



# Debt Collection Policy

**The status of the policy:**

**Purpose:** The purpose is to clarify the schools' procedure for collection of debt.

**Consultation:** Draft to governors

**Links with other policies:**

- Child Protection & Safeguarding
- Teaching & Learning

**Monitoring and evaluation:**

- Finance, Personal & School Environment Committee

**Date established by governing body:**

Finance, Personnel and School Environment 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017

**Date for full implementation:** 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017

**Date for review:** November 2018

## **Introduction**

In the past, the school has absorbed the non-payment of voluntary and non-voluntary contributions, using its delegated school budget. However, the level of non-payment is having a detrimental consequence on the school's finances, and 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; or text/emails.

Reminder letters 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.

In order to keep the cost of lunches as affordable as possible, the school meal provider administers the collection of school lunch payments, but not the debt; this is held by the school. Therefore, it is imperative that the simplest and most efficient procedures are in place for the collection and debt management of dinner money.

If payments are not received, the following practice will be followed:

- 1) If payment has not been received within the 1<sup>st</sup> week of the half-term, a reminder invoice will be sent.
- 2) If payment has not been received within the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, a letter from the headteacher with a further reminder invoice will be sent to parents. The letter will offer the commencement of a payment plan.
- 3) If payment has not been received within the 3<sup>rd</sup> week, the parent will be advised to provide a packed lunch for their child from the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> week.
- 4) If payment has not been received within the 4<sup>th</sup> week, the school will write to the parent to arrange an appointment with the headteacher to discuss the outstanding debt.
- 5) If the debt reaches or exceeds £10.75, the Finance, Personal and School Environment Committee will be informed, (as an anonymised report)

## **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 the summer term before they start in the September.

## **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 6 months before the trip is due to take place. This means that at least 85% of the payments due must be paid 6 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 6 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. 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 Resources Committee.

The Finance, Personal and School Environment Resources Committee will review outstanding debts termly, and determine whether further action to recover the debt is required.

All basis 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 - £10.75

Residential - £350

Nursery - £250





## School Lunch letter 2

To the Parent of

Dear Parent,

Your child's school lunch account is in arrears. The amount owing is £xxxxx.

Despite reminders we can see that there is still an outstanding amount which needs to be paid by xxxx. This can be settled by instalments if this is more beneficial to you.

**Until this is settled, you will need to provide your child with a packed lunch.**

Please contact the school office to arrange this.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Dillon  
Headteacher



### School Lunch Letter 3

To the Parent of

Dear Parent,

Your child's school lunch account is in arrears. The amount owing is £xxxxx.

We can see that your child is having a packed lunch occasionally; however, there is still an outstanding amount.

Please come on xxxxxx to meet me to discuss this outstanding amount.

Please contact the school office to confirm this appointment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Dillon'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

Michael Dillon  
Headteacher



## Nursery Sessions Letter

To the Parent of

Dear Parent,

Your child's additional nursery sessions invoice remains unpaid. The amount owing is **£xxxxx**.

**Until this is settled, your child's place for additional hours will be cancelled**

Please contact the school office to arrange payment of this invoice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael M'.

Michael Dillon  
Headteacher