

Waterloo Primary School



Debt Management Policy

Approved by: S. Robinson Chair of Governors

Date: 10th October 2023

Debt Management Policy

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring procedures are in place for recovering outstanding debt.

This policy sets out the procedures for the recovery of outstanding debt and for the write off of any debt which is deemed irrecoverable.

**** Covid 19 Addendum - from March 20th 2020 school are not accepting any cash payments. All parents are advised to sign up to Parentpay and all payments are now made online.***

1. General Debt

Payment should be obtained as and when goods, services, facilities are provided. Parents are required to sign up to Parentpay the school's online payment system.

Where payment is not received at the time when the goods/services/facilities are provided, a letter will be sent to the debtor within seven days via Parentpay.. The letter will state that the fee is overdue and needs to be paid by fourteen days from the date of the letter.

If payment is still not received then a final reminder will be sent to the debtor via Parentpay informing them that if payment is not received within fourteen days their debt will be sent to Sefton Council for pursuance of the debt.

2. Instalments

If a debtor requests to pay their debt in instalments then they must put in writing to the Headteacher the reasons for their inability to pay their debt. If the Headteacher is in agreement with the instalments then a payment plan will be agreed with the School Business Manager which must not exceed 7 weeks from the date of the letter.

If the debt is still not settled within the terms of the agreement, then a final reminder will be issued requesting payment within fourteen days and if no payment is received the debt will be sent to Sefton Council for pursuance of the debt.

At each appropriate Governor's meeting the Headteacher is required to inform the Governors of all outstanding debt to school and what action is being taken.

3. Debt Write off

Debts referred to Sefton Council will be pursued and if not successful will be passed over to a debt collection agency. If still unsuccessful Sefton Income Section will inform school and seek permission to write off the debt or pursue further.

Outstanding debt of under £50 can be written off by the Headteacher provided all the appropriate follow up action has been undertaken. The Governing Body will need to be informed the reason for the write off at the appropriate Governor meeting.

Debts of over £50 will need Governor approval following submission of details of the debt and the reason for the proposed write off.

The write off must not be communicated to the debtor. It is not an acknowledgement that the debt does not exist but is an internal transaction and remains on record.

4. Removal of Services within School

Whilst the debtor remains in debt they will be unable to access any services within school which require payments.

If a debtor regularly fails to make payment within agreed timescales then the Headteacher will need to consider removal of the service until the account is cleared.

5. Afterschool and Breakfast Club

Parents/Carers must pay in advance via Parentpay for their places in Afterschool and Breakfast Club. Parents/Carers must sign up to Parentpay prior to booking their children and will sign a booking form/contract to agree payment in advance.

On the first day of non-payment, a member of school staff will attempt to contact the parent/carer in person or by telephone to discuss the debt and requesting payment on the following day.

If parent/carer does not pay as required then the process as outlined in section 1 will be implemented. If payment is not forthcoming then the parent/carer will lose their place in Afterschool or Breakfast Club and cannot use the service until the debt is cleared as stated in section 4. The Afterschool Manager and Breakfast Club Manager will monitor fees in conjunction with the School Business Manager and Afterschool Administrator and inform parent/carer if they are outstanding.

6. Dinner Money

Payment for school meals should be made weekly in advance via Parentpay. This would normally be the Monday of the week for which the meals are being paid for.

If parents/carers believe that their child may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, they should be advised to contact the Local Authority or school office. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that families are encouraged to register for free school meals if they are entitled as this also enables the school to access **Pupil Premium** funding.

Any arrears of dinner money that arise must be pursued by the school on a weekly basis via Parentpay reminders and telephone contact.

On the first day of non-payment, a member of school staff will attempt to contact the parent/carer in person or by telephone to discuss the debt and requesting payment on the following day.

If dinner monies remain outstanding at the beginning of the second week, a reminder letter should be issued to the parent/carer via Parentpay.

If dinner monies remain outstanding at the beginning of the third week, a final warning letter must be issued via Parentpay. This letter will remind the parent/carer of the previous reminder letter and the current amount outstanding. The letter will also inform them that if the debt remains unpaid, the school will refuse to provide a school meal for the child and the parent/carer will need to provide the child with a healthy packed lunch or be taken home for lunch and requests contact with the school to discuss any problems in making the outstanding payment.

If dinner monies remain outstanding at the beginning of the fourth week, a notification of withdrawal of school meals letter must be issued to the parent/carer.. This letter will give them a final opportunity to clear the outstanding debt. The letter will inform them that if the debt is not cleared in full, the child will not be provided with a meal with effect from the following Monday. The parent/carer will be advised to make alternative arrangements for the child's lunch.

Arrangements can be made with the School Business Manager to clear any dinner money debt by instalments, however, the amount should be acceptable to both the school and the parent/carer.

Social services may also be informed that they are not carrying out the 'responsibility of care' by failing to provide food for their child at lunchtime. It is not the responsibility of the school to provide lunch for pupils, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to provide a meal, either a school lunch, packed lunch or to take the child home.

This Debt Management Policy in respect of dinner monies includes the refusal to provide a school meal when the parent/carer has not paid or made contact with the school and payment has been outstanding for 4 weeks. This policy is intended to keep debts to a minimum and thereby avoid the cost of a referral to solicitors for legal action or debt collection agency, or to write-off the debt if there is no realistic prospect of debt recovery being successful. This course of action would not be cost-effective with the amounts concerned.

At each meeting of the Governing Body, the HT is required to inform the Governors of any outstanding dinner money debt.

Outstanding individual school meals debt of up to **£50** may be written-off by the HT provided that the appropriate follow-up action outlined above has been taken and the details of the debtor, amount written-off and the reason for no further action being taken is reported to the finance committee for information at their next meeting.

Write-off of outstanding debt in excess of **£50** must be approved by the Governing Body following submission of details of the debt by the HT together with reasons for no further action being taken.

A write-off must not be communicated to the parent/carer. It is not an acknowledgement that the debt does not exist, but is an internal transaction in the accounts of the school, which removes the debt from the records.

7. Nursery Fees and Charges

Parents/Carers must pay in advance via Parentpay for their child's nursery fees and charges. Payment for Nursery Fees and Charges will be charged at the end of the month for the month ahead (e.g. end of September for October's fees and charges).

Nursery fees and charges must be paid within 30 days of the invoice date. Failure to pay an invoice may result in your child's place at nursery being removed.

Payment reminders will be sent to Parents via ParentApp (or email if parents do not have the app). If payment is not received within 30 days, parents/carers will be issued with a final payment reminder and final payment date (6 weeks after the original payment date). If payment is not received by the date stated in the final payment reminder letter your child's place may be removed and you will receive written notification from the Headteacher.

8. Conclusion

We hope that by implementing this Debt Policy, we are able to help parents/carers manage school dinner money, afterschool and breakfast club money and general debt effectively, reduce the administration time and costs involved chasing money and general debts and at the same time ensure that money which should be spent on the children's education is not used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers and debtors.

Agreed by Governing Body on.....

Signed by Chair of Governors.....

Review Date: January 2022