



Cooper Perry Primary School

Debt Recovery Policy

Administration Policy

Behaviour Policy

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Introduction

The school's governing Board has a responsibility to have a debt recovery policy which ensures that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school to receive all income to which it is entitled.

Aims and Objectives

- To ensure that the governing Board complies with the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools and Financial Regulations;
- To protect the delegated school budget;
- To apply this policy consistently to ensure debt is dealt with in a timely manner;
- To ensure further goods or services are not supplied to parents/carers or customers who have not paid for items already received or used.

Making payments

Cooper Perry has its own procedures in place which are used to collect income:

Dinner Money

Payment for all school meals should be made in advance direct to Dolce Catering via the parents/carers school grid account, either by direct debit or online/telephone card payments. If a school meal is ordered but payment not received Dolce will email the parent/carer direct to request payment. If payment is not received Dolce will hand the debt to the school. School will then contact parents/carers for payment and they will be advised to provide their child with a packed lunch until payment has been made.

Extended school activities

Payments for all booked sessions and for Nursery lunches must be made in advance on or before the first morning of each half term. Payments for all booked Out of School Club sessions must be paid by the start of each month. Payments for short notice requirements are to be made within 7 days of the booking being accepted.

Payments must be made either via Parent Pay, our online payment service, or by workplace voucher schemes. Parent Pay accounts are reviewed on a fortnightly basis. In the event that an account is not in credit then a text message will be sent to parents/carers requesting a payment to be made to return the account to credit immediately. Please contact our administrative team for further information about voucher schemes.

Music tuition

Music lessons are provided by the school at a charge to the parent / carer of a child. Parents / carers are informed of the cost upfront and have a commitment to pay for a full year regardless of whether the child continues with the lessons.

A statement is sent to the parent / carer on an annual basis asking for payment. If payment has not been received by the end of the first half term a further reminder is sent. In the event that no payment is received the debt will be referred onto the County Council for recovery.

Board and lodging on residential visits

The board and lodging element of a residential visit can be charged to parents / carers and they are notified of the cost in advance and are given the opportunity to pay in instalments should they wish. Payment must be made in full before the departure date or the child will not be allowed to attend.

Remissions

In some cases governors have agreed that certain categories of pupils are not liable for the fee or are eligible for a reduced fee for some or all of; extended school activities, music tuition or residential visits. This is included within the Charging and Remissions Policy (reviewed annually).

The school debt recovery process

In the event that payment is not forthcoming the school process outlined below will commence:

Informal reminder – Within two weeks of late payment, the debtor will be informally reminded by text or email that they owe money to the school.

First reminder letter – If the debt is yet to be paid one week after an informal reminder, a formal letter will be sent to the debtor.

Second reminder letter - If the debt is yet to be paid one week after a first formal reminder, a second formal letter will be sent to the debtor. The second reminder letter allows the debtor every opportunity to settle their debt. It also gives school the opportunity to prove that all reasonable steps have been taken to recover the debt should the issue proceed further.

Final reminder letter - If no response is received one week following the second reminder, the school will send a letter to the debtor advising them that they will be referring the matter to the local authority to consider legal action. This letter will be sent by recorded delivery to ensure the debtor has had every chance to respond.

The County Council debt recovery process

An official invoice will be raised on the County Council's finance system which will lead to the Council's debt recovery procedures as follows:

- Invoice raised with payment terms of 28 days
- A reminder is sent 3 days after the 28 days has expired
- A final notice is issued before the school can request the debt recovery officer to contact the parent/carers/customer at their home/ business address (minimum value £150) or the matter referred onto the courts (minimum value £250).
- The Governing Board will not write off any debt which exceeds £500.
- A full record will be kept of debts owed to the school for seven years. This will include all letters requesting money, reminders and invoices.
- The school will not initiate legal action to recover debts. However, we will refer uncollected debts to the local authority to consider such action.

Extended Schools debt recovery process

Payments made after the first morning of the half term (Nursery) / month (Out of School Club) will be deemed to be late. In this instance a text message will be sent to parents/carers requesting immediate payment. If payment is still not received within 5 working days the parent/carers will be informed that they can no longer use the facility unless payment has been received.

The waiving of debts

- The waiving of debts is at the discretion of the Headteacher and the Governing Board. A debt may be waived when it is believed the debtor is experiencing serious financial hardship or if all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted and it is believed it would not be cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action.
- The Headteacher is authorised to waive debts of up to £100.
- Debts between £100 and £500 may only be waived with the approval of the Governing Board.
- Debts of £500 or more will never be waived.

Roles and responsibilities regarding debt collection

The Head teacher and Office Manager will ensure that:

- Letters requesting money are accurately recorded and those records maintained.
- Evidence of the steps taken by the school in pursuance of debt is recorded including dates and times of both letters and phone calls.
- A final reminder is sent by recorded delivery to the debtor.
- The privacy of the family involved will be respected and only made known to those who need to know.
- The level of outstanding debt can be determined at any time.

The Governing Board:

- Will prescribe and regularly review the arrangements for debt recovery.
- Must approve any legal action to be taken by the LA
- Will record all approved action in the minutes of the relevant meeting.
- Will adhere to the privacy arrangements.
- May delegate its responsibilities under this policy to the Resources Committee (other than the waiving of debts between £100 and £500).

Signed: _____

Chair of Finance Committee

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Chair of Full Governing Board:

Date: _____