



**INSPIRE NURTURE BELIEVE ACHIEVE**  
*Working together to be the best that we can be.*

Happiness

Perserverance

Resilience

Kindness

Friendship

Respect

April 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

During the last Governors meeting the financial pressure on our federation of schools formed a significant part of discussions as it has become exceedingly difficult to make sure we do not overspend on the budget that is allocated to us. Incremental pay rises without the funding uplift to support this has caused huge pressures on school budgets as well as an increase of costs for utilities and general resources. Despite these financial difficulties, one of our aims is to ensure that no child misses any educational opportunity that is available to them, however, this has become increasingly difficult to achieve.

For school leaders, there are daily conversations about where savings could be made and what impact this would have on pupils – there is more need than ever to discuss the viability of a school trip, replacing books or equipment that are not deemed as essential or which enjoyable learning licences can be cut.

Alongside this, as leaders and teachers, we are relentlessly trying to ensure that children have the best of what we offer as many of you have seen at our Art Exhibition, for example.

Due to strong financial planning and decisions the federation has made in the past, we have not previously needed to make any colleagues redundant or reduce the educational offer to our pupils; however, we do have to think pragmatically about the effect of these additional costs moving forwards.

As a small federation, we are extremely proud of the enrichment opportunities that our children have access to. We mentioned some of these in a previous Newsletter:

***canvas camp, science dome, historical drama days, young Shakespeare, drama and roleplay workshop, Eden Camp, KS2 intra school football, football club, dance club, multi-sports club, smarty art club, muddy puddle Fridays, black history month, swimming, cooking curriculum, Residential for Y5 and Y6, Departure Days at the start of every half term, school trips etc.***

Our Charging and Remissions Policy says that we aim for 100% Voluntary Contribution – a summary is below and the full policy can be read on the website.

### **Summary - Voluntary Contributions**

*Parents will be invited to make a voluntary contribution for the following;*

- a) Educational visits out of school or visitors into school*
- b) Transport as part of an enhanced educational activity*
- c) Transport after school to an organised event e.g. Sporting fixture*

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*The responsibility for determining the level of voluntary contribution is delegated to the Headteacher who may be in a position to consider extenuating circumstances on an individual basis. The level of voluntary contribution expected from a class is 100% of the children - this would mean that all pupils need to make a voluntary contribution. This does not include the children who are in receipt of the support listed in the policy and who qualify for Free School Meals (this is not the same as UIFSM – Universal Free School Meals offered to all children in Y2 or below). These children will be separately budgeted for.*

**The system in place for encouraging 100% contribution is:**

- *Parents will be informed of school trips with as much notice as possible (see Educational Visits Policy and Procedures on the Website)*
- *Parents will have the opportunity to pay for residential trips in instalments. (e.g. Residential Payments spread over a significant period of time).*
- *Parents will be sent reminders about the trip and the status of payment for that class as a whole class or on individual basis as necessary. Parents will be informed prior to the visit if insufficient contributions have been made. A further opportunity will be presented for any outstanding payments to follow and after this, the visit will be cancelled and a letter sent to parents.*

In spite of this policy, we have been very conscious that a) the children had missed so much in previous years due to the impact of Covid-19 and b) with the cost of living crisis many families have been struggling to pay; we have therefore allowed many enrichment activities to go ahead when we would have had to cancel them based on the details outlined in the policy. We have also felt the strain in school as the cost of living crisis has impacted on **every** aspect of school life, from the cost of bills, learning licences coach transport and even basic resources like pens and pencils. In addition to this, many children have needed nurture and support post-Covid to deal with Social, Emotional and Mental Health adding additional costs to the budget that hadn't been allocated in previous years.

**In the previous financial year (April 2022 – April 2023) the impact on school budgets from subsidies and underpayment for visits and (educational visits including residential) visitors into school, the enrichment curriculum and transport was:**

**Goldsborough: £9497.80**

**Sicklinghall: £7543.03**

As you can see this is a significant amount of money that was expected into to the budget. Unfortunately, we can no longer maintain this level of underpayment as it has an impact on our expenditure for the essentials needed to run a school.

Breakfast Club and After School Club cannot be subsidised by school budgets as they are a private offer and not something school can fund so it is imperative that these costs are paid in a timely manner.

We hope you will understand our need to now follow the policy much more closely moving forwards, however we have considered additional aspects to work alongside this policy:

**What can we do to maintain the current level of school enrichment?**

- School will provide as much notice as possible to voluntary paid items to spread the cost.
- School will suggest a payment schedule; however, the payment item will be added as a reducing balance which means that it can be reduced in smaller amounts at a time that suits. You can then design your own schedule.
- School will communicate updates with families at regular intervals and allow alternative dates for payments as long as these are paid on the agreed date.
- **Families are expected to communicate with school if they need a longer timeframe to pay or if they are paying on an alternative date e.g. *if a school trip falls before payday.***
- School will communicate with parents if the 100% voluntary contribution has not been met to allow final opportunities for communication / payments.

**Where the funding has not met the cost of the enrichment activity, it will have to be cancelled. This is obviously disappointing for the children, so it is best not to discuss these opportunities with the children until we know whether it is going ahead or not.**

**Voluntary contributions – overpayments:**

Some families have asked many times (and have already) overpaid for aspects of the school-life to ensure that they go ahead.

Many schools are now opening up this option as voluntary option for all families.

We agreed at Governors that this is something that we would try. Previously the technology has not worked as we had hoped and wouldn't allow additional overpayments on individual trips, so the only way we have found to allow people to add voluntary overpayments to the school fund more than once, and to leave the payment item open for a long period of time is to set the payment to the maximum allowed and have it as a reducing balance.

A **voluntary** reducing balance item of £250 will be added to everyone's parent pay account.

**There is no pressure to pay anything on this payment item at all.** However, if you do wish to do so, it can be £1, £5 or more. It can be a one off, weekly or monthly.

As a federation, we are always willing to support our school community – anyone facing financial difficulty should speak to Mrs Ellis (email the office with details or arrange a phone call / meeting) and we will do all we can to support, but the school has to be financially viable too as there is currently no room in the budget to pick up the additional costs.

Yours sincerely,

Goldsborough Sicklinghall Federation Governing Board