



Debt Recovery Policy

The status of the policy:	Final
Purpose:	The purpose is to clarify the schools' procedure for collection of school debt.
Consultation:	Governors
Links with other policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child Protection & Safeguarding• Charging & Remissions• Equality
Monitoring and evaluation:	This policy is monitored by Jane Light, School Business Manager (SBM)
Date established by governing body:	14 th June 2021
Date for full implementation:	14 th June 2021
Date for review:	June 2024

Introduction

The need to ensure public funds are managed and utilised efficiently requires the school to take all reasonable measures to control the debts owed to it.

All trips and activities arranged by the school are to enhance the children's learning experience; however, without sufficient contribution from parents, these trips and activities will be put into jeopardy.

The government is clear in its guidance to schools should insufficient contributions be received from parents; the activity should be cancelled. This is not something the school would do lightly, but, unless the activity is self-funding, cancellation is a decision that will need to be made.

Voluntary Contributions for school visits/workshops

If an activity occurs during the course of the school day, whether on the school premises or elsewhere, the school can ask parents for a *voluntary* contribution towards the cost of providing those activities

To ensure that parents are aware of the voluntary nature of the contribution being requested, the school will request voluntary contributions in the form of a letter, text/emails or via Teachers2Parents.

Reminder messages will be issued should the voluntary contributions towards the event, trip or activity not cover the cost of provision. Should the voluntary contributions not meet the full cost of providing that activity, a decision to cancel will be made and parents will be notified of that decision.

If there is a cancellation charge, refunds will be processed after deducting that charge.

If an activity goes ahead, children of parents who are unable, or unwilling, to provide a voluntary contribution will not be excluded from that activity.

Non-Voluntary Contributions

School Lunches

The school is under no obligation to pay for school lunches requested by parents. All non-payment of requested meals is a debt to the school and should be paid by the parent, not from public funds.

The school, as catering provider, administers the collection of school lunch payments and debt. Therefore, it is imperative that the simplest and most efficient procedures are in place for the collection and debt management of dinner money. School now requires all lunches to be booked at home and parents cannot book without paying for lunch so lunch debt is now at very low levels. Some lunches may be booked in school when children do not have a packed lunch or have forgotten to order and these bookings may incur debt.

The School Business Manager and Admin Assistant check the lunch arrears once a week. If more than one week's lunch payments are not received, the following practice will be followed:

- 1) Lunch ordering will be turned off from the next full week. The parent will be advised that they must provide a packed lunch for their child until the debt is paid. If the child does not bring in a packed lunch, the parent will be called daily and reminded that it is their responsibility to provide a lunch for their child.
- 2) Reminder texts will be sent twice weekly.
- 3) If payment has not been received by the following half term holiday an invoice will be issued. The letter will offer the commencement of a payment plan. A reminder will be sent and a follow-up call made.
- 4) If the debt remains unpaid and the child leaves the school, the Governing Body will be informed.

Swimming

The school asks for voluntary contributions towards the costs of the coach hire only – the school pays for the hire of the pool and the swimming instruction. This cost is reviewed annually and parents are informed in term before they start swimming.

School Residential Trips and Activities Outside School Hours

Because penalties for cancellation will be incurred should an activity be cancelled, the decision to cancel a residential trip needs to be made at least 3 months before the trip is due to take place. This means that at least 85% of the payments due must be paid 3 months prior to the trip's commencement date.

If cancellation is the only option available to the school, all cancellation penalties will be taken from the payments already received, and the residual balance will be refunded to parents.

To ensure all contributions are received 3 months before the commencement of a residential trip, the following procedure will be put into practice:

- 1) A letter notifying parents of the intended trip will be sent. This will include details about the trip, including the activities to be undertaken; the costs associated with the trip; and a consent form, which will act as an agreement that the cost of the trip will be paid by the parent.
- 2) Following the letter, the school will send a letter to parents to inform them of the cost. Payment amounts and their due dates will be included in the letter. All these payments must be received by the payment due date, prior to the start of the trip.
- 3) If any of the payments have not been paid by their due dates, the parent will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher/Yr 6 leader to discuss the matter and, if necessary, a payment plan will be put in place.
- 4) Insufficient contributions for the trip will mean the trip is likely to be cancelled. Parents will be informed of the decision. Refunds will be made after the deduction of any cancellation charges levied.

Nursery

The school will offer parents the option of taking their 15 hours free hours, as a flexible option. This means that parents can choose between any day and any session. Parents also have the option to 'top up' the 15 hours to full time provision. If they are eligible for 30 hours funding, there is no charge. If parents are not eligible for 30 hours funding, these additional session will be charged at the same rate as Local Authority funding.

Parents will be sent an invoice for any additional hours/sessions in advanced. Parents are expected to pay half of the invoice half way through the term and settle any outstanding fees before the end of the term. Any unpaid invoices will chased, similar to be procedures above. The child's place for the next term will be cancelled if the invoice is unpaid.

Reporting

The headteacher will ensure that debt levels are monitored regularly.

Records of individual debts will be maintained and no debt should be allowed to exceed £* see below. All debts over this will be reported to the Governing Body.

The Governing Body will review significant outstanding debt annually and determine whether further action to recover the debt is required.

All bad debts are reviewed and a decision is made whether to write them off. This is reported to governors.

*

Trips/Swimming and enrichment – not applicable
Lunch - £11.50
Residential - £250
Nursery - £250

Debt Recovery Procedures

Where payment from the parent/carer has **not** been received within the above acceptable credit period the following process should be applied.

- **First 'overdue payment' reminder letter**

An initial reminder letter will be sent home requesting the amount be paid by an appropriate due date.

- **Second 'overdue payment' reminder letter (WARNING LETTER)**

If full payment is not received by the due date in the first letter, a second letter will be sent with a further deadline date and a payment plan. A follow up phone call will be made to the parent/carer.

- **Third (FINAL) 'overdue payment' reminder letter**

If full payment is not received and no response is made, Letter 3 will be sent home advising this is a Final reminder and payment must be received immediately

otherwise the Council's Legal Service will be contacted.

Costs of debt recovery

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Head teacher will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor. The debtor will be formally advised in writing that they will be required to pay the additional costs incurred by the school in recovering the debt. This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Governing Body.