

## Schools requesting financial contributions from parents

### Overview

There is nothing in law that prevents a school from asking for voluntary contributions from parents, but relevant legislation and guidance places clear conditions on this. The [Education Act 1996](#) states that any request or invitation for voluntary contributions must make clear that a) 'there is no obligation to make any contribution' and b) 'pupils at the school will not be treated differently according to whether or not their parents have made any contribution'. The guidance, [Charging for School Activities](#), expands and further states, 'When making requests for voluntary contributions, parents must not be made to feel pressurised into paying as it is voluntary and not compulsory. Schools should avoid sending colour coded letters to parents as a reminder to make payments and direct debit or standing order mandates should not be sent to parents when requesting contributions'.

In addition to this, guidance states that [Home/School Agreements](#) 'must not include any terms or conditions which would be unlawful or unreasonable, such as requiring parents to make a financial contribution to the school' (as is the case in two of the schools below). Lastly, the [School Admissions Code](#) prohibits schools from requesting 'financial contributions (either in the form of voluntary contributions, donations or deposits (even if refundable)) as any part of the admissions process' (though we found no incidences of this taking place).

It is important to note that given the nature of the legislation and guidance in this area, some violations are more obvious than others. That is to say that the requirements to make it clear that there is no obligation to contribute and to ensure that parents 'not be made to feel pressurised' are, to an extent, subjective. Given this, and so as not to distract from the severity and extent of the issue we found, we chose not to include a number of schools who may have been seen as 'marginal cases', despite the fact they could very well still have been said to be in breach of the law/guidance.

Of course, that does not rule out the possibility that there will nonetheless be disagreement over some of the cases below. It might, for instance, be claimed that a school has fully adhered to the law in documents or correspondence apart from those which we have captured (and which for whatever reason are unavailable to us). In all cases we have done our best to ensure that what is presented here reflects the most recent information which is available on the schools' websites and which parents (prospective or otherwise) would readily come across when looking for information. Schools should be making absolutely certain that any and all information published or circulated makes clear that contributions are voluntary and does not put pressure on parents. There should be no excuse for achieving this in one letter but then failing to do so in another, or on their website, as is attested to by the large number of schools who, from our research, appeared to be fully adhering to the guidance.

The BHA logged 100 specific schools that were breaking the rules, before deciding to stop as there are simply too many to log them all. Of those, 89 were 'faith' schools. The reason why so many are religious may reflect the fact that voluntary aided schools' religious authorities are required to pay for 10% of capital costs themselves (which comes to about 1-2% of the total budget). Many schools decide to meet these costs through their fundraising efforts.

In anticipation of many of the pages linked to in this document being removed from the schools' various websites, we have provided 'frozen links' to all the pages in an accompanying spreadsheet.

## **‘Faith schools’**

### **Annecy Catholic Primary School, East Sussex**

<http://www.annecy.e-sussex.sch.uk/storage/download/7iGWkYlv36>

From the school’s prospectus:

*“GOVERNORS FUND Annecy is a Voluntary Aided school. Voluntary Aided status allows Annecy to be run as a Catholic school, but also means that there are additional responsibilities for parents/ carers, governors and the diocese. One key responsibility that we take on is to raise a proportion (usually 10%) of the cost of building work and maintenance in the school, the balance being funded by the government. The governors maintain a fund to support these activities. The main source of income for this fund is donations from families of children attending the school. Without these contributions, the school is unable to fund school improvements or provide other funds essential to the school’s ongoing development.*

*The amount requested for the year is £10 per child or £20 per family, three times a year. Donors who are taxpayers can help the school even more by completing a Gift Aid declaration. The form only requires name, address and postcode and enables the school to claim an extra 28p from the Inland Revenue for every pound donated.”*

It is not clear here that contributions are voluntary and we can find nothing on the website clarifying this.

### **Ashford Church of England Primary School**

<http://www.ashford-primary.surrey.sch.uk/about/governors-fund.php>

The Building and Maintenance section of the website states:

*“We are a church school and as such our parents contribute £55 per year for each child at school. This money is used by the Governors to pay contributions to building projects and equipment initiatives for the school. For each £1 parents contribute, the London Diocese adds £9. This Fund has helped the school to upgrade all the classrooms over the past three or four years. Last year we built a new Year 1 classroom and redesigned and relocated our entrance hall and school office.*

*You can make payments in a number of ways: monthly or annually, in cash, by cheque, or through our online payment system, Tucasi. Careful monitoring means we have been able to save money and can now pass these savings on to parents. We have reduced the annual charge by more than 20% compared to previous years. This year the structures are:*

- **First Child:** £55 per year in advance OR £5 per month (12 months = £60)
- **Second Child:** £55 per year in advance OR £5 per month (12 months = £60)
- **Third Child:** £20 per year in advance OR £2 per month (12 months = £24)

*The documents below explain in greater detail how valuable your contributions are to assuring we offer our children the best possible learning environment while they are at our school.”*

The text simply assumes that parents will pay, which suggests that contributions are compulsory not voluntary, as does use of the term ‘annual charge’. The ‘documents below’ to which the text refers also includes the [letter](#) sent to parents requesting contributions. At no point does the letter clarify that contributions are voluntary and it also directs parents to fill in a standing order form.

### **Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School, Hertfordshire**

[http://www.bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk/aboutus/school\\_fund.html](http://www.bishophatfield.herts.sch.uk/aboutus/school_fund.html)

The School Fund section of website states:

*"For those who feel able to make a regular contribution by standing order, please complete the form below and return it to our Finance Office."*

This is not permitted by the guidance.

**Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Sports College**

<http://www.robertsutton.staffs.sch.uk/index.php/school-fund/>

A letter to parents dated November 2013 reads as follows:

*"Dear Parents/Carers*

*School Fund*

*We have now completed the first half term of the new school year and I wish to raise your awareness of the school fund, its achievements and its aims. **I know that a number of parents already have standing orders in place for their children and regularly contribute and for this I thank you. If that is the case, please ignore the remainder of this letter.***

*As a Catholic school we are obliged to contribute 10% of any building costs from our own resources. The school has undertaken yet more major refurbishments and new developments over the summer break, which were essential to the further development of the school but albeit expensive.*

*Unfortunately, as with any buildings, there is always work to be done. It is customary now for the school to appeal for a small donation of £20 per year from parents to assist us with the funding. If you have two children present within the school we only ask for £30 and three, or more, children, £40. Payments may be submitted via Parentmail Payplus system or, if you haven't yet registered for this, via a cheque payable to Blessed Robert Sutton School. I do, of course, appreciate the difficult financial climate for all of us at the moment and therefore you may break the payments down into small monthly commitments of £2. Should you wish to set up a standing order, a form is available to download from the school's website or on request from the School Reception.*

*I trust that you understand the need to preserve and further develop the distinctive Catholic nature of our school and to help ensure that our children have the best possible facilities and resources for their learning by supporting the School Fund.*

*Thank you in anticipation.*

*Yours sincerely,"*

In addition to directing parents to set up a standing order, it is not immediately obvious from the letter that contributions are voluntary. Indeed, the letter recognises that some parents may have difficulty in paying, but suggests breaking down the payments instead of telling parents that contributions are voluntary.

The schools charging and remissions policy contains text relating to voluntary donations, in which it makes clear that requests must make clear that there is no obligation to contribute, but this is only as part of information given on Day Trips and has no obvious bearing on the request for contributions to the

School Fund. In any case, even if this did apply to general donations, the letter above would fail to comply.

**Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, Ealing**

<http://www.wiseman.ealing.sch.uk/page/?pid=188>

The website says the following:

*“School Building Fund*

*As a voluntary aided Catholic School we must find 10% of the cost towards maintaining our buildings and site. Thank you for your continued financial support towards this fund. During October 2014, £60,000 was used to repair boilers and the Cana Building roof- areas not covered by the BSF contract. It is important that we continue to top up this cost centre.*

*I would like to confirm that the Governors have decided that for **students in Years 8 through to Year 13 contributions will remain the same as in previous years**. The new parental contribution rate of £100 per family will apply to Year 7 students, along with in – year admissions.”*

This does not make it clear that contributions are voluntary (indeed, it implies that they are not) and we can find no further information on the website that clarifies this.

**Christ the King College, Isle of Wight**

<http://www.christ-the-king.iow.sch.uk/uploads/originals/issue-38-11-07-14.pdf>

From a July 2014 Newsletter to parents:

*“**Governors’ Building Fund** - A reminder to all parents that we rely on your contributions to this fund. £10 per term or £2 per week, either by Parent Pay or standing order. Thank you. Lloyds TSB, Newport, Isle of Wight Sort Code: [REDACTED] Account Number: [REDACTED] Account Name: [REDACTED]”*

Not only does this direct parents towards setting up a standing order, it does not make it clear that contributions are voluntary. This is also the case in the fundraising missive here: <http://www.christ-the-king.iow.sch.uk/uploads/originals/fundraising-leaflet-with-form-2.pdf>

**Corpus Christi Primary School**

[http://www.corpuschristiprimary.co.uk/?page\\_id=1571](http://www.corpuschristiprimary.co.uk/?page_id=1571)

The school’s website says the following:

*“Please click the link below to download, complete and return the relevant standing order form which should then be returned to the school office either directly or through your child in an envelope clearly marked ‘School Building Fund’.*

Payment by standing order is described as ‘the most preferred method’ and a form is provided to download on the website.

**English Martyrs Catholic Primary School, Reading**

<http://www.englishmartyrs.reading.sch.uk/our-community/diocesan-building-fund>

From the school’s website:

### ***"Diocesan Building Fund***

*The Diocesan Schools' Building Fund (DBF) was introduced in September 2000 in order to provide the contribution needed towards building and repair projects at our Voluntary Aided Schools. 50% of the Fund is provided by parishes regardless of whether or not they have access to a Catholic school; 50% of the Fund is provided by schools from donations from the parents of the children attending the school. In this way the whole diocesan Mass-going population and all parents of children in our schools share the Bishop's commitment to our Catholic schools.*

*As a voluntary aided school, we only receive 90% of the budget allocated to capital projects (such as building works, buying new computers and other projects which require a large expenditure). The onus is on the school to raise the other 10% and we do this through the DBF.*

*Subsequently, all parents are asked to support the DBF by donating a small amount each term. This amounts to £12 for one child or £18 per term for families. The easiest way to go about this is to set up a direct debit for just £3 a month for single children, or £4.50 for families. Further details can be obtained from the school office."*

The request for contributions is not obviously voluntary and also puts undue pressure on parents by stating that contributing demonstrates that they 'share the Bishop's commitment to our Catholic schools'. The school's charging and remissions policy says that any request for contributions must 'make clear that there is no obligation to contribute' which this fails to do.

### **Hazlemere Church of England Combined School**

<http://www.hazlemereschool.co.uk/letters/>

From a 2015 letter to parents:

*"We invite parents to make a termly contribution to support the work of the school and suggest a contribution of £10 a term. This essential fund supports our work in many ways and enables us to give your child additional opportunities. Our School Fund is often used for the things that we would not otherwise be able to afford – this year the children enjoyed a drama workshop; a workshop by The New Mozart Orchestra; resources for school plays and experience days are provided. These opportunities, which the children enjoy, bring their learning to life. The donations do not cover off-site trips and visits; however we believe they allow the school to plan in advance a wide range of experiences for the children as they move through the school which we would otherwise be unable to offer.*

*Please send in a cheque made payable to "Hazlemere C of E Combined School" or cash in a clearly marked envelope. Alternatively you may wish to pay by direct debit (please see the attached form)."*

A direct debit form is attached to the letter.

### **Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Isle of Wight**

[http://www.holycrossrcpri.iow.sch.uk/Governors\\_Building\\_Fund\\_files/building%20fund%20appeal%202014%20letter%20revised%20gh.pdf](http://www.holycrossrcpri.iow.sch.uk/Governors_Building_Fund_files/building%20fund%20appeal%202014%20letter%20revised%20gh.pdf)

From a letter to parents in January 2014:

*"Dear Parents/Carers*

*As we are now well into the Spring Term, we would like to remind you about outstanding payments to the Building Fund.*

*As a Voluntary Aided school, we are expected to contribute 10% of the cost towards all building works and large capital projects; all the Catholic schools in the diocese contribute to a central fund, maintained by the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth. Without the fund, a small school such as ours would need years of fundraising to be able to maintain and improve the school and its site.*

*Over the last few months we have benefitted from new perimeter fencing, external lighting and improvements to the Year 5 & 6 classrooms and corridor upstairs.*

*Our school is required to make a payment of £1400 per term towards the central fund. However, contributions from parents have declined to such a critical level that we are no longer able to meet the termly payment.*

*As parents you made a conscious decision to send your child to Holy Cross, and we continue to seek your support and commitment. All we ask is that you contribute £15 per term (which equates to £19.20 with gift aid). Please can you write a cheque for £15 and pop it in the envelope attached and hand it in to the office or class teacher.*

*(Please also fill out the gift aid form if you pay standard rate tax).*

*Or if you prefer, you can set up a standing order/direct debit with your bank to save having to remember each term. (If you have more than one child at school please contribute as much as you feel you can afford).*

*I apologise for having to ask this of you, but without your contribution we would not be able to provide the school that you demand!*

*Please don't put the letter down and hope that someone else will make up the shortfall – the donation of £15 assumes that we all contribute!*

*Yours sincerely"*

This letter puts an undue amount of pressure on parents to contribute and is also not obviously voluntary. [A further letter](#) was sent in January 2015 which emphasises the extent of the shortfall and says 'The principles of the system are that parents choosing to send their children to Holy Cross are expected to contribute enough money to cover these Diocesan bills each term.'

### **Holy Rosary Catholic Primary School**

<http://www.holyrosaryschool.org.uk/Policies/Home-School%20Agreement%20June%202014.pdf>

Taken from the Home/School Agreement that parents must sign on accepting a place at the school:

*"The family will:*

- Be committed to support the school's Mission Statement, ethos and values.*
- Be committed in establishing good behaviour at home and support the teachers in setting standards of good behaviour.*
- Ensure that each child arrives for school, and is collected after school, on time.*

- *Be committed in ensuring that your child achieves a high level of attendance*
- *Be committed in supporting the school*
- *Show commitment to your child's education by attending open evenings, assemblies and other school events.*
- *Be committed in promoting a community of mutual courtesy and respect.*
- *Be committed to supporting the Governors' School Building Fund."*

The fact that a commitment to support the Governor's Building Fund is contained within the Home/School Agreement suggests not only that contributions are not voluntary, but that they are prerequisite to accepting and taking up a place at the school.

### **Holy Souls Catholic Primary School, Birmingham**

<http://www.holysoul.bham.sch.uk/page/?title=Prospectus&pid=10>

The school's prospectus reads as follows:

#### **3.2 Diocesan Building Fund**

*Holy Souls Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided school where the governing authority is the school's governing body.*

*As a voluntary aided school we are only given 90% of funding necessary to maintain and improve the school's premises and upkeep of equipment, such as computers. The Catholic Church has to fund the remaining 10%. Therefore, the Catholic Church asks you to contribute an amount to the school's upkeep each year. The recommended amount is £10 per term per family or £30 per year.*

*If paying by cheque – cheques are to be made payable to:*

*Holy Souls Catholic Primary School – School Building Fund.*

This does not make it clear that contributions are voluntary and as it appears in the prospectus, it may have the effect of deterring parents from applying.

### **Holy Trinity CofE Primary Academy, Handsworth**

<http://www.htcepa.bham.sch.uk/index.php/parents-information/41-school-fund>

The school's website reads as follows:

#### ***"School Fund***

*The school tries to raise money for many things needed for the day to day running of the school e.g. funding for Christmas parties and entertainment, prizes for children, additional equipment for use in the playground etc.*

*Children are asked to bring in a small amount of money (50p per week) to put towards the cost of these and other items. Parents who wish to pay for a term may do so by asking the class teacher how much it is per term and paying the appropriate amount at the beginning of the term."*

There is nothing to suggest that these payments are voluntary and there is no attempt to explain this to parents.



**La Retraite RC Girls' School, Lambeth**

<http://www.laretraite.lambeth.sch.uk/154/school-fund>

The school fund section of the website reads as follows:

*“£30.00 is collected from each family at the beginning of the school year in September. The school uses this money to provide amenities and activities to enhance the students’ educational experience.*

*The money is usually brought in by the youngest student from each family. Please **DO** pay this amount as early as possible, as it is very important for us and for the education of your daughters.”*

There is no mention of this being voluntary and, in fact, it is assumed to be obligatory.

**Lowton Church of England High School, Wigan**

<http://www.lowtonhs.wigan.sch.uk/messages/September/BuildingFund13.pdf>

From a September 2013 letter to parents:

*“If you choose to donate on a regular basis you can complete our standing order form (attached)....”*

A standing order form is attached.

**Mount Carmel Catholic College for Girls, Islington**

<http://www.mountcarmel.islington.sch.uk/documents/content/Sept%202014%20Welcome%20Website.pdf>

The school’s September 2014 newsletter read as follows:

*“Mount Carmel is a Voluntary Aided (VA) school and as such is responsible for all capital works i.e. building projects and school improvements. As a VA school, 10% of total building costs have to be paid by the School Governing Body. If the money cannot be raised the projects are not approved.*

*Until a few years ago monies required to support the school came via the parish. However the Diocese recognised that contributions through the parishes have dropped along with mass attendance, so consequently they introduced a scheme to include all parents who choose to send their children to a Catholic school. This Voluntary Contribution Scheme (VCS) operates across all schools in the Diocese of Westminster. Mount Carmel’s Contribution Scheme is the main source of funding for our 10% commitment (in addition to fundraising and other charitable donations).*

*To support the school in fulfilling its current and future commitments, the Governors ask that every family commit to making a regular contribution to the School Building Fund. There is a minimum contribution of £10 per family per term (£2.50 per month) which, over the year, works out at less than 60p per week, £30.00 per year.”*

Whilst the term ‘Voluntary Contribution Scheme’ is used, asking parents to commit to making a ‘minimum contribution’ suggests otherwise and puts undue pressure on parents.

**Notre Dame RC Girls Secondary School, Southwark**

[http://www.notredame.southwark.sch.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=141&Itemid=1410](http://www.notredame.southwark.sch.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=141&Itemid=1410)



The school's website reads as follows:

*"Governor's Fund*

*As a Voluntary-Aided Roman Catholic School, we are required to find 10% of the cost of all capital works in the school. The Government only funds 90% of the cost.*

*In order to help finance the 10%, the Governing Body of the School ask that a contribution of £25 per year is made by the parents or guardians of each student. This is collected at the beginning of the autumn term.*

*We have looked at what other similar schools ask as a contribution from parents. All have been greater than £25, with one asking for £200 per year and one requesting £35 per month.*

*We feel, therefore, that £25 per year is a reasonable request."*

This is not obviously voluntary and is also contained within the Prospectus section of the website, potentially deterring prospective parents from applying.

**Oaklands Catholic School and Sixth Form College**

<http://www.oaklands.hants.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=58&type=pdf>

A letter to parents from September 2014:

*"Dear Parents*

*For a number of years the school has been running a very successful Governor's Fund which has helped to raise much needed money to improve the quality of provisions for students.*

***How better can you spend 38p per school day than by improving the facilities at your child's school?***

*The Governor's request a minimum donation of £75 per child (or a maximum of £150 per family) which equates to just under 38p per school day.*

*Any gifts above this **minimum** level enable the Governors to make additional improvements to the quality of the education your children receive at Oaklands. Gifts from previous generations of parents have enabled the Governors to support major refurbishment projects on buildings such as the Science block and new builds such as the Sixth Form, JP and Music blocks. In previous years, they have also been able to improve still further the computer and IT provision to a level beyond the Government's requirements. These amounts have drained the Governors' Fund and it is important that it is replenished quickly to ensure we continue to support the development of Oaklands.*

*The best way of giving to the Governors' Fund is to make your gift tax-efficient. You can divert some more of your Income Tax back to the School by making a **Gift Aid Declaration**.*

• *This is a simple declaration, which says that you want all the donations you make to the Governors' Fund treated as **Gift Aid**. This means that the Inland Revenue will pay back to the Governors' fund the Income Tax that you paid when you earned that amount of money. Every £1 donated under Gift Aid is worth £1.25 to the Governors' Fund*

• *You decide the amount you wish to give and whether you wish to make donations, monthly, or annually*

- You can make the donation by completing the Bank Standing Order form attached to your Gift Aid Declaration or by sending a regular donation to the school via cash, cheque or online or by sending a regular donation by CAF voucher
- Reminders will be sent to all parents from whom a donation has not been received early in the term.
- You can cancel your Gift Aid Declaration -eg if you cease to pay tax-at any time by giving notice to the school and by cancelling your Bank Standing Order at your branch.

***The Governing Body thanks all the caring and supportive parents for their financial assistance in the upkeep of the school, and for their help in providing better facilities for all Oaklands children."***

This does not make clear that contributions are voluntary and, in fact, implies that they are not by twice stating that requested contributions represent a minimum amount. The emboldened text at the bottom of the letter also puts pressure on parents and seems to suggest that those not able to are not 'caring and supportive'.

**Our Lady and St Joseph Catholic Primary School, Hampshire**

[http://www.ourladyst-joseph.hants.sch.uk/mainfolder/about-us/docs/welcome/Building\\_Fund\\_Contribution\\_Letter\\_and\\_Forms.pdf](http://www.ourladyst-joseph.hants.sch.uk/mainfolder/about-us/docs/welcome/Building_Fund_Contribution_Letter_and_Forms.pdf)

*"A standing order is the easiest and simplest method and a form is attached for your convenience"*

Standing order attached to letter.

**Our Lady Mother of the Saviour Catholic Primary School, Halton**

<http://ourladysruncorn.halton.sch.uk/PublishingImages/Google%20Images/Schooloffice/School%20Building%20Fund%202014.pdf>

From a September 2014 letter:

*"I have enclosed a leaflet that explains the fund in more detail, together with the relevant forms for Standing Order (Form A) or direct donations (Form B)."*

The letter attaches a Standing Order form.

**Our Lady of Compassion Catholic Primary School, Solihull**

[https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/compassion/UploadedDocument/c94dced8279748f596a9e2794e638d97/building\\_fund\\_leaflet\\_january\\_2015.pdf](https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/compassion/UploadedDocument/c94dced8279748f596a9e2794e638d97/building_fund_leaflet_january_2015.pdf)

From a January 2015 leaflet specifically about the building fund:

*"For each £10 we are able to apply for a further £90 in grants, up to the annual limit set by the Department for Education. **Your contributions are vital to enable us to access grants allocated to our school.***

*A number of OLC families already contribute to this fund by a termly, or, an annual direct debit for which we are very grateful.*

***I would urge every family to make a contribution and you can do this by making a regular donation by Standing Order (Gift Aided by those who are taxpayers). This is the simplest way for many parents, and will involve less administrative work for our school. If Gift-Aided, each £10 is worth over £12 to the school.***

*The amount suggested by the Catholic Diocese is **£10.00 per child, or £15.00 per family, per term** (this equals just 58p or so per week per child). Your family may choose to contribute less or more, of course, depending on your circumstances, but it would be marvellous if every family were involved."*

There's no explicit mention of contributions being voluntary and a significant amount of pressure is applied. Parents are also encouraged to set up a standing order and a form is provided as part of the leaflet.

#### **Our Lady of Muswell Primary Roman Catholic School**

<http://www.ourladymuswell.haringey.sch.uk/parents/forms>

From the Governors Fund form on the website:

##### ***"Donations from parents***

*When you accept a place at OLM, you make a commitment to support the school in the education of your child. Donating to the fund is a practical demonstration of that commitment. A request for parental contribution to a fund of this type is the norm for VA schools.*

##### ***How much should I give?***

*The governors request that parents with one child in the school will contribute £60 each year i.e. £20 a term/£1.15 a week. Where parents have two or more children in the school the expectation is that they will contribute not less than £100 each year. Parents are encouraged to give more if they can, and some do this. The governors are grateful to all parents for their support. If any parents feel that they cannot contribute £60, please leave a note marked "For Governors" at the school office stating what contribution they feel able to make. For ways to pay, please turn over."*

Not only is it not in any way clear that these contributions are voluntary, there is also a significant amount of pressure applied and it appears that not contributing anything is not an option. Further, the 'ways to pay' section mentioned at the bottom offers a standing order.

#### **Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Primary School, Doncaster**

<http://www.ourladys.doncaster.sch.uk/events/information-for-parents>

From the website:

##### ***"Building Fund***

*Each year we kindly ask for your generosity towards the Diocesan schools Building Fund. We are asking for **£30 per family** (£10 per term, £5 per half term or 75p per week). If you wish to pay the full amount via cheque please make it payable to Our Lady's School Building Fund."*

It is not clear from this that contributions are voluntary and we can find no further information on the website clarifying this. It may be that in letters to parents the school has made it clear that contributions are voluntary, but as this does not appear on the website, prospective parents would not be aware of this.

#### **Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School, Lancashire**

<http://www.ourladystarofthesea.lancs.sch.uk/news/2015/3/26/holy-week.html>

The school's website has a news section providing regular updates to parents. The post during Holy Week this year contained the following:

*"We will be asking all who have not contributed to the Building Fund yet for their contribution and writing to them at the beginning of next half term as we are now two thirds of the way through this 2014/15 academic year and so we need to have Building Fund payments in as soon as possible. Another round of Building work is due soon and in order for us to be considered for any future building projects, we need to ensure that we have met the Diocesan Levy. It is only fair that we play our part when we know so many schools are struggling to repair and improve. We all want the very best learning environment in which the children can thrive and flourish."*

This does not make it clear that contributions are voluntary and, in fact, implies that they are not. It also places undue pressure on parents.

#### **Shrewsbury Cathedral Catholic Primary School**

[https://primarysite-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/f3263a40b19946aab36790346e4db8c4/75e9/building\\_fund\\_letter\\_2014.pdf](https://primarysite-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/f3263a40b19946aab36790346e4db8c4/75e9/building_fund_letter_2014.pdf)

From a September 2014 letter to parents:

*"Dear Parents*

#### **DIOCESE OF SHREWSBURY SCHOOLS BUILDING FUND**

*Please find enclosed a leaflet from the Diocese about the Schools Building Fund inviting you to contribute.*

*The Diocesan Schools' Building Fund helps our school to meet the required 10% liability for any building and repair costs. The Government meets 90% of the costs, but because we are a Catholic School we have to pay the remainder.*

*When you applied for a place for your child at our school, you will have been informed of this fund and the need for you to contribute annually. We ask just £15.00 a year per child (equivalent to only 29p per week), a sum which brings enormous benefits in developing the school premises, and therefore the working and learning environment for your child."*

The contribution is implied to be compulsory and it is even suggested that entry to the school is conditional on parents being willing to pay.

#### **SS Alban and Stephen's Junior School, Hertfordshire**

[http://www.ssasinfants.herts.sch.uk/pdfs/govs/gov\\_fund\\_letter\\_0914.pdf](http://www.ssasinfants.herts.sch.uk/pdfs/govs/gov_fund_letter_0914.pdf)

The Governors Fund section of the website reads as follows:

#### **"Governors Fund**

*Ours is a Voluntary Aided school. This means that we have to fund 10% of the cost of any repair or improvements carried out at the school. Parents are invited to contribute via standing order (found beneath), as this would allow us to budget accurately. This can be set up to be paid either weekly,*

*monthly, quarterly or annually. If you can't make a regular commitment then please send in cash or a cheque to either school office or via your child's teacher at any time during the school year. Please ensure that any contribution is marked with your child's name and for the attention of the governors.*

*Whatever donation you can make, large or small please be assured that it will be spent wisely and for the benefit of all the children.*

*If you are a taxpayer please also complete the gift aid form (found beneath), we can claim back 25p for every £1 you contribute, at no extra cost to you. For example for an annual contribution of £60 we could reclaim £15 making a total contribution of £75 by just signing a form. Please make sure that the person paying the contribution is the one who completes the form."*

*This section of the website includes a standing order form. Further, whilst not one of the worst offenders, it doesn't make it absolutely clear that contributions are voluntary.*

**SS Peter and Paul RC Primary School, Islington**

<http://www.freezeage.com/1430296407DHDOSXQCDU>

A letter to parents from November 2011:

***"Re: Governor's Building Fund – Special Appeal***

*Dear Parents / Guardians,*

*You should have received last month a letter requesting your contribution to the Governors Building Fund for the Autumn term. The Governors Building Fund pays for the repairs and improvement of the school. The school thankfully receives a great deal of help from the local authority (LEA) and the diocese, however, the Governors Building Fund has to pay at least 10% of the total cost.*

*As most of you know, major building work was completed last year on the ground floor of the school. This was only made possible because the governors pledged to pay £50,000 towards the overall cost. This sum has to be reimbursed to the diocese over the next few years. Last year, for example, the total contributions fell short of the yearly target fixed by the diocese, by £3,000. If this year's contribution does not meet target, the LEA and the diocese will be in a position to refuse to subsidise the second phase of building works for refurbishment of the first floor, which is due to commence in 2014.*

*The suggested minimum contribution is currently £30 per child per term, i.e. £90 per year. For those parents whose financial circumstances permit it, particularly if you have more than one child attending the school, we appeal to you to give more generously if you can.*

*The school has been lucky to benefit from free school meals from Islington Local Authority for the last 2 years. If you are in a position to do so, why not allocate a sum similar to what you would have paid for school meals towards the Governors' Building fund?*

*Like us, we are sure that you are keen that your children benefit from the best possible learning environment, which means a modern, safe and agreeable building with the best possible equipment.*

*We enclose an envelope, should you wish to make a special cash contribution. You can also pay by cheque made payable to the Governors' Building Fund. Thank you in advance for your support and generosity"*

Whilst this letter is now nearly four years old (and we are not aware that requests of this nature are still made), it is the latest one we were able to access and the request is particularly shocking. The letter not only doesn't make it clear that contributions are voluntary, it suggests a minimum donation and calls on parents to donate the money they save by receiving free school meals.

**St Ambrose Catholic Primary School, Stockport**

<http://www.st-ambrose.stockport.sch.uk/parents/diocesan-building-fund>

The school's website reads as follows:

*"As a Voluntary Aided school, part of the responsibility for the school building falls to Shrewsbury Diocese.*

*However, in order for work to be funded, the Diocese relies on a small contribution from schools and parents throughout the Diocese of Shrewsbury.*

*A letter from Bishop Mark is sent to all parents each year outlining the details and parents are asked to support the Diocesan Building Fund.*

*In recent years this fund has enabled us to have the school rewired, a new fire alarm fitted, internal painting of the school, 2x new portable ITC suite and a new kitchen installed.*

*Without this fund the school would have struggled to have all this work done.*

*Any shortfalls in these contributions still have to be funded by the school."*

This does not make it clear that contributions are voluntary and there would no doubt be some uncertainty for prospective parents. The same text also appears in the [prospectus](#).

**St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Basingstoke**

<http://www.st-annes.hants.sch.uk/school-information>

A letter to parents from 2012 and the only letter regarding the fund that is linked to on the website on the Important School Information page:

*"I am writing to you with regards to the School Building Fund. Each year we ask parents for a contribution of £10 per term towards the fund (£30 per year).*

***The question I often get asked is why do we need to do this?***

*You have chosen to send your child to a Catholic school because of the caring Christian environment and the high academic standards. Catholic schools are owned by the Diocese and for this reason we have to help maintain them. For all maintenance and building projects we only receive 90% of the money we need from the Government, the remaining 10% is the liability of the governors of the individual schools. You have been asked to contribute £10 per term, or as much as you can afford, to help cover the 10% your school cannot claim from the Government.*

***How and what do I pay?***

*You can pay by cash or cheque (payable to St. Anne's School Governors) via the office. Alternatively you can pay by standing order – if you wish to do this, please request the appropriate form from the office. Parents are asked to contribute a minimum of £30 per child per year for up to 2 children. If you are unable to contribute £30 per year, we ask that you give what you can afford."*

It is not clear that contributions are voluntary and specifying a minimum amount represents pressure. Whilst the letter contains two mentions of parents contributing whatever they are able to afford, this is not sufficiently clear in explaining that contributions of any size are entirely voluntary.

**St Anne's Catholic Primary, Chertsey**

[http://www.stannes-chertsey.surrey.sch.uk/website/school\\_fund](http://www.stannes-chertsey.surrey.sch.uk/website/school_fund)

From the school's website:

***"School Fund***

*Books and other educational materials are normally purchased from our delegated budget. In recent years, however, because of financial constraints, in addition to using School Fund to meet extra costs associated with School life, the realities of the current situation are such that we have to rely on the School Fund and on donations from our very supportive Parents' Association to fill financial gaps, including provision of books and items of educational equipment. School Fund is also used to pay for visiting theatre and music groups.*

*All pupils benefit from these arrangements. Consequently, we ask parents to contribute a minimum of thirty pounds (£30) per family, per year. Donations may be paid termly. (five pounds of this represents a contribution to the Governor's Fund due to the fact that as a Voluntary Aided Catholic School, the Governors have the responsibility of finding 10% of all funds dealing with external repairs and improvements). The Governors would ask all parents to help the School by making this modest contribution.*

*Monies can be paid by Standing Order, Parentmail/+Pay, cash or cheque via your child's class teacher."*

This does not make it clear that contributions are voluntary – in fact, by stating a minimum contribution, it implies that they are not.

**St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Hertfordshire**

<http://www.staugustines.herts.sch.uk/herts/primary/staugustines/site/pages/schoolinformation/schoolbuildingfund>

From the school's website:

*"Dear Parents/Carers*

***SCHOOL BUILDING FUND***

*St. Augustine's is without doubt a good school with high standards of achievement in academic studies, sports and extra-curricular activities. We are delighted you have chosen St. Augustine's for this very important stage in your child's education.*

***As a Voluntary Aided School we are required by law to provide 10% of the cost ourselves when we need to spend money on repairing and maintaining our school buildings. This is also of course the case when we spend money developing and updating our school buildings. This is the reason that all parents at Voluntary Aided Schools are asked to make a voluntary contribution each school year.***



*Therefore we are requesting that each family make a contribution of £60 per year (or £20 per term or £5 per month by standing order) to ensure that the school can continue to maintain and improve school facilities for your children.*

*Please find below the relevant documentation for you to complete and return with payment.*

*Thank you in advance for your contribution and your continued support.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Governing Body of St. Augustine's Catholic Primary School"*

A [standing order](#) form is provided.

**St Austin's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool**  
<http://www.st-austins.co.uk/school-prospectus/>

The school's prospectus is divided up into sections which are each linked to on the School Prospectus page of the website. The School Levy section reads as follows:

***"The School Levy***

*We have always had to pay for our Catholic schools. Cash needed for this has been collected at weekly Masses, however, with the decline of regular Mass attendance it has become impossible to raise the finance for the upkeep of our schools.*

*There is now a system whereby every Catholic school in the Diocese is billed for cash based on £10.00 per year per family on roll. In our school, this is requested at the beginning of the academic year. Reminders are sent to families who may overlook payment.*

*These funds are then held centrally within the Archdiocese and governing boards apply for the use of such funds as necessary. Since 1998 we have been successful in receiving funding for replacement UPVC windows throughout the school, the previous administration block, and refurbishment of the infant toilets and full re-wiring of the school in summer 2007.*

*We were also successful in receiving funding for a new Early Years Centre for September 2010 and the refurbishment of four classrooms and a new main reception building in 2012."*

There is no indication that the levy is a voluntary payment for parents and using the word 'billed' suggests that it is not. The fact that reminders will be sent out to families may also represent pressure.

**St Benedicts Catholic Primary School, Warwickshire**  
<http://www.stbenedictsonline.co.uk/letters.asp>

From the latest available School Building Fund letter on their website (2013-2014):

*"Dear Parents*

*The Autumn term is when we send out a reminder about the school building and maintenance fund and your annual contribution as parents in a Catholic school. Each year we have to raise a set amount that*

*goes towards any building work. Many schools save this up and put it towards a large project that either improves the school environment or essential building work.*

*Over the last two years we have had both remedial and cosmetic work completed on the school in order to maintain a good learning environment for your children. I'm sure you know how hard it is to upkeep a property. For big projects we use our Diocese Capital Money and we have to fund 10% of any costs. THIS IS THE MONEY YOU PAY EACH YEAR.*

*Your children have benefitted from: · Summer 2011: A beautiful new reception/Year 1 classroom extension · Summer 2012: A huge refurbishment of the school : New ceilings and lighting, decorated classrooms, a new kitchen and a refurbished hall. · Spring 2013: Much needed repairs on the roof and facias. · Autumn 2013; We are now awaiting new fencing, electronic buzzer gates and new reception area. This year we need to raise £7000, our contribution towards a new ICT infrastructure, new laptops for the children and a faster 'WIFI'*

**WE HAVE TO PAY OUR 10% CONTRIBUTION AND SO NEED TO BE SURE THAT ALL OF OUR FAMILIES PAY THEIR CONTRIBUTION.**

*In order to help with this in these difficult times: The level of contribution is remaining the same this year at £40 per family. Payments can be made in two £20 instalments, now and in the Spring term or payment can be made by standing order by completing the attached form or can be set up online if you wish.*

*Please make cheques payable to St Benedict's Primary school and sign and return the slip below with the money in an envelope and pass it to the office.*

*If you have any queries or questions please do not hesitate to contact me.*

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN OUR DRIVE TO PROVIDE THE BEST FOR YOUR CHILDREN"**

There is no suggestion that this contribution is voluntary and a significant amount of pressure is placed on parents throughout the letter.

**St Bernards Catholic Grammar School, Slough**

<http://www.st-bernards.slough.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/School-Fund-Letter-2014.pdf>

From an October 2014 letter to parents:

*"...With these things in mind, I would like to recommend a minimum contribution of £50 per term from parents. I quite understand that, while some parents may contribute more than the suggested amount, other parents are financially unable to do so. The best way to contribute is by Standing Order, and I have included the required form with this letter."*

The letter does not make it sufficiently clear that contributions are voluntary, particularly by suggesting a minimum amount, and a Standing Order form is also attached to the letter.

**St Catherine's RC Primary School, Manchester**

<http://www.st-catherines.manchester.sch.uk/money-due-this-term/>

From the Money Due This Term section of the website:

### ***“Buildings Fund***

*Building Fund is £18 per child (payable annually in September). This money is collected by the school and paid to the Diocese for the maintenance and development of buildings in the Diocese, including our school.*

### ***School Fund***

*This is a voluntary donation. School Fund money has been used in the past to pay for carpets in the classroom, building a library and many other resources. We give a guideline of £1 per week but it is entirely up to you. Some parents pay weekly ie £1 per week or others give a cheque for the year ie £52. Cheques payable to St Catherine's RC School Fund.”*

The fact that the School Fund section makes it clear that payments are voluntary strongly implies the Buildings Fund is not.

### **St Cecilia's Catholic Junior School, Liverpool**

<http://www.stceciliasjuniorschool.co.uk/letters-home/>

From a June 2014 letter to parents:

*“Dear Parent/Guardian*

### **ARCHDIOCESAN DEVELOPMENT FUND (School Levy)**

*This fund was established by the Liverpool Archdiocese for the maintenance and development of all Catholic schools within the Archdiocese. Each school is expected to contribute according to the number of pupils attending the school, the levy being the minimum of **£10.00** per child per year or per family, if you have more than one child in the school (not infants). We are urged by the Archdiocese to pay our full share.*

*Would you please send you money in by Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014 clearly marked “**School Levy**” with your child’s name, class and amount enclosed. If paying by cheque please make cheque payable to St Cecilia’s Junior School.*

*Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.*

*Yours sincerely”*

The letter simply assumes that parents will pay and is therefore not clear in stating that contributions are voluntary.

### **St Cecilia's Catholic School, Lancashire**

[https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=45&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CDUQFjAEOCg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.st-cecilias.lancs.sch.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2013%2F03%2FDiocesan-Levy-Letter-updated-March-2013.doc&ei=3PUrVejcIncauymgPAB&usg=AFQjCNHlt177Z0VI596cXUrer\\_izVBMd5A](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=45&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CDUQFjAEOCg&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.st-cecilias.lancs.sch.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2013%2F03%2FDiocesan-Levy-Letter-updated-March-2013.doc&ei=3PUrVejcIncauymgPAB&usg=AFQjCNHlt177Z0VI596cXUrer_izVBMd5A)

From a March 2013 letter sent to parents:

*“Dear Parents*

*During Lent we are all reminded about 'almsgiving' and so once again I write to encourage your generosity in support of the **SALFORD DIOCESAN SCHOOLS BUILDING FUND.***

*Many people are unaware of the fact that Catholic Schools are supported financially by the Catholic community. In order to provide youngsters with a Catholic education, a proportion of the costs of all repairs, maintenance and new building has to be found. This is a massive burden since there are 222 schools in this diocese, all of which have to be maintained if the ethos we all value is to be passed on through our educational system.*

*Parents are being asked to support this enterprise by donating funds to the Diocesan Building Fund so that the future of Catholic education is to be assured. Having chosen a Catholic education for your child I urge you to take this responsibility seriously and to contribute your portion so that the burden is spread equally amongst all whose children benefit from Catholic education.*

*Bishop Brain writes: "We have a network of schools throughout the Diocese that has grown through the great generosity and commitment of the Catholic community over many years. We are all very proud of the education service our schools provide for our children through the good work, effort and dedication of Governors, teachers, parents and friends.*

*You can continue to support this work and ensure that our school buildings are maintained and developed to a high level that befits our young people. We know that they deserve the very best, not only in the staff that work in the school, but the buildings and facilities that are made available for them"*

*We have been asked to collect **£20 per pupil** annually in order to raise school's contribution to the Fund. Please note that contributions can be made either by cash/cheque or by standing order. St Cecilia's school has benefited from this in the past and will hopefully benefit in future years.*

*Please fill in the reply slip and send it back to your child's Form Teacher, as soon as you can in the envelope which accompanies this letter. **(We should be grateful if all parents would return the reply slip so that we can be certain that you have received this letter).***

*Yours sincerely"*

*There is nothing in this letter to suggest that contributions are voluntary and pressure is applied in saying 'Having chosen a Catholic education for your child I urge you to take this responsibility seriously and to contribute your portion'.*

**St Chad's Primary School, Lancashire**

<http://www.st-chads.lancs.sch.uk/download/file/Brochure.pdf>

From the school's brochure on its website:

**"ARCHDIOCESAN LEVY**

*In common with all other Catholic parishes, St. Chad's school has to pay a levy towards the buildings and maintenance of our schools. This stands at £10.00 per family at present which we ask parents to pay each year.*

*"An alternative way to pay the levy is to join our 200 Club as a fun way to raise funds and maybe benefit from the prize money. Three prizes totalling £100 are offered each month. New members are always*

welcome, if you wish to join please contact Mrs Coyle in school. Annual membership costs only £12.00 and may be paid by cash or cheque.”

Whilst the school has attempted to introduce a fun, alternative way of paying the levy, the levy is still implied to be obligatory.

**St Cross Catholic Primary School, Hertfordshire:**

<http://www.stcross.herts.sch.uk/includes/attachments/P11/LETTER%20REQ%20TO%20ALL%20-%20OCT14%281%29.pdf>

Taken from an October 2014 letter:

*“This fund was established in 1988 by the Diocese of Westminster to help Catholic Schools to plan and fund their financial liabilities, which is 10% of any building or maintenance work approved by the LEA. In order to meet our obligations we need the financial support of our parents. Therefore, it is a requirement of all families with children in Catholic Schools under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Westminster to support this fund. The school is legally obliged to meet 10% of its financial needs for repairing, maintaining and developing our school buildings and so relies heavily on contributions to the School Building Fund.*

*All parents who have chosen to send their child to a Catholic school are requested to make a contribution so that the school can continue to provide the best possible teaching and learning environment. Therefore, I am writing to ask you to make your annual contribution now, the amounts of which for the current academic year are listed below:*

*- £36 per child per year or £60 per family per year”*

Using the word ‘requirement’ indicates that contributions are intended to be mandatory, not voluntary, and saying that ‘all parents who have chosen to send their child to a Catholic school’ puts pressure on parents.

**St Dominic's Catholic Primary School, Hackney:**

<http://www.stdominics.hackney.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/St-Dominics-Gazette-Sept13-Newslette.pdf>

This is from a newsletter from September 2013 – the newsletter can no longer be accessed through the site as only the 4 most recent newsletters are available. It reads:

*“The School Building Fund (School Levy): As part of our commitment to improve our school environment we are asking parents/carers to help. The school building fund helps to make the necessary improvements to the building through donations. We recognise times are more difficult however; the contributions are as follows - £30 per child or £45 for a family. This fund is vital and does make a difference to our school and ultimately your child’s education. Please see Arlene or Rita in the office to make a donation.”*

The governors’ page on the website also says this:

*“The Diocese of Westminster owns most of the land and the buildings on which the School stands. The Governing Body are trustees and have a duty to look after the School buildings and site on behalf of the Bishop. That is why parents and carers are asked for contributions, or a levy, towards the cost of maintaining and improving the School buildings and grounds.”*

This is clear case of contributions being not obviously voluntary, as a prospective parent wouldn't read this and know it was voluntary. The use of the word 'levy' also implies that the payment is a standard requirement for all parents.

**St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary School**

<http://www.st-edmund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Building-Fund-Standing-Order.pdf>

Taken from the Building Fund Standing Order section of the school's website:

*"In September 2000 the Diocesan Schools Building Fund was launched to help schools finance repairs and projects to school buildings which are the responsibility of the school governors. Every Diocesan school, including ourselves, pays according to the number of pupils on roll. Our contribution to the Diocesan Fund is not optional. We have to pay it. If we are unable to make the contribution from the Governors' Building Fund, the levy would have to be paid from the main school budget, resulting in fewer resources for our children. Our parish makes no contribution towards the upkeep of the buildings so you are not even contributing through your offerings at church.*

*We have been extremely fortunate that, in the time that this fund has been operating, we have benefitted from financial support for many projects, including the increased classroom capacity of the school.*

*We request a contribution of £10 per child per term (£30 per year).*

*Please return this form to the school office as soon as possible with your contribution and indicating your choice of future payments."*

There is no mention of this contribution being voluntary and a Standing Order form is provided for parents.

**St Edward's School, Upton Park:**

[https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=120&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CFQQFjAJOG4&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.st-edwards.newham.sch.uk%2Findex.php%2Fdownload\\_file%2Fview%2F991%2F158%2F&ei=3essVYNsj89o2aqBiAo&usg=AFQjCNHdGWoPiGjwBPtjs6kzsFV0y6Zx8g](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=120&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CFQQFjAJOG4&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.st-edwards.newham.sch.uk%2Findex.php%2Fdownload_file%2Fview%2F991%2F158%2F&ei=3essVYNsj89o2aqBiAo&usg=AFQjCNHdGWoPiGjwBPtjs6kzsFV0y6Zx8g)

This is taken from a January 2015 newsletter:

*"GOVERNORS' FUND 2014 /2015 A reminder letter is being sent out to those parents who have yet to pay the annual levy towards the upkeep of the school buildings. The annual levy is £45 per family. Thank you for your cooperation."*

The letter mentioned in the text is no longer available on the website as only the latest newsletter is linked to, but the wording here (i.e. use of the word levy and the fact that a reminder is being sent to parents who haven't paid) represents pressure and suggests that contributions are not voluntary. Reminders are also contained within an earlier November 2014 newsletter and a later March 2015 newsletter. The school's charging policy states with regard to voluntary contributions that 'Should a family be unable or unwilling to make a contribution this does not affect their child gaining admission to the school or prohibit the child in participating in any aspect of school life'. This is clear, and the newsletter sent to parents should be similarly so.

**St Francis Catholic Primary School, Caterham:**

<http://stfrancis.surrey.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Brochure-2014-15.pdf>

The school's 2014/15 prospectus says the following:

*"School fund is used for many extra items e.g., Music and sports subscriptions, Catholic Teachers' Federation subscription, children's Christmas entertainment etc. Present funding arrangements require the Governors of schools with voluntary aided status to contribute 10% of the cost of refurbishment programmes, building projects, maintenance and repairs to the school building. An audited account has to be presented to the Local Education Officer and the Governors every year.*

*Contributions to School Fund is £25 per family per term. This sum provides for the extra educational resources mentioned earlier and also allows us to strategically plan for future capital maintenance by building up a Governors Fund."*

The fact that this appears in the prospectus is troubling and prospective parents may very well see this as a compulsory payment and deter them from applying.

#### **St Francis de Sales Catholic Infant & Nursery School**

<http://www.stfrancisdesalesinfants.org.uk/prospectus>

The schools prospectus reads:

*"As a Catholic school, the Archdiocese is responsible for 10% of all external repairs, maintenance and new buildings and all catholic schools pay a 'Levy' annually to help towards these costs. As a school we have benefited a great deal from improvements to our building and the Archdiocese has contributed towards this. We ask for a contribution of £10.00 from each family in our school towards the cost of the Levy and a letter requesting the Levy is sent out during the Autumn term"*

It is not clear from this that the levy is a voluntary contribution and prospective parents will not be clear on this.

#### **St George Catholic College:**

[http://www.st-george.southampton.sch.uk/school/pages/college\\_information/funds.html](http://www.st-george.southampton.sch.uk/school/pages/college_information/funds.html)

This is taken from a letter published on the College Funds and Donations section of the website:

*"Dear Parents & Guardians,*

*As a Catholic voluntarily aided college, any repairs, maintenance or building work the college requires has to be part funded by the college itself. Currently, this stands as the college having to contribute 10% of the costs of any building or repair work on our site. Over the years, Saint George has been generously supported by families within the college community, in raising the necessary funds to do this, and build our new sports hall and Doyle block to name but two examples.*

*Unfortunately, now that the Government's Building Schools for the Future programme has been suspended, contributions and support from our families is ever more vital in improving the facilities here for our students. We are still committed to looking to the future of our college, and we are currently in the process of bidding for various grants which can only be obtained if again the college contributes 10% of that building cost.*

*I am therefore writing to all families to support the college, and contribute £5 a month (£20 per term). The best way of giving to the Governors' fund is to make your gift tax efficient by making a Gift Aid*



*Declaration. You can make your donation by completing a Bank Standing Order form and Gift Aid Declaration or by sending a regular donation by cash or cheque made payable to Saint George Catholic VA College.*

*We rely on the support of the community of Saint George to take the college into the future, and for us to see another successful fifty years in buildings that match the academic potential of our students.*

*With many thanks,*

*Yours sincerely"*

The request does not make it clear that contributions are voluntary.

**St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Cheshire**  
[http://www.stgregorys.cheshire.sch.uk/serve\\_file/35871](http://www.stgregorys.cheshire.sch.uk/serve_file/35871)

Taken from a letter to parents dated 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015:

***"Diocesan Building Fund***

*Thank you to all our parents who have already made a contribution to this fund. If it wasn't for this fund, we would not have had the Early Years Reception building, would not have been able to afford the new Class 2 building, the toilet refurbishment would not have happened and the wonderful heating system would not be in place. For the amount of money we put into the fund from donations from parents, we get an enormous return. For example, the average contribution demanded from the school, by the Diocese, each year is £1,350. I have been here nearly 8 years so the school has contributed approximately, £10,800 to this fund...and this is what we've had in return:*

- 1. A new Reception building - £238, 000 (2008)*
- 2. A new heating system and toilet refurbishment - £135,000 (2011/12)*
- 3. A new classroom (Class 2) - £90,000 (November 2013)*
- 4. A safer redesign of the entrance to school - £26,000 (August 2014)*

*We have asked the Diocese to redevelop our playground, build another teaching space and improve the outside areas for early Years and the Pre-school and are awaiting a decision on this. So, to date, for £10,800 investment we've received nearly £500,000 (half a million) of improvements in return.*

*Unfortunately, not all parents contribute for a variety of reasons and any shortfall the school has to pay from its own budget which in turn disadvantages the children because that money is meant for resources for their learning.*

*For example, last year the school was approximately £500 short of parental contributions and had to use £500 from the school budget which could have been used for better resources for the children, e.g. books.*

*Therefore, if parents who have not managed to make a contribution yet could do so that would be very helpful indeed, the children would not lose out and it could help us to secure further improvements to our school.*

Yours sincerely,”

It is not made clear here that contributions to the fund are voluntary, and a significant amount of pressure is applied to parents throughout.

**St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Ealing**

<http://www.st-gregorys.ealing.sch.uk/assets/Files/Newsletters/Newsletter-140214.pdf> :

Taken from a letter to parents in February 2014

*“School Maintenance Fund*

*Our thanks to all those parents who are up-to-date with the Maintenance Fund. We would ask that all parents try to contribute either £60 annually or £20 per term. Cash or cheques please, made payable to the “St Gregory’s Maintenance Fund” and delivered to the school office.”*

This is not obviously voluntary and the fact that this is a reminder suggests that pressure is applied on parents.

**St Hugh of Lincoln RC Primary School, Trafford**

<http://www.st-hughlincoln.trafford.sch.uk/files/files/12sept.pdf>

This is from a letter from 12<sup>th</sup> September 2014:

*“Building Fund: Every year we have a building work completed in school and make many improvements. To subsidise this we pay into the Salford Diocese Building Fund, from which we benefit greatly. To assist with our Annual subscription we ask all families for a donation of £20. Over previous years this has been extremely good value for school as we receive substantially more funds than we pay in and I urge you to support this by paying your contribution. This can either be paid in full or instalments each term to the school office. Thank you.”*

It is not clear here that donations are voluntary.

**St James' Catholic Primary School**

<https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=575&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CDcQFjAEOLoE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.st-james-hyde.tameside.sch.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2013%2F01%2FAutumn-one-five-14.docx&ei=PQMsvbrHFJHyatbgYgO&usg=AFQjCNGIBYCp3Njgl6UYh0-qLLCuUQIlKA>

Taken from a September 2014 newsletter:

***“DIOCESAN BUILDING FUND***

*With this newsletter there will be a leaflet from the Diocese about the Diocesan Building Fund. The Diocese ask us for a donation of £15 from each family to fund large buildings works in schools across the diocese. We have benefited from this in the past with the building of The Ark and the demolition of the old Nursery building and our new windows. Can I urge you all to contribute as we have to pay from the school budget if not enough donations are received and this disadvantages all our children. If you wish to pay £5 a term or need help with the very complicated forms please pop into school and ask at the office.”*

Pressure is put on parents to contribute and contributions are not explicitly voluntary.

**St Joachim's Catholic Primary School, Newham**

<http://www.st-joachims.newham.sch.uk/documents/Prospectus.pdf>

From the school's prospectus:

*"GOVERNORS' FUND As a Voluntary Aided school the governors and school community are responsible for contributing 10% towards building costs. Therefore we need to raise part of the money for our school through the annual parental contributions to the Governors' Fund.*

*CONTRIBUTIONS A letter will go home to parents and carers at the beginning of the Autumn term specifying a requested contribution from each family for the entire academic year. If you have a bank account we would encourage you to make your contribution by standing order so as to spread the payments."*

It is not clear from this that contributions will be voluntary and even if this is made clear in the letter (which we do not have access to), prospective parents will not be aware of this.

**St John's Catholic Primary School, Burscough**

[http://www.burscough.lancs.sch.uk/newsletter\\_archive.php?month=2](http://www.burscough.lancs.sch.uk/newsletter_archive.php?month=2)

From a February 2015 newsletter for parents:

***"School Levy***

*The school levy (£ 10 per family) is now due for this academic year, 2014 – 2015.*

*The collection of this Levy, which is also supplemented by a Parish donation, is the only method of funding the large capital schemes that need to be undertaken in our Catholic schools.*

*The Archdiocese of Liverpool asks for less from families than many other Dioceses and it is expected that this contribution is part of the commitment to Catholic Education that parents make when they choose a Catholic School.*

*Any shortfall has to be taken from the school budget. Parents at St John's, however, have always been very generous and supported this fund.*

*In recent years St John's has benefited greatly from the scheme, with new boilers, replacement roof, windows and window lights.*

*The levy can be paid in cash or cheque (payable to St John's Catholic Primary School). Thank you for your support in this matter."*

It is not made clear that contributions are voluntary and pressure is put on parents by claiming that contributions are 'part of the commitment to Catholic Education that parents make when they choose a Catholic School'. Payment is also chased in a number of subsequent newsletters.

**St John Fisher Catholic Primary School, Ealing**

<http://www.st-johnfisher.ealing.sch.uk/News/School-Building-Fund/index.asp>

From the school's website:

*"As a voluntary aided school, parents of the pupils attending the school are responsible for contributing 10% towards all building works. As such, we are still paying off our original debt of £600,000 for our new*

*school! As a school community we have done very well paying off that debt - and we have only approximately £172,000 left to pay! We are keen to pay what is left off as soon as possible so we can continue to further improve facilities at St John Fisher. At the moment we are investigating the possibility of placing additional teaching rooms over the Reception Classes, on our outside, 'Learning Deck'. This will provide us with the space we need when we split classes for focussed teaching and also the additional space for classes for parents and our conversations group.*

*Therefore, please ensure that you contribute what you can towards the school building fund. If you cannot afford the £100 per family, then please just give what you can as every little helps! If you have already set up a direct debit - then please carry on as normal - there is no need to alter anything! Many thanks in anticipation of your continued support."*

Whilst the text does allow parents to give what they can below the requested £100, it does not say that no contribution at all is acceptable and therefore pressurises parents into paying at least something.

#### **St John the Baptist Church of England Junior School, Richmond**

<http://www.st-john.richmond.sch.uk/about-us/maintenance-fund/>

From the school's website:

*"St John's is a voluntary aided Church of England School. This means that we are partly funded by central government and part by the Diocese of London.*

*Whilst we buy in services from the local authority and from the diocese, we are required to make contributions to the Diocese in order to have access to a large pool of funds, the Board's Building and Maintenance Scheme. These funds are available to Diocesan schools and the major works of our refurbishments throughout the learning environment and extended school club areas have been paid for through this pool. The School is required to pay 10% of any works that are carried out through this scheme.*

*St John's has benefited from being a high focus school over the last 10 years and this has led to vast improvements throughout our whole learning environment.*

*Easy/optional methods of payment...*

<b>Contribution</b>	<b>Children</b>
<b>£40</b>	<b>First child on roll</b>
<b>£35</b>	<b>For each other child on current roll</b>

The page simply describes what the fund is for and then explains how much to pay and ways of paying (including by Standing Order). It therefore seems that payments are assumed to be compulsory.

#### **St John's Marlborough Academy, Wiltshire**

<http://www.stjohns.wilts.sch.uk/html/information/academy-fund.html>

From the school's website:

*"We ask each family to contribute a minimum of £25 per year to the general Academy Fund, which is payable at the beginning of the Autumn Term. This is used to provide things not covered by our government funding, such as equipment for clubs and activities and a subsidy towards the running of the minibuses. It is audited each year, and an account of its use is available. In general, the aim is to ensure that each year group derives some benefit from the fund during a year. Donations can be made by cheque or ParentPay and if a Gift Aid declaration is signed we can claim an additional 25%"*

The wording here and the fact that the requested contribution is a minimum amount suggests that payment is obligatory, not voluntary.

**St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Covent Garden**

<http://www.stjosephs.camden.sch.uk/PDF%20Newsletters/Newsletter%2020th%20%20September%202013%20INC%20SBF%20LETTER.pdf>

From a September 2013 letter to parents:

*"The suggestion from the Governing Body is that parents make a contribution of £10 for one child in school for each term or £30 for the school year. If you have more than one child in school then a donation of £50 for each family paid over the school year would seem appropriate. The school year runs from September until July. While we understand that this seems like a large sum of money, we do hope that every family will be able to make a contribution, however small, to this joint effort.*

*Contributions can be made on Tuesday mornings inside the entrance of the school. Two parents have kindly volunteered to collect the contributions: Charlotte Gubb (mother of Jimmy & Stanley) and Faye Everett (mother of Cicely Hall). If as a taxpayer you would like to contribute using Gift Aid please speak to a member of the office staff.*

*"Parental Contributions: The School's Building Fund relies on the financial support of the parents who decide to send their children to one of the Diocese's Voluntary Aided schools. In short, if your child comes to this school, we ask you to make a contribution. This may seem a bit tough on you but the fact of the matter is that we have nowhere else to turn as neither the Diocese or the parishes have endless reserves. It is also important to stress that the School's Building Fund only works if parents from all our schools make a contribution. We can't do it without you!"*

The letter never states that contributions are voluntary, and the fact that parents are told that two parents have volunteered to stand at the gates to collect contributions clearly amounts to pressure.

**St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Dorset:**

<http://stjosephs.dorset.sch.uk/building-fund>

The Building Fund page on the school's website says the following:

*"Following consultation in 1999, the diocese devised a scheme which would allow schools to deal direct with the Portsmouth office. The Diocesan Schools Building Fund (DSBF) was introduced in September 2000 in order to provide the contribution needed towards building and repair projects at our Voluntary Aided Schools. 50% of the Fund is provided by parishes regardless of whether or not they have access to a Catholic school; 50% of the Fund is provided by schools from donations from the parents of the children attending the school. In this way the whole diocesan Mass-going population and all parents of children in our schools share the Bishop's commitment to our Catholic schools.*

**Parental Contributions to the Building Fund**

*Parents of pupils attending our schools are asked to contribute £10 per pupil per term (£30 per year) into the Building Fund as a contribution towards the 50% of the Fund which is provided by the schools in the diocese.*

*We realise however, that this may prove a burden on some families, especially if they have a number of children in schools in the diocese. In such cases, we ask that a contribution according to your means be made.*

*Payment can be made by cheque or standing order – please contact the school for details. In addition, we ask parents who are tax payers to sign the “Gift Aid” form which enables us to reclaim from the Inland Revenue the tax you have already paid on your donation.”*

Whilst the school invites parents to make a contribution according to their means, it is not made clear making no contribution at all is acceptable. The school also puts pressure on parents to contribute by saying that contributions reflect that ‘all parents of children in our schools share the Bishop’s commitment to our Catholic schools’.

**St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Guildford:**

[http://www.st-josephs-guildford.surrey.sch.uk/includes/attachments/P29/Governors'%20Payment%20Request%202012-2013%20%20Nov%202012\(1\).pdf](http://www.st-josephs-guildford.surrey.sch.uk/includes/attachments/P29/Governors'%20Payment%20Request%202012-2013%20%20Nov%202012(1).pdf)

This letter is dated November 2012, but it is the letter still linked to on the Governors’ Fund page of the website, presumably for explanatory purposes. The letter says the following:

***“Parent contributions to maintain school buildings***

*As a Catholic school, we are required to contribute 10% towards all costs relating to the maintenance of and improvement to the children’s classrooms, all other buildings and the school grounds (eg, the school gates and fencing to the playground), as well as any IT and other equipment used in the school (including the laptops). This is a considerable commitment for all of us. In fact, with significant reductions in the total government grant, it is likely that we will have no alternative but to fund 100% of some items in the near future. We therefore ask all parents or guardians to pay an annual contribution, per child, to the Governors Fund.*

*We are pleased to confirm that the Governors Fund contribution for 2012/13 has not been increased and therefore remains at a minimum of £30 per child. Please do note though that this amount is for each child you have at the school, so if you have more than one child at St Joseph's, then this amount should be increased accordingly. Please note also that this is a minimum amount. If you can afford more, we would ask you to consider paying a higher and more realistic sum. Perhaps we could suggest £48 per child per year.*

*For those of you who currently pay by standing order, please check your bank records to ensure they are set to pay at least the minimum amount per child per annum. Some parents are paying below this minimum level, possibly just because the standing order has not been updated for several years. Some parents also forget to change the amount in line with the number of children they have at the school, which may have increased or in fact decreased.....Attached to this letter is a Standing Order form and a Gift Aid Declaration.”*

The letter includes a Standing Order form, sets a minimum contribution and even directs parents who are already paying to pay more. At no stage is it suggested that this contribution is voluntary.

**St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Islington:**

<http://www.st-josephs.islington.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/A-letter-from-our-Chair-of-Governors.pdf>

From a letter to parents dated 2013 - it is the letter that features on the school's website:

***"How much should I give in this school year?"***

*For some time parents have been contributing £60 per family per year, and the governors are very grateful for this assistance. The governors are conscious of the pressures on family budgets, and have decided to keep the contribution rate at £60 for a single child per year. Where parents have more than one child in the school, governors ask for a discounted family rate of £100 per year.*

**Commitment**

*St Joseph's is an excellent school with a dedicated Head Teacher and teaching staff. There are more applicants for entry than there are places available. In order to maintain and develop the school, the governors expect each parent to commit to supporting the school financially. Many parents have already made their 2013/14 contributions in full, or are making monthly part-payments. The governors understand how difficult this is for many families, and wish to thank parents for the efforts they are making. Some parents have not yet made any contribution. The governors now ask those parents to reflect on their commitment to the school and, in fairness to the school and to parents who have already paid, to pay the contribution requested."*

Significant pressure is put on parents to contribute and the contributions are implied to be compulsory.

**St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Salisbury**

<http://www.st-josephs-salisbury.wilts.sch.uk/parents/admin/giftAid.html>

From the school's website:

*"As a Catholic School, St Joseph's does not receive 100% funding for capital costs. The school receives 90% allocation of Formula Capital and other modernisation grants. The governing body of the school is expected to raise the additional funds. The governing body is a registered charity with no grant-funding or means of income. In the past the Catholic parishes of the deanery made up this short fall. It is still the case that parishes contribute very generously to diocesan funds through a levy. However, at St Joseph's many of the pupils are non-Catholics and parents do not have the opportunity to contribute to the levy.*

*We therefore ask each family to donate £10 per term to the capital costs of running the school. This money goes directly to repairs and maintenance of the building. If you are a taxpayer, by signing a Gift Aid declaration form, the school can claim an additional 22p for every £1 donated. Please consider arranging a Standing Order, so that your donation is received regularly by the school. Details of how to make Gift Aid donations will be sent to all parents at the beginning of the year, with reminders every term."*

It is not made clear that contributions are voluntary and underneath the text on the webpage a standing order is available to download.

**St Jude's Catholic Primary School, Birmingham**

<http://www.stjuderc.bham.sch.uk/newsletters/news-140905.pdf>



From a September 2014 newsletter for parents:

***"SCHOOL FUND***

*As usual we are asking you to contribute to school fund. Each family is asked to send in £5 for the year. This small contribution goes towards providing additional resources and opportunities for the children. Please send your donation in with the attached slip in an envelope and put it into the box in the main entrance. Thank you."*

There is no additional information on the school's website and we can't find any letters further clarifying parental contributions. The newsletter implies that contributions are obligatory.

**St Jude's Catholic Primary School, Hampshire**

<http://st-judes.hants.sch.uk/school/governors/building-fund>

From a letter to parents dated Spring Term 2013. The letter makes up the Governors' Fund page of the website and says the following:

*"Building and maintenance is an ongoing factor in the life of a School and to meet our obligations we ask all parents to contribute to the Governors' Building Fund. At the moment, this contribution is set at £36 per child per year although a smaller amount would be gratefully received if you are unable to meet the full contribution. The payment can be made monthly, termly or annually by standing order or cheque. If you are a UK taxpayer and your contribution is "Gift Aided" the School will receive an additional £9 from the government each year.*

*We would be grateful if you are able to contribute to the Governors' Building Fund. If you decide to make your payments by standing order; please complete the annual, termly or monthly form which you can download from the list below."*

The letter directs parents to a Standing Order form and at no point makes clear that contributions are voluntary. The option not to pay the amount suggested only comes in the form of an option to pay a smaller amount.

**St Jude's Catholic Primary School, Lambeth**

<http://st-judes.lambeth.sch.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/PROSPECTUS.pdf>

Taken from the school's prospectus:

***"MAINTENANCE FUND***

*As a voluntary aided school the Governors are responsible for the external maintenance of the school, so we ask parents to contribute towards the insurance premium for the upkeep of the school building. This is paid annually to the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education. The funds raised through this scheme enable us to maintain the high standard of appearance of the school building. The school is redecorated externally on a rolling programme and building improvements are carried out. Please help by sending your contribution in promptly at the beginning of each school year."*

It is not made clear that contributions are voluntary and prospective parents may very well think they are not.

**St Lewis' Catholic Primary School, Warrington**

<https://st-lewis-catholic.eschools.co.uk/storage/download/yF7MDh6HKI>

From a 2014/15 letter to parents:

*"This is where we need your help. In order to meet these costs parents are requested to make an annual contribution of £25.00 per family (or whatever you can afford). You can help by either:*

- *Paying by Standing Order (see attached Mandate)*
- *Paying by cash or cheque (payable to 'St Lewis' Building Fund')*

*Payment by standing order is very much appreciated, since it reduces the administration involved."*

A standing order mandate is included in a letter to parents.

**St Mark's RC Primary School, Salford:**

<http://www.st-marks-clifton.salford.sch.uk/School+Information/School+Fund>

From the School Fund page on the school's website:

*"In line with other Catholic Primary Schools we currently ask all families for a **Building Fund Contribution** of £20 annually. This can be paid by cash or by cheque or by Direct Debit. Further details from the school office."*

There is no indication that this contribution is voluntary and there is no clarification elsewhere on the website. It seems likely that prospective parents would believe this to be compulsory.

**St Mary Magdalene's Catholic Junior School, Brent**

<https://primarysite-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/19d9bb9911c04149a962906e67b762ac/a71f/DiocesanBuildingFundletter.pdf>

From an October 2013 letter to parents, although it remains the letter linked to on the school's website:

*"Payment can be made by cash or cheque and you can also make your contribution via standing order in monthly, quarterly or annual payments – a Bankers Order form is attached for this purpose."*

A Standing Order form was sent to parents and is available to download on the website.

**St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School, Milton Keynes**

<http://www.stmarymagdalenemk.co.uk/school-building-fund/>

The contribution form provided on the website includes a standing order form.

**St Mary's Catholic College, Wirral:**

<http://www.stmaryscollege.wirral.sch.uk/home/letters-home/building-fund-2014.aspx>

From a letter to parents dated September 2014:

*"Schools' Building Fund Parental Contribution*

*We are required to make a contribution of more than £25,000 to the Diocese of Shrewsbury Schools' Building Fund. The money is used to pay the Church's contribution to any building developments that take place. The College has benefitted significantly from this in the past and we hope to do so again in the near future. I have enclosed a leaflet giving more details.*

*We are requesting that families make a contribution of £20 per family to this fund. This can be paid by a cheque made payable to the College or cash brought in an envelope marked "Schools' Building Fund" and taken to the College Finance Office. Alternatively payment can be made via ParentPay indicating that the money is for The Schools' Building Fund."*

Nothing here makes clear or even suggests that contributions are voluntary, and we can find no further information about the Building Fund on the website.

#### **St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Kensington and Chelsea**

<http://www.st-marys.rbkc.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Issue-24-13th-March.pdf>

<http://www.freezepage.com/1430310717WREBDFUMFQ>

This is taken from the Governor's Fund section of the school's website, as well as a newsletter from March 2015:

#### **"Governor's Fund**

As a Voluntary Aided school when we need to spend money on repairing, maintaining or developing our school buildings the Government requires us to raise 10% of the cost ourselves. This may seem a bit tough in the current climate but we have nowhere else to turn as neither the Diocese nor the parishes have endless reserves. We therefore have to ask every parent who has chosen to send their child to our voluntary aided Catholic school to make a contribution so that we can continue to provide the best possible teaching and learning environment.

#### ***How much are we asking for you to give?***

Parents are asked to contribute £30 per year per child. If you have more than one child we ask for a contribution of £40 per family per year. This payment can be spread over the year at £10.00 each term. We are also happy to accept smaller payment terms by arrangement. **Please help to support your child's school by paying your contribution.** Contributions are spent solely on the school building for the benefit of all children."

Again, it is not made clear that contributions are voluntary and the wording of the request ('every parent who has chosen to send their child to our VA Catholic school') not only puts pressure on parents, but makes contributions seem obligatory.

#### **St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Hounslow**

[http://www.smi.hounslow.sch.uk/\\_Media/parents-maintenance-letter.pdf](http://www.smi.hounslow.sch.uk/_Media/parents-maintenance-letter.pdf)

From a June 2014 letter to parents:

*"The Governors are very aware of the current economic climate, and we are now encouraging all parents to pay £5 per month by Standing Order, to spread the donation over the year in a manageable amount and to greatly reduce the amount of administration dealing with the receipts.*

*We ask each family to contribute £60 (or if they wish, more). This is per family and not per child and is the same as the amount requested since 2010. Arranging to pay small regular amounts helps budgeting. If families prefer to pay annually by a cheque or cash, they may continue to do so.*

**PLEASE READ THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE FORMS VERY CAREFULLY**

*Paying by Standing Order as Gift Aid – both Form A and Gift Aid form*

*If you are currently paying tax, the Diocese on behalf of the Governors can claim back the tax on your contribution to the Maintenance Fund. For example, if your contribution is £60 we can get an additional £15 from HMRC. All you need to do is complete the Gift Aid Form and Form A. Assuming all parents who contribute to the fund pay Income Tax we could claim back over £3,000. If in the future your circumstances change and you no longer pay tax on your income and capital gains equal to the tax that is reclaimed, you must cancel your declaration.*

*Paying by Standing Order (not as Gift Aid) – Form B only*

*If you are unable to pay as Gift Aid, payment can be made direct to the Governors' account. All you need to do is complete Form B Return the completed forms to the School Office in an envelope addressed to "St. Mary's Governors' Fund".*

The following is from an October 2014 newsletter for parents:

*"You will know that the boys' toilet was done over the summer and for this we used a mixture of government building grant and maintenance fund contributions. That's the £5 a month (or £60 a year that you pay to us). We need this contribution from all of you because as a Church school we only receive 90% of the money needed to run. Thank you!"*

The letter includes two standing order forms and encourages parents to pay this way. It is also not completely clear from the letter that all contributions are voluntary. Further, the newsletter is even less clear that contributions are voluntary and, in any case, puts pressure on parents to pay by saying 'we need this contribution from all of you'.

**St Mary's Lewisham CE Primary**

<http://www.st-marys.lewisham.sch.uk/parents/school-fund/>

The School Fund section of the school's website reads as follows (bold from the original text):

*"As a Voluntary Aided School we ask for an annual contribution of £30.00 Diocesan Fund. This should be paid before your child starts school and then every September after that. You may wish to pay by standing order – a downloadable form is available. **£10.00 a term can be paid if preferred.***

[School Fund standing order form](#)

*The reason we ask for this contribution is that we do not receive help from Lewisham for any repairs and maintenance to the outside of the School building. The Southwark Diocese administer an External Maintenance Scheme based on a pattern of voluntary parental giving, providing a fund for governors from which their 10% contribution is required for maintenance projects. The remainder of the money collected is used to enable the school to help pupils where needed i.e. to part finance school trips/journeys.*

***It is part of your commitment when sending your child to a church school."***

Contributions are made to seem obligatory and a standing order form is also offered.

**St Patrick's RC Primary School, Lancashire**

<http://www.st-patricks.lancs.sch.uk/download/file/St%20Patricks%20Prospectus%202013.pdf>

Taken from the prospectus on the school's website:

***"School Levy***

*As St. Patrick's is a Voluntary Aided school, we have to contribute 10% of any costs for improving and/or repairing the building. Parents are asked to make an annual contribution to the Diocesan Building Fund the amount is approximately £20.00 per pupil but can change from year to year. It is important to note that if there is a shortfall it has to be made up from the school budget which has an obvious detrimental effect on funds available for the school."*

It is not clear from this that contributions are voluntary and there is no further information on the website available to prospective parents.

**St Paul's Church of England Combined School, Buckinghamshire**

<http://www.st-pauls.bucks.sch.uk/information/school/development.htm>

Taken from the Development and Maintenance Fund section of the school's website:

***"How do I contribute?***

*You may contribute monthly, quarterly or yearly, by cash, cheque or Banker's Order. If you are a tax-payer, there would be a significant benefit to the school if you contribute under "Gift Aid". The additional revenue from the recovery of tax is substantial and we would urge as many parents as possible to give in this way.*

***May I cancel?***

*A Gift Aid Declaration may be cancelled at any time.*

***How much should I contribute?***

*We will be happy to accept any amount you feel able to give. Since one of the primary purposes of the fund is to cover the cost of the Diocesan Maintenance and Insurance Scheme, we would ask for a minimum annual amount of £16 for each child."*

Whilst the school initially says it would be happy to accept any contribution, it goes on to set a minimum amount per child and it is therefore not clear that contributions are voluntary.

**St Paul's with St Michael's C of E Primary, Hackney**

<http://www.spsm.hackney.sch.uk/parents-page/maintenance-fund/>  
<http://www.spsm.hackney.sch.uk/parents-page/home-school-agreement/>

Taken from the Maintenance Fund section of the school's website:

***"Maintenance Fund***

*The parents, guardians or carers of all children attending this school contribute to the fund, although families with two or more children attending this school only pay for two children. This is part of the agreement you sign when your child is accepted as a pupil and is also something that you agree to do when you sign the Home-School Agreement.*

### **What do we pay?**

*The amount can vary but at present it is £27.00 per child per year. Payments can be made in full during the first half term or payments can be made in installments of £4.50 at the beginning of each half term. You will receive a reminder notice with a payment slip and envelope, to make your payment, at the beginning of each half term."*

As the above text mentions, the home-school agreement says the following:

*"The family will encourage and support the school and their child's education by:...*

- *Be[ing] willing to pay annually the school's Maintenance Fund."*

There is no question that contributions are compulsory, with the suggestion being that children will not be able to attend if their parents do not agree to paying.

### **St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Winchester**

[http://www.st-peters.hants.sch.uk/images/documents/Schools\\_Building\\_Fund\\_Standing\\_Order\\_Gift\\_Aid\\_June2014.pdf](http://www.st-peters.hants.sch.uk/images/documents/Schools_Building_Fund_Standing_Order_Gift_Aid_June2014.pdf)

From a June 2014 letter to parents:

*"Please complete the attached Standing Order Form and return to the School Office for the attention of School Governor, Finance. Please, please do pay by Standing Order as this will save the School Governors incurring Bank charges for handling cheques and cash and will save a lot of additional administrative time. It will also save you having to remember to make periodic payments."*

A standing order form is offered and encouraged.

### **St Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, Telford and Wrekin**

<https://stpeterandpaulcatholicprimary.taw.org.uk/SitePages/Building%20Fund.aspx>

The Diocesan Schools Building Fund page on the website reads as follows:

*"As you may be aware SS Peter & Paul Catholic School is a Voluntary Aided School, supported by the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The Voluntary Aided status means that in return for a significant amount of freedom in management of the school, the Diocese is legally responsible for a contribution of 10% to the cost of external building and maintenance works.*

*These contributions are requested annually through the Diocesan Building Fund and for the academic year 2013/2014 the requested contribution is £15 per child. As we are duty bound to meet the capitation sum, we would encourage parents to make a contribution as we are obliged to raise any shortfall in contributions from school funds, which does of course reduce spending in other areas of the school.*

*We hope you will agree that £15 per child (just less than 29p per week) is a small price to pay for the enjoyment of voluntary status. It is this status which allows us to nurture the catholic ethos and way of life*

*in our school. We have been fortunate to have our lovely new school built and there are many projects in other schools that would not be possible without the Building Fund.*

*If you have not already done so, could we please urge you to make your annual contribution as soon as possible. Thank you for your support."*

It is not clear from this whether or not contributions are voluntary and it is likely that many parents will assume they are not. Whilst in one instance the school simply 'encourages' parents to contribute, they are 'requested' elsewhere and, in also 'urging' parents who have not yet contributed to do so, it could be said that the school is putting parents under pressure.

#### **St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Lancashire**

<https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=580&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CFUQFjAJOLoE&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.st-peters-pri.lancs.sch.uk%2Fgetfile.php%3Fsrc%3D216%2Fletter%2B20th%2BJanuary%2B2015.doc&ei=PQMsvbrHFJHyat-bgYgO&usg=AFQjCNEvHiQjCAGl3JzDhbb9oU3lgGZYRA>

From a newsletter to parents dated January 2015:

*"Building Fund: Thank you for contributions received so far towards the school building fund. We would be grateful if those parents who have yet to contribute could do so before half-term. Contributions to the Building Fund enabled us to carry out the recent work on the car park."*

It is not clear that contributions are voluntary and we cannot find any information elsewhere that suggests otherwise.

#### **St Philip Howard Catholic Primary School, Hertfordshire**

<http://www.sphoward.herts.sch.uk/useful-information/>

The following is the full text appearing on the Useful Information page of their website:

##### ***"Building Fund***

*The daily running costs of our school are met by the Local Authority. but as a Voluntary Aided School, the governors of St. Philip Howard, on the behalf of the Diocese, are responsible for 10% of the cost for the upkeep of the exterior of the fabric of the school building and for any new buildings.*

*The governors ask parents for help in raising funds for this purpose, in particular by contributing towards the school's building fund. School Building Fund can be paid by cash, cheque or standing order."*

There's no mention of this contribution being voluntary. A prospective parent seeing this would not immediately recognise this as being voluntary.

#### **St Raphael's Catholic Primary School, Tameside**

<http://www.st-raphaels.tameside.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Newsletter-WB-04.02.13.pdf>

From a February 2013:

*"DIOCESE BUILDING FUND: Each year we ask for a contribution from each child in school of £15.00 towards the diocesan school building fund, many thanks to all the parents who have already sent in the money, your support is greatly appreciated. If you have not yet paid your contribution to the fund please try and get this into the school office before the end of February.*



*Any shortfall of the total amount requested by the diocese school has to be met from our own budget. In recent years our school has received much needed funds from the diocese for building works, the projects at St Raphael's from the diocese."*

From a September 2014 newsletter:

*"SCHOOL BUILDING FUND: Following on from the letter which was sent home at the start of the school year contributions to the Diocesan School Building Fund are now due. The contribution expected from each pupil in school is £15.00. This can be paid by cash or cheque to school or by setting up a direct debit with the Diocese. Please ensure your money is in school as soon as possible as we must have all monies and standing order information with the Diocese at the start of October."*

From a November 2014 newsletter:

*"SCHOOL BUILDING FUND: As per previous newsletters contributions to the Diocesan School Building Fund are now due. The contribution expected from each pupil in school is £15.00. This can be paid by cash or cheque to school. Please ensure your money is in school as soon as possible."*

The [school's website](#) also has the following in the FAQ section:

***"Do you collect school fund?"***

*School fund of £1.50 is collected weekly in the school.*

*This fund is used to support activities both in and outside school such as baking materials, science activities, school trips and theatre performances."*

None of this makes clear that contributions are voluntary and the frequency with which it appears parents are chased for payment represents clear pressure.

**St Richard's Catholic Primary School, Lancashire**

<http://www.st-richards.lancs.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/St-Richards-Prospectus-2014.pdf>

From the school's prospectus:

*"School Levy*

*St Richard's is a Voluntary Aided School and as such is funded 90% from the LEA and 10% from the Diocese. Catholic education is a valuable privilege, which has been gained by much hard work and commitment from the Catholic communities over many years. The 10% Diocesan contribution which is used on building projects is raised by a twice yearly levy on the parish, and the parents of the children attending the school. The current Levy is £10 per family and parents will be asked each September and January for £5 to make this contribution. We believe that the cost is small for the quality of Catholic Education, which the school offers."*

It is not made clear from this that the levy is voluntary for parents, and prospective parents may well be deterred from applying on reading this.

**St Simon's Catholic School, Stockport**

<http://www.st-simons.stockport.sch.uk/files/news100914.pdf>

<http://www.st-simons.stockport.sch.uk/files/news220415.pdf>

From a September 2014 newsletter:

*"It is that time of year again when we ask all families to send in their contribution for the Diocesan Building Fund of £15 per pupil. Please see the attached leaflet for details. Payment should be sent in an envelope with your child's name and marked "Diocesan Building Fund" (cheques payable to St Simon's School Fund). We are requesting that all payments are made by Friday, 28th November. You may pay in instalments, if it helps. Many thanks to those of you who always pay promptly every year, it saves us a great deal of administration time."*

From an April 2015 newsletter:

*"We have a shortfall of £958 in Diocesan Building Fund contributions. Having given everyone ample opportunity and options to pay, it is most disappointing that so many families still choose not to pay. It has been reported to us on several occasions that some parents proudly announce on the playground that they never pay. We know we have the support of the majority of parents who understand that the £15 per year per child, which amounts to 39p per week per child, for the privilege of Catholic education is worth it.*

*School has to pay the contribution on behalf of all non-payers. This is money we just do not have available without compromising educational resources for all children. We have in the past been able to use school fund to subsidise or fully cover the cost of school trips but this is unlikely to continue as an option if school fund is needed to pay the shortfall in Diocesan Building Fund contributions.*

*We know that many of you feel as strongly as we do about those who choose not to pay and thank you for your support. Please examine your conscience - have you paid or are you deliberately choosing not to pay? Your actions have a direct impact on the children."*

Clearly this represents pressure on parents to pay and strongly suggests that payments are obligatory as opposed to voluntary.

**St Stephen's CofE Primary School, Lambeth**

[http://www.st-stephens.lambeth.sch.uk/Downloads/Letters/Maintenance\\_Fund\\_Reminder\\_12.11.14.pdf](http://www.st-stephens.lambeth.sch.uk/Downloads/Letters/Maintenance_Fund_Reminder_12.11.14.pdf)

From a letter to parents dated November 2014:

*"Dear Parents/Carers*

*Re: Maintenance Fund Reminder*

*This is a reminder to all parents/carers who have not contributed £25 to the maintenance fund.*

*The Governors of St Stephen's C/E Primary School have a duty to maintain the school buildings; they do this through the contributions made by you. Grants to repair the roof or replace fencing do not cover the total cost of the work, governors are expected to contribute 10% of the cost. Remember our predecessors raised enough money to build the original school building. It is the job of today's school community to keep it in good repair and to make it the best for the children who attend the school now.*

*Every parent is expected to pay £25 per child per year, every April. If you cannot pay this amount and need to spread the cost across the year you will need to speak to the Headteacher or contact Bill Wilson (school Governor), via the school office.*

*I would like to thank you in advance for helping to upkeep the school buildings.*

*Please send cheques (payable to St Stephen's School) or in cash in an envelope clearly marked 'Maintenance Fund' to the school office.*

*Your sincerely,"*

The implication of this letter is clearly that contributions are compulsory and significant pressure is placed on parents to pay.

**St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School**

<http://www.st-swithunwells.org.uk/building-fund/>

From a letter to parents undated but linked to on the Building Fund page of the school's website:

*"Contributions can be made at any time. Payment can be made at the school office by either cash or cheque. Alternatively by far the most efficient method of payment is by setting up a standing order."*

From the leaflet explaining the Building Fund, also linked to on the website:

*"If you would like to donate to the Building Fund please complete the attached standing order form and gift aid form and return it to the Governors via the School Office."*

Standing Order form offered/encouraged.

**St Teresa's Roman Catholic Primary School, Merton**

<http://www.st-teresasmertonschool.org.uk/School-Management/School-Finance/>

From the school's website:

***"School Finance***

***The school receive money from the Government through the Local Education Authority to run the school on a day to day basis.***

*The school spends about 79% of its annual budget on Staffing costs.*

*The school received just under £10,000 through the Local Education Authority to spend on small Capital projects related to building improvement in the financial year ended 31March 2015. Recently this money went towards improvement in fire evacuation readiness through the installation of the new external wall fire doors.*

*The school hopes that each family will donate £45 each year to the 'Governors Fund Account'. This money goes towards the ongoing cost of planned buildings improvement that would not otherwise be possible using the Capital funds from the LEA. This money was used during the summer for the refurbishment of key Stage 2 classrooms, some of the main corridors and the ICT suit. .*

*Income received through fundraising events is put into the 'School Fund Account'. This money supplements enrichment activity and was recently used to subsidize the cost of hosting a school wide drumming workshop and cooking clubs."*

It is not immediately clear that these contributions are voluntary and prospective parents may well be unsure about this. There is no further information on the website clarifying the situation.

**St Theresa's Catholic Primary School, Cheshire**

<http://www.st-theresas.cheshire.sch.uk/page/building-fund-and-school-funds/2037>

From the Building Fund and School Funds section of the website:

*"As our school is a Catholic School all our parents are asked to support the Education of their child by contributing to the building fund. Catholic schools are not fully funded by the Government and because of this we must ask for support from parents who have chosen to send their child to a Church School and not a County School. We are asked by the Bishop to collect a contribution per child to send to the Diocesan Finance Committee to support the upkeep of our Catholic school. In our school we ask for this donation at the start of every school year. In September 2014 we asked for a contribution of £15 per child."*

The suggestion here is that parents at Catholic schools are expected to make contributions, and it is not made clear that contributions are voluntary.

**St Werburgh's and St Columbia's Catholic Primary School**

<http://www.stwerburghscolumba.cheshire.sch.uk/page/school-building-fund/8936>

From the School Building fund section of the school's website:

*"As our school is a Catholic School all our parents are asked to support the education of their child by contributing to the Building Fund. Catholic schools are not fully funded by the Government and because of this we must ask for support from parents who have chosen to send their child to a Church School and not a County School. We are asked by the Bishop to collect a contribution per child to send to the Diocesan Finance Committee to support the upkeep of our Catholic school. In our school we ask for this donation at the start of every school year."*

There is no suggestion that contributions to the fund are voluntary. The fund is also mentioned on the Admissions page of the website and again does not state clearly that contributions are voluntary.

**St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School, Ripon**

<http://riponst-wilfrids.n-yorks.sch.uk/prospectus/voluntary-contribution-scheme-information/>

***"Leeds Diocese Voluntary Contribution Scheme"***

*The governors of St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School run this scheme on behalf of the Diocese of Leeds. As a Voluntary Aided School we are not fully funded by the Government. A percentage of all our capital costs have to be paid by the Diocese. In order to pay these costs parents are required to make a small contribution of £20 each year per child or £40 per family. A direct debit mandate can be found to download as a PDF file in the menu on the left."*

This is a good example of a school not being clear that contributions are voluntary. Whilst the title above the text includes the word 'voluntary', stating that 'parents are **required** to make a small contribution' suggests otherwise. A direct debit form is also offered.

**The Priory Church of England Primary School, Merton**

<http://www.thepriory.merton.sch.uk/CAPITATION-SCHOOL-FUND/>

From the school's Capitation and School Fund section of the website:

**"CAPITATION:**

*As a Church of England School, we have an annual payment of £30 for the school Building Fund/Capitation for parents. This is not a voluntary contribution but it is a payment all Church of England Schools require to maintain the school buildings and classrooms. Each year our parents pay £30.00 into this fund and this enables us to keep the school safe and looking attractive for the children."*

Contributions are clearly obligatory.

**William Perkin CofE High School, Middlesex**

[http://www.williamperkin.org.uk/documents/School\\_Fund\\_Letters.pdf](http://www.williamperkin.org.uk/documents/School_Fund_Letters.pdf)

From a recent letter to parents:

*"We believe that regular generous giving by parents is essential if the School Fund is to thrive for the benefit of all children. Government funding for schools is unlikely to increase in the next few years and while we are fortunate to have a wonderful new building we have already identified the following needs:*

- *A minibus to transport small groups of children to trips and sports matches*
- *Extending our dining facilities to enable more children to benefit from a hot meal at lunchtime*

*The School Fund is built up from financial donations from parents and is held in a separate bank account to other funding. Use of the money is decided by the governors. As a guide we ask all parents to select an amount they are able to donate:*

- o *£10.00 monthly for each pupil educated here.*
- o *£20.00 monthly for each pupil educated here*
- o *£30.00 monthly for each pupil educated here*
- o *Other amount*

*To enable you to support the School in this way, we enclose:*

1. *A Pledge Form for you to specify the amount you wish to give.*
2. *A standing order mandate (this is the easiest and most reliable way for you to contribute).*
3. *A Gift Aid declaration (for those who pay UK tax) which increases the value of your contribution by 25% and costs you nothing."*

Whilst not the most egregious of offenders, the school's letter does not make clear that contributions are voluntary, and stating suggested amounts pressurises parents into paying. A standing order form is also offered as part of the letter.

**Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School, Essex**

<http://www.freezeage.com/1436782550BFYVPNGJPD>

From the Parental Contributions page of the school's website:

*"From Nursery and Reception, all the way through to Year 6, every pupil at Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School goes on a wonderful journey, enjoying many life enriching experiences. Our school strives to*

*maintain the very highest standards in all subjects including English, Maths, Science, History, Geography and Jewish Studies.*

*The parental contribution currently requested is £340 per child per term for school pupils. For nursery pupils, the contribution requested is £180 per term. It is important for parents to honour their financial obligations as, without their contributions, the school could not possibly function.*

*Of equal importance is the security of all our pupils and the development of social and life skills so that everyone is ready for his, or her, transition to secondary school after Year 6.*

*Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School is voluntary aided, as are most state funded faith schools; this means that not all of the wonderful experiences that we provide are funded by the Local Authority. They are paid for by I-JEMS to which we ask parents to contribute in addition to other fundraising activities we carry out. Wohl Ilford Jewish Primary School would not be the same without this complete package.*

*The I-JEMS' contribution currently requested is £340 per child per term for school children and £180 per child per term for Nursery children.*

*Any parents who have difficulties in making the I-JEMS' contribution are welcome to talk to the Parental Contributions Administrator in the strictest confidence. No child will be discriminated against with regard to entry into the school, or in any other way."*

Setting aside the extortionate amount of over £1000 a year, the text does not make it clear that contributions are voluntary. Whilst it mentions that children will not be discriminated against, significant pressure is applied, particularly through saying 'it is important for parents to honour their financial obligations'. Further, by suggesting that parents speak to the school if they have 'difficulties' in paying, they do not make clear contributing nothing would be acceptable.

## **Other schools**

### **David Livingstone Academy**

<http://www.davidlivingstone.croydon.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Charging-Policy-January-2012.pdf>

The school's charging policy reads:

*"SCHOOL FUND All parents are required to contribute annually to the Academy Fund. The amount, agreed by the LGB, is payable at the start of the academic year. The fund is used to subsidise filtered water in all classrooms and provide healthy food for class parties."*

It is not clear from this that contributions are voluntary – in fact, it implies that they are not.

### **Downlands Community School, West Sussex**

<http://downlands.w-sussex.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/School-Fund-Letter-2014.pdf>

From a September 2014 letter to parents:

*"It has been decided to request a £5 minimum per child contribution to School Fund for this year. Please complete and return the form attached indicating how you will make your payment. If you are unable to pay online, please put your contribution in a sealed envelope with your child's name, tutor group and*

*School Fund Donation on the envelope. Your child should hand the completed form in to the trips box or the school office."*

There is not suggestion that contributions are voluntary and by stating a minimum amount it suggests that contributions are obligatory.

#### **Goodway Nursery School**

<http://www.goodwayn.bham.sch.uk/index.php/parents/38-school-fund>

#### ***"School Fund***

*We ask for a contribution of £1 per week or £5 per half term for School Fund. This goes towards the cost of fruit, cookery ingredients, special events and trips."*

It is not clear that the contribution is voluntary.

#### **Grosvenor Grammar School**

<http://www.grosvenorgrammarschool.org.uk/documents/2289/Blue%20Information%20Booklet%202014-15.pdf>

Taken from the Information for Parents and Pupils document on the school's website:

*"Grosvenor Grammar School believes in providing as many opportunities as possible for its pupils to develop academically, personally and as young citizen and is very grateful to parents for the contribution that they make annually to the school to help in this process.*

*The School Fund contribution is £70.00 for the first child and £35.00 for each additional child, currently enrolled from the same family, to a maximum of two additional children. This fund, for the good of the pupils, is administered by a committee comprised of the Principal, a Vice Principal, the School Treasurer, the School Cashier, the Financial Administrator and two members elected by the staff. The School Fund Committee is directly responsible to the Board of Governors and accounts, which are independently audited annually, are published to all parents in the Annual Report."*

It is not clear from this that contributions are voluntary.

#### **Imberhorne School**

[http://www.imberhorne.w-sussex.sch.uk/sites/default/files/school\\_fund\\_letter\\_september\\_2014.pdf](http://www.imberhorne.w-sussex.sch.uk/sites/default/files/school_fund_letter_september_2014.pdf)

"From September 2014 letter to parents:

*"We do not ask parents to raise money through fairs and such activities but instead ask parents to make a contribution to the Imberhorne School Fund each year. The donation requested and the proportion of parents who chose to donate is somewhat lower than in comparable schools in similar areas around the County. I would ask each family with a student at the school to make a minimum annual contribution of £25 to enable us to finance the provision of equipment and resources which may not be otherwise available through normal educational funding."*



It is not made clear that contributions are voluntary and the specification of a minimum amount suggests that they are not.

#### **Kendrick School**

<http://www.kendrick.reading.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Kendrick-School-Fund.pdf>

*"If you choose to donate by standing order, please complete the form and return the **whole form** to the school – we will pass it on to your bank when a copy has been taken for our records."*

A standing order form is offered to parents.

#### **Mary Elliot School**

<http://www.mary-elliott.walsall.sch.uk/files/SchoolFundLetter.pdf>

From a March 2015 letter:

*"I am writing to remind parents that school fund can be paid annually September to September or on a term by term basis. (The next instalment is due at the start of the summer term.)"*

*The rate is £5 per student per term or £15 for the annual payment in September.*

*I do hope that you will send in your contributions to school fund to enable us to continue to provide the enrichment opportunities for all our students this year."*

It is not made clear that contributions are voluntary.

#### **Mascalls School**

<http://www.mascalls.kent.sch.uk/pdfs/A%20GUIDE%20FOR%20PARENTS%202014-2015.pdf>

From the school's Welcome Pack for Parents/Carers and Students:

##### **"SCHOOL FUND**

*All parents, apart from those whose children receive free school meals, are expected to contribute to the School Fund. This enables the school to provide additional but highly desirable facilities for students, such as support for the extra-curricular programme, in sport, music, art, drama and dance, that is such a feature of life at Mascalls, and additional facilities in the school which cannot be afforded from Government funding. It enables the school to enrich and extend its educational provision. Parents will be invited to make an annual contribution of a minimum of £25 per family."*

It is implied that contributions to the fund are obligatory.

#### **Onslow Infant School**

[http://www.onslow.surrey.sch.uk/classpage\\_detail.asp?Section=121&Ref=12](http://www.onslow.surrey.sch.uk/classpage_detail.asp?Section=121&Ref=12)

From an October 2014 letter to parents:

*"Dear Parents*

#### *School Fund*

*As new parents to the school you may or may not be aware that the school operates a 'School Fund'. This fund is used to pay for various activities that take place during your child's time at the school. The following are examples of the sort of events the fund pays for:*

- *Visits by theatrical groups*
- *Workshops and visits by other educational groups such as 'Florence Nightingale' in Year 1; Seaside Workshop; Music Workshops; Drama Workshops; Sports Workshops; Hydestile Animal Hospital etc*
- *Visits by authors and storytellers*
- *The Christmas Parties*

*We would ask for a one-off contribution of £25 which covers the whole 3 years your child is with us. This can be made in 2 payments if this is better for you. I hope that you will consider that this is exceptional value for money for what the children get in return during their 3 years here.*

*Unfortunately if we do not receive enough funding in this way, we will have to ask for individual payments for each event, which would certainly add up to quite a bit more than the one-off payment we request.*

*We would be pleased to receive your contribution towards the school fund in the next couple of weeks if possible. Payment can be made either online via our school website (a separate letter will be sent explaining how to do this) or by cheque (made payable to Onslow Infant School Fund) or cash via the school office."*

It is not made clear here that contributions are voluntary, nor that events will be cancelled if insufficient funds are available (as is required by the guidance).

#### **Wallington High School for Girls**

<http://www.wallingtongirls.sutton.sch.uk/School-Fund>

From the School Fund page of the website:

*"Contributions can be made either annually, on 7 September, by cheque or standing order, or quarterly, on 7 September, 7 December, 7 March and 7 June, by standing order, or a monthly standing order.*

*From an administrative point of view, the school would prefer annual or quarterly standing orders.*

*If you wish to contribute by standing order, please complete, sign and return to the school, the School Fund – Bankers Standing Order Form."*

A standing order form is made available to download from the website on the School Fund page.

#### **Wildern School**

[https://www.wildern.hants.sch.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=37&Itemid=43](https://www.wildern.hants.sch.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=37&Itemid=43)

From the School Fund page of the website:

*“Although the County Council provides the basic finance for operating the school, many of the extra-curricular activities, which are organised by the school staff, can only be financed by self-help. Hence, apart from the valuable contributions we receive from the Wildern Society, we ask all parents to provide funds for their children to join the School Fund. The contribution is £2 per pupil per year, or £1.50 per pupil per year if there are more than two children from the same family at this school. School Fund enables us to support and fund extra-curricular activities.*

*Part of the money raised in this way goes to help finance the running of the school’s two mini-buses since there is now no direct contribution from the County Council towards the tax, insurance or maintenance of these vehicles. Pupils who use the minibus for extra-curricular activities may be asked to pay a small contribution for each journey to go towards the cost of the petrol. The remainder of school fund will be used to assist in providing modern equipment for use by the pupils, particularly in Club activities.”*

Whilst the amount requested is not as large as in some other instances, it is still not made clear that contributions are voluntary.