



## Debt Recovery Policy

**Policy approved and adopted:** October 2018

**Review date:** October 2019

### 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

- To ensure that the school is not financially disadvantaged by the actions of an individual or group of individuals.
- 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.
- To ensure that the funds available to the school are used to the fullest advantage of all pupils.

It is the responsibility of the Business Manager to maintain procedures to ensure that:

- All income received in relation to staff and pupils is recorded on the Tucasi payment system as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- All income is banked, on a regular basis, using the normal HCC bank paying in books and recorded on SAP using the IBC Record Local Banking App.
- Where payment is due from a non-HCC customer, using the IBC Create Invoice App.
- The Headteacher and Governors are provided with up to date outstanding debt reports on a regular basis through the Finance and Personnel Committee

### Payment of School Meals

- Parents must pay in advance for all school lunches by sending in cash or cheques or by paying via the school's online payment system.
- If a payment by cheque is returned unpaid, the school will no longer accept cheques from the family.
- Payments should ideally be made on Mondays however payments will be accepted on other days.
- Children are only entitled to a meal if payment has been received or they are entitled to free school meals.
- 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.

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

1. If payment is not received, a text message will be sent informing parents that their child has ordered a lunch without payment being made and immediate payment should 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. If lunches have continued to be ordered, parents will be telephoned each day to ask them to bring in a packed lunch.
3. Should payment not be received after two weeks, a 'second reminder' letter will be posted home. School lunches will not be able to be ordered until the balance is settled.
4. Six weeks from the first reminder letter, a final 'overdue reminder' letter will be posted home and an appointment will be made to discuss a referral to the Early Help Hub (Social Services)
5. If the debt is in excess of £100, Debt Recovery will be initiated via Hampshire County Council

#### **Payment of Breakfast and After School Club Fees**

- Parents must pay in advance for all Breakfast and After School Club sessions. Payment can be made with cash, cheque, paying via the school's online payment system or using childcare vouchers.
- Parents who book regular sessions must choose to pay weekly, monthly or half-termly in advance.
- Where full payment is not made at the time of booking, parents will be provided with a statement which sets out the date and amount of all payments due.
- If a payment by cheque is returned unpaid, the school will no longer accept cheques from that family.

#### **Procedures for recovery of Breakfast and After School Club Fees are as follows:**

1. If payment is not received on or before the date of the booked session, 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 home confirming that their child will be unable to attend Breakfast and/or After School Club until the balance is settled.
3. Should payment not be received after two weeks, a 'second reminder' letter will be posted home. No further Breakfast or After School Club sessions will be able to be attended until the balance is settled.
4. If the debt is in excess of £100, Eight weeks from the first reminder letter, Debt Recovery will be initiated via Hampshire County Council.

#### **Procedures for recovery of other outstanding payments 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 home.
3. Should payment not be received after two weeks, a 'second reminder' letter will be posted home.
4. Six weeks from the first reminder letter, a final 'overdue reminder' letter will be posted home advising of debt recovery action
5. If the debt is in excess of £100, 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.

#### **Writing off debts**

The Business Manager may write off any amount of income due, up to £50 and will notify the Headteacher when this occurs. The Headteacher may write off any amount of income due up to a maximum of £200 if they consider it is irrecoverable. The Business Manager will inform the Finance and Personnel Committee of any write offs which have been made in excess of £100.

Write-offs in excess of £200 must be approved by the Finance and Personnel Committee.

**Review of Outstanding Debts**

The Business Manager will present a schedule of outstanding debts, in excess of £50, to the Finance and Personnel Committee for review.

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