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Dear Parents/Carers,

Voluntary contributions for educational activities

There has been some confusion recently regarding 'voluntary contributions' towards school trips and activities. Through this letter I hope to clarify some key issues.

In guidance written by the Department for Education 'Charging for school activities' (October 2014) it sets out that a school cannot 'charge' parents for any element of the National Curriculum, this includes materials for learning or educational activities. However governing bodies and local authorities can ask parents for 'voluntary contributions for the benefit of the school or any school activities'. In essence this means that any activities that are costly can be subsidised by reasonable contributions by parents to enhance the experience of learners at the school.

When arranging educational visits and activities the school considers costings and tries to cover as much of these as possible through the school budget. As you may be aware school budgets are decreasing in real terms currently, meaning that the budget is stretched further and further year on year.

As a result of this the financial viability of many educational trips and activities are dependent on parental contributions as the school may simply not be able to afford these otherwise. For example an activity such as swimming may cost the school in the region of £5000 a term, this would cover pool hire, staffing costs etc. The school will fund a certain amount of this and request support from parents to fund the rest.

Of course a voluntary contribution is by definition... voluntary. The school cannot demand this payment, however if there is not enough contributed then sadly activities may not be possible to fund. The school also makes allowance for those who simply cannot afford to contribute and uses some of its Pupil Premium funding to support those who are unable to pay with an additional contribution. The school advises those parents who feel they cannot contribute to discuss this on an individual basis with the Headteacher. These discussions take place with the utmost discretion and children are in no way singled out or made aware if their parents cannot or will not contribute. No child will ever be excluded from an activity under this guidance due to lack of parental contribution.

There are however in school some activities that are not part of the national curriculum and for these activities the school can ask for payment. For example PGL, additional musical instrument or voice tuition, clubs that run after school that are not part of the curriculum, breakfast and after school services.

I hope that this letter has clarified the issues regarding contributions to trips. At Brookland we aim to give the children the best possible chances in their education whilst weighing up the cost for both ourselves and parents. I hope that you will support us in this.

Kind regards



Mr Gavin Douglas
Headteacher

Headteacher- Mr Gavin Douglas BA(Hons) PGCE NPQSL

