

Finance and Fees Policy

Issue date

This policy takes effect from March 2022

Review date

This policy will be reviewed and revised by the School Leadership Team on an annual basis.

Controls:

- Financial Agreement form
- Income and Expenditure form

Information/advice/guidance:

- Information on school fees
- (<http://www.southdevonsteinerschool.org/admissions.html>)
- Fees and additional costs guidance

Compliance:

References:

- Staff Contributions policy
- Admissions policy
- Behaviour policy
- Finance procedures

Written by: School Business Manager **Date:** March 2022

History of review: March 2022 reviewed by Julie Thomas

Date for next review: March 2023

Statement:

The South Devon Steiner School is committed to providing financial clarity and openness at all times. As long as the school is able to be financially strong and stable, it wishes to remain as financially inclusive a community as possible. It is our hope that members of the school community will work with the school to find alternative sources of income to boost the fee income. Extra donations are very welcome and can be gift-aided.

Policy:

Parental commitment to pay the fees

- The school will charge a non-refundable registration fee of £50 per new applicant to join the school.
- Places are offered subject to full payment of the deposit (£600 for every child) prior to enrolment.
- Where a child attends a trial period and then commences school on the next school day, the deposit must be paid within 5 working days of enrolment.
- Parents will be expected to sign a financial agreement at the time of their admission and again before the start of each new school year. This will clearly state the agreed fees.
- Monthly fee payers, the annual fee will be divided into twelve payments to run September-August each year.
- Termly fee payers/parents will receive an invoice for the total termly contributions.
 - If paying as a lump sum payment, this is expected before the first day of the new term.
 - If payment is received by the published early payment date each term, a 2% discount can be applied if requested.
- Unless fees are paid termly or annually, parents must set up a standing order for fees to be paid equally each month. Monthly fees must be received no later than the 5th day of each month, in advance (for example: March fees should be in the school bank account by 5th March)
- Invoices for monthly fees payer will be issued within the first week of each month and will be for information only. Please speak to the School Business Manager if you would like to arrange to pay over 12 months

Failure to pay fees

- All families agree to either pay annually at the beginning of each school year, termly at the beginning of each term or monthly in equal instalments. A new financial agreement is completed and signed for each school year.
- Payments are closely monitored and any non-payments are dealt with as part of the four stage process.

Stage 1 - For families who pay annually or termly they are expected to do so in advance. Payments for Annual and Termly payers must be received before the start of term. For monthly payment terms the payment must be received by the 5th of each month. After the 5th of the month any families who have not paid are sent a reminder via email asking for payment immediately.

Stage 2 – If payment is not received within 7 days a reminder letter is sent specifying payment must be made within 7 days.

Stage 3 – if payment is still not received a 2nd reminder letter is sent requesting the child/ren remain at home from the following week and until the payment is made. If no written communication is received from the family a phone call will also be made to clarify the situation.

Stage 4 – if no payment is made and the child does not return to school a notice to leave letter is sent and the family warned their debt will be passed to a debt collection agency.

- Teachers and the School Leadership Team are informed of stages 3 and 4 if they occur.
- All invoices must be cleared by the end of each school year, 31st August, to enable children to return for the new school year in September.

- Parents are expected to continue payment regardless of any disagreement, complaint or grievance with the School: arrears are always treated as a default.
- The level of attendance has no bearing on school fees and other charges. All fees and charges are due as agreed independent of attendance levels for whatever reason.
- Where an account is in arrears, further children will not be admitted from that family.

Fee Increases

- Each year we review the schools budget and will agree with the Trustees a fair fee increase. We take into account rising fixed costs, employees pay increases and other major repairs. The year on year increase will be a minimum of 5%.
- This increase is communicated by letter to each family at least six weeks before the end of the school year.
- Fees increases will come into practice on the 1st of September each year. We will expect you to change your standing order to reflect this.

Reduced Fee places

- South Devon Steiner School offers a limited number of reduced fee places. Applying for one of these should be a last resort, all other avenues must be explored first. The forms will ask for evidence of other attempts to find support.
- These places are made possible by those who commit to paying the full contributions. The reality is that these places are currently also enabled by the low salaries paid to members of staff and our limited ability to develop the grounds and facilities. In other words, there is a price to pay for the financial assistance we offer. We ask you to consider this carefully.
- By applying for a reduced fee place, you are entering into a mutual and strict non-disclosure agreement with South Devon Steiner School. You may not share the details of the agreement and we will treat your information as confidential.
- Your application will be reviewed by the School Business Manager along with the School Leadership Team according to the rules defined by the school's Council of Trustees.
- If you are offered a reduced fee place and your income increases, you must inform the School Business Manager immediately.
- The parental commitment to pay the fees (see above) applies to reduced fee places. If a parent defaults in payment (see Failure to pay fees), the school may not be able to offer a reduced fee place for the following school year.
- Each parent must re-apply at the end of the school year for a reduced fee place and provide all the supporting documentation requested.
- If a reduced fee place application form is returned after the deadline without good reason, then the school may not be able to offer the place for that year.
- Failure to provide all the requested documentation may result in us being unable to offer you a reduced fee place for that year.
- We cannot back date or reduce fees once your community place fee has been decided for that year.

Criteria Applied to Reduced Fee Places

The following criteria will be applied to all requests:

- 70% of the total fees

- 30% of the household total income

Whichever is highest will be the minimum amount the school will accept as fees

Additional costs

- Some occasional personal items such as recorders, maths calculators, play copies, dictionaries, books, class trips and outings will be charged separately
- From time to time we will send out additional invoices to cover these items, which will be subject to our usual payment terms of 7 days.
- Many of our Classes operate Class bank accounts and have set up saving schemes for trips. Please enquire with your Class contacts.
- Reparation of damage plays a part in the school's Behaviour Policy: The school reserves the right to bill parents for breakages or damage beyond reasonable wear and tear, particularly if caused by a pupil's negligence, vandalism or indiscipline.
- Invoices will be issued by email.

Giving notice to leave

- If you wish to withdraw your child from the school then you must give one full term's notice in writing. You will be expected to pay your agreed fees during this notice period in accordance with the Parent Contract and your Financial Agreement.
- Fees in the notice period are strictly non-negotiable.
- If your child stays after the end of notice period then this notice expires and a new notice needs to be given in writing if they intend to leave within a new period.
- If you wish to take your child out of the school for a period longer than a month and wish for us to hold your child's place then you must continue to pay your fees.

Problems with paying the fees

- The School wishes to maintain a mutually supportive relationship with parents. If there is a possibility that parents may not be able to make a payment or face financial difficulty, they should contact the School Business Manager immediately, in advance of any likely default.

When your child leaves school

- We will expect all debts and fees to be fully cleared before your last child leaves the school, with the exception of previously agreed deferred amounts, which need to be cleared within 2 years of your last child leaving the school.
- Any debts that are ignored will be subject to the 'failure to pay fees' section of this policy.
- Steps will be taken to recover any outstanding debts, including the use of a commercial debt recovery firm. All legal and other costs will be payable by the parents.