Activities**

- If a pupil does not attend an activity due to illness, no refund applies.
- Where curriculum related clubs are cancelled by the school, the income received will be held to cover the cost of the next round. Where pupils are not taking part in the future, parents/carers are entitled to request a refund.

### **7.6 Outside of school hours activities - not part of the curriculum, or public examination syllabus or part of the school's basic religious education**

- If a pupil does not attend an activity due to illness, no refund applies.
- Where the activity is cancelled by the school, the income received will be held to cover the cost of the next round. Where pupils are not taking part in the future, parents/carers are entitled to request a refund.
- Where the activity is arranged by the school but has been cancelled by external organisers/tutors/sports coaches, the school will endeavour to obtain refunds which, upon receipt, will be passed onto the parents/carers.
- Where an activity arranged by external organisers directly with parents/carers is cancelled, the parents/carers must contact the organisers to obtain a refund in accordance with the separate booking agreement.

## **8.0 REMISSIONS POLICY**

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors will authorise the remission of charges in all cases. The school will consider the remission of charges to parents or carers who receive the relevant support payments (in accordance with the current DfE listing) which make their child/children eligible for free school meals and for children in care.

All claims for remission of charges should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be dealt with confidentially.

The school may decide to subsidise part or all the payment of some charges for certain activities and pupils; each event or case will be considered individually by the Headteacher and the governing body.

## **Appendix A – Dinner Money Debt Recovery Procedure**

### **1. Introduction**

This procedure sets out the approach taken by the school to recover outstanding school meal debts.

School meals are provided on the understanding that payment will be made in advance. Where debts occur, they must be recovered promptly in order to protect the school's budget and ensure that funds intended for pupils' education are not used to subsidise unpaid meals.

This procedure supports the school's commitment to fairness, transparency and sensitivity when dealing with families.

### **2. General Principles**

School meals should be paid for in advance wherever possible.

If pupils take school meals without sufficient credit on their account, this will result in an outstanding balance which must be cleared as soon as possible.

The school will:

- monitor accounts regularly
- contact parents/carers promptly where arrears arise
- maintain clear records of all communication regarding outstanding balances
- take a supportive and sensitive approach where families may be experiencing financial difficulty

Parents/carers who believe their child may be eligible for Free School Meals are encouraged to contact the school office so that eligibility can be checked.

### **3. Procedure for Collection of Arrears**

Where an account falls into arrears, the school will follow the process below.

#### **Stage 1 – Informal Reminder**

An informal reminder may be issued when an account first goes into arrears. This may take the form of:

- a reminder via the online payment system
- a telephone call
- a discussion with the parent/carer

A record of this communication will be maintained.

#### **Stage 2 – Written Reminder**

If the outstanding balance remains unpaid after approximately two weeks, or reaches approximately £27.00, a written reminder will be issued requesting prompt payment.

Parents/carers may be invited to contact the school office to discuss the outstanding balance.

### **Stage 3 – Final Reminder**

If the balance remains unpaid and arrears reach approximately three weeks or £40.00, a final written reminder will be issued.

This letter will advise that:

- payment must be made by a specified date
- school meals will no longer be provided if the balance is not cleared
- a packed lunch must be supplied until the balance is paid

### **4. Withdrawal of Meal Provision**

If the outstanding balance is not cleared following the final reminder, the school will withdraw the provision of school meals.

Parents/carers will be required to provide a packed lunch each day until the balance has been cleared.

Pupils entitled to Free School Meals will continue to receive meals as normal.

### **5. Repayment Arrangements**

Where families are experiencing financial difficulty, they may request to repay the debt in instalments.

Requests should be made to the Headteacher or School Business Manager and will be considered confidentially.

When agreeing repayment arrangements, the school may take into account:

- financial hardship
- illness
- the level of debt
- the likely repayment period
- any previous payment history

All repayment agreements will be confirmed in writing and recorded by the school.

### **6. Recovery of Outstanding Debt**

If the outstanding balance remains unpaid and no repayment arrangement has been agreed, the school may refer the matter for formal debt recovery.

Parents/carers will be notified in writing before any further action is taken.

### **7. Write-off of Debts**

In exceptional circumstances, where recovery is not considered possible or appropriate, debts may be written off.

Authorisation levels are as follows:

- School Business Manager – up to £25
- Headteacher – up to £250
- Full Governing Body – up to £500

All write-offs will be formally recorded and retained for audit purposes.

### **8. Monitoring**

The school office will monitor school meal accounts and ensure that this procedure is followed.

The Headteacher and governing body will review the effectiveness of the procedure as part of the school's financial oversight arrangements.

## **Appendix B – Gentle Reminder Letter**

Gentle Reminder Letter

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Carer

According to our records, there is a small outstanding balance for your child's school dinners.

This relates to the week commencing .....

We would be grateful if payment of £..... could be made by tomorrow.

If you have already arranged payment, please accept our thanks. Should you have any questions or need to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact the school office, who will be happy to help.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

## **Appendix C - Accumulated School Meals Arrears**

Accumulated School Meals Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Carer

We are writing to follow up on our previous letter dated ..... regarding outstanding school dinner payments. Our records indicate that this balance has not yet been cleared.

The total amount currently outstanding is £..... We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you and ask that you contact the school office to arrange a meeting with the Headteacher at a mutually convenient time.

Until the balance has been resolved, we kindly ask that a packed lunch is provided for your child/children. If payment has not been received and a packed lunch is not provided, a member of staff will contact you on the day to request that either payment or a packed lunch is brought to school before lunchtime.

We would be grateful if this matter could be resolved as soon as possible. Payment can be made via our online payment system.

We understand that some families may be experiencing financial difficulties. If this applies to you, please be aware that you may be eligible to apply for remission of charges. Any such request should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be treated confidentially and considered on an individual basis.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Kind regards

Headteacher

**Appendix D – Non-payment of school dinner money arrears**

Date:

Non-payment of school dinner money arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Carer

Despite our previous correspondence dated ..... and ....., our records show that the outstanding balance for your child's school dinners has not yet been cleared.

The total amount of arrears currently stands at £.....

In line with the school's policy on dinner money debt recovery, a copy of which was provided when your child started/entered Key Stage 2, we must advise you that if payment is not received within five working days, the matter will be referred to our legal advisors for consideration of formal debt recovery action. This process may ultimately result in legal proceedings.

Until the outstanding balance has been cleared, school meals will no longer be provided, and a packed lunch must be supplied for your child/children each day.

We recognise that some families may experience financial difficulties. If this applies to you, you may be eligible to apply for remission of charges. Any such request should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially and on an individual basis.

If you wish to discuss this matter or require further clarification, please contact the school office as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher