



Debt Recovery Policy

Statement of Intent

The Governing Body is committed to taking all reasonable measures to collect debts as part of its management of public funds. Any debts have to be met from the school budget and this is to be avoided so as not to have a detrimental impact on the children's learning. A debt will be written off only after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it.

Aims

1. To ensure that the school is not financially disadvantaged by the actions of an individual or group of individuals.
2. To safeguard the school's funds and specifically to ensure that no individual or group of individuals take advantage of the school causing it to be unable to recover funds that are owed to it.
3. To ensure that the funds available to the school are used to the fullest advantage of all pupils.

School Meals

1. Parents must pay in advance for all school lunches. Our preferred method of payment is the online payment system, which can be accessed via the school's website, or alternatively payment can be made by sending in cash, a cheque or by paying via the school's online payment system.
2. If a payment by cheque is returned unpaid, the school will no longer accept cheques from the family.
3. Children are only entitled to a meal if payment has been received or they are entitled to free school meals.
4. Parents are encouraged to speak to a member of staff if they think they would be entitled to receive free school meals. This allowance is a statutory right and parents will be supported by the school with applications if required.
5. If a parent forgets to pay in advance, a reminder will be sent home as detailed below. The school may grant a debt allowance of one meal, however this must be paid for the next day and future meals must be paid for in advance before a further meal is provided. If the debt is not cleared parents will be contacted by telephone and until payment has been made should provide their child with a packed lunch.

Procedures for recovery of outstanding school meal payments are as follows:

1. If a lunch has been ordered without being paid for a text message will be sent informing parents that their child has ordered a lunch without payment and requesting that immediate payment be made.
2. Should payment not be received within one week, a 'first reminder' letter will be sent home asking that their child should be provided with a packed lunch until the balance is settled.
3. Should payment still not be received after two weeks a second reminder letter will be posted home asking that their child should be provided with a packed lunch until the balance is settled. If lunches have continued to be ordered, parents will be telephoned each day to ask them to bring in a packed lunch.
4. Six weeks from the first reminder letter, a final 'overdue reminder' letter will be posted home advising of debt recovery action. An appointment will be made with the Headteacher to discuss a referral to the Early Help Hub (Social Services)
5. Eight weeks from the first reminder letter, Debt Recovery will be initiated via Hampshire County Council

Procedures for recovery of other outstanding payments (e.g. lettings, residential trips or music tuition) are as follows:

1. If payment is not received, a text message will be sent informing parents that immediate payment should be made.
2. Should payment not be received within one week, a 'first reminder' letter will be sent.
3. Should payment not be received after two weeks, a 'second reminder' letter will be sent.
4. Six weeks from the first reminder letter, a final 'overdue reminder' letter will be sent advising of debt recovery action
5. Eight weeks from the first reminder letter, Debt Recovery will be initiated via Hampshire County Council.

Copies of all reminder letters will be retained on file.

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue reminder'.

If a debtor asks for 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt, recovery of such costs may be sought from the debtor.

At the discretion of the Headteacher, the debtor may be advised that they will be required to pay in advance for all future supplies/services etc or they will no longer be available to them.

Any hirer of school facilities who has unrecoverable debts to the school will be banned from future hirings.

Writing off debts

Headteachers may write off any amount of income due up to a maximum of £200 if they consider it is irrecoverable, and must sign an explanatory record giving reasons for the write-offs. Records must be kept for inspection.

Write-offs must be approved by the Governing Body.

Review of Outstanding Debts

A regular schedule of outstanding debts will be provided to the Resources Committee for review.

The Committee will review and confirm that the above processes are followed appropriately for any debts outstanding.

Any actions being taken to recover outstanding debts should be included within the minutes of the meeting and actions reviewed at subsequent FGB and Resources Committee meetings.

The Governing Body believes that fairness and consistency of judgement is essential to the operation of the school. All members of the school have equality of opportunity to achieve their full potential and will not be discriminated against because of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, race, or religion. The Governing Body believes that the school always has to be aware of the potential for unconscious discrimination, to avoid assumptions about individual members of the school based on stereotypes and to use the teaching and learning arrangements actively to encourage everyone to achieve their full potential. All our policies are consistent with our duty of care to protect our pupils and to provide a learning environment that is safe and healthy. In all our dealings, we respect the strict code of confidentiality that underpins our school ethos.

Policy date: January 2019

Policy review: January 2022