



Debt Recovery Policy including Before and After School Care Clubs Oakridge Primary School

Adopted: Chair of Leadership and Management Committee: Next review date:	September 2021 Mr D Rust September 2022
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Introduction

The school's Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school to receive all income to which it is entitled. Oakridge Primary School will therefore take all reasonable measures to collect any monies owing to it as part of the management of public funds. Collecting money from parents or carers is a sensitive area; we deal with issues of debt collection with sensitivity and confidentiality at all times.

Aims and Objectives

At Oakridge Primary we comply with all Staffordshire requirements for Financial Regulations for Schools with regard for the following aims:

- To make sure there are sound and proper financial procedures in school for dealing with the school's finances;
- To ensure that proper controls are in place;
- To provide a clear framework for managing school finances;
- To protect the school governors, head teacher and school employees.

Procedures

As school uses the MyFinance System for invoices and payment, the County Council Income Team will carry out standard debt recovery procedures on behalf of the school.

The following procedure will be employed for all outstanding debts (of 21 days or longer):

- A gentle reminder (telephone, text or one to one);
- A formal letter (by pupil mail, e-mail or post)
- A second formal letter (Recorded post)
- A third letter informing the debtor that the debt has been passed to the County Council Income Team.

When all practical and cost effective procedures have been exhausted by the County Council Income Team, the Director of Finance and Resources will notify the school of the amount of the debt that is considered to be irrecoverable and should be written off. Writing off a debt will lead to a charge being made on the school budget as the income was credited to the school budget when the invoice was raised.

A write-off must not be communicated to the parent or organisation. 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.

The L and M Committee must:

- approve the writing off of any debt in relation to the school budget;

- take into account their review of the age and size of the debt together with the advice from The Director of Finance and Resources.
- Individuals or organisations that have previously defaulted on payments to the school are not allowed credit facilities.
- the head teacher has the authority to write off a debt not exceeding £50 but will report all debts and write-offs at each meeting of the L and M Committee

Negotiation of repayment terms in certain circumstances if people are unable to pay:

The School may reduce or cancel a debt in certain circumstances. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be carried out.

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue payment' reminder. If a debtor requests for 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

A record of all such agreements entered into will be retained. In all cases, a letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms for repayment.

The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

The Head teacher or L and M Committee will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further 'credit' and will, in future, be required to pay in advance.

This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the L and M Committee

Costs of debt recovery

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Head teacher/ L and M Committee 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 Resources Committee.

Dinner Money

Payment for school meals must be made in advance and all meals must be booked and paid for using ParentPay. Parents can pay/book weekly, termly or half termly in advance using the ParentPay system; this can be accessed on line or can be credited in your local pay point store. Codes are available from the school office.

This debt management policy in respect of dinner monies includes the refusal to provide a school meal when the parent has not paid in advance. Parents will be contacted by telephone and asked to provide their child with a packed lunch until sufficient funds have been cleared on your ParentPay account.

At each meeting of the L and M Committee, the Headteacher is required to inform the Governors of any outstanding dinner money debt.

Little Oaks / Out of School Club

1. Fees will be reviewed annually by the committee in line with the school budget.
2. Details of charges will be published on the website, the school newsletter and included with the Registration Form.
3. It is a requirement that all children must be registered prior to attending Nursery or an out of school club.

4. Nursery Fees

4.1 All eligible children will be considered for a funded place in line with DfES and Staffordshire Early Years guidelines and principles. No charge will be levied prior to funding being granted.

4.2a) Charges will be made for attendance outside of the funded places in line with the current charging arrangements.

4.2b) Charges will be levied for sessions booked irrespective of whether the child attends.
4.2c) Any reduction in sessions must be notified in writing giving four weeks notice and are subject to capacity within the Nursery. This will then replace any previous registered sessions.

5. Out of School Club Fees

Charges for sessions will be made in line with current charging arrangements, which are one month in advance.

5.1 Charges will be made for attendance outside of the funded places in line with the current charging arrangements.

5.2 Charges will be levied for sessions booked irrespective of whether the child attends.

6. To cancel registration four weeks written notice is required.

Statement of Charges

1. A statement of charges will be issued at the end of every month.

2. Payment is required in full within seven days.

Payments

1. Payments against the statement of charges may be made via ParentPay or childcare vouchers

2. Payments must be made by the payment due date

3. Child Care vouchers are accepted, but parents should ensure that the school is registered with the particular provider.

Non-Payment of Fees

1. If a parent falls into arrears of more than 1 month a letter will be sent requesting immediate payment of the outstanding amount.

2. If following reminders payment is not received the school will ask the LA to issue an invoice for payment and follow debt recovery procedures to obtain payment. If this cause of action is followed an administrative fee may be incurred. To prevent further charges being incurred, the parent will be informed that their child will be unable to attend the unit with immediate effect until all outstanding monies have been paid.