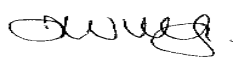





Wootton Community Primary School

## Debt Recovery Policy and Procedure

Approved on:	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2023
FGB/Committee:	FGB
Responsibility:	Headteacher
Review Date:	September 2023
Signed by Headteacher:	
Signed by Chair of Governors	

## Introduction

This policy has been written to help Wootton Community Primary School adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents/carers. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents/carers clearly understand what is expected of them.

Parents will be asked to pay for most services in advance. Schools can only offer free meals to children who are in Key Stage 1 and are entitled to free school meals (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2) and pupils who qualify for FSM entitlement. Every other meal and service for which there is a charge must be paid for. The school will always endeavour to ensure that payment for the services offered by the school are transparent and as easy as possible to administer.

The school is invoiced directly for residential trips, educational visits and school dinners, so it is essential that sufficient funds are available. If there were insufficient funds from those who use these services then the school would have to cover the shortfall from the budget it is given for all children. That would be unfair and unsustainable.

Parents who are experiencing difficulty in paying for a chargeable service offered by the school should inform the school office immediately. In most circumstances a payment plan can be agreed to help parents clear their debt to the school as soon as possible. Large debts left unpaid may be passed to a professional debt collection firm to legally recover.

The following procedures apply to:-

Dinner Money

School Trips

Extra-curricular clubs and activities

Miscellaneous items for sale (e.g. leavers hoodies or swimming badges and certificates)

Lettings

## School Dinners

**It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that a child is provided with either a packed lunch or a school meal each day.**

Wootton Community Primary School has a clear 'no debt' policy relating to the school meal service. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers. Every parent/carer will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

We hope that through implementing this Debt Collection Procedure we will help parents/carers manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is used appropriately.

### **School Dinner Money Procedures**

We require that any school meal balances are cleared School meals should be paid for by the end of the school week in which the meals were taken. All payments are made online through School Money. Text reminders will be sent home each Friday notifying parents of any outstanding balances. We ask that these are kindly cleared within 7 days.

If payment remains outstanding, we regret that we will not be able to provide any further school meals until the payment has been cleared. You will be notified of this by text message.

### **Free School meals**

Your child may be able to get free school meals if you get any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

If you think your child may be eligible to receive free school meals there is now a fast and easy new way to check and prove eligibility. Simply visit the 'Free School Meals / Pupil Premium Service' at [www.fsm.lgfl.net](http://www.fsm.lgfl.net) and; click 'Eligibility Check' and 'Create a New Account'. The Local Authority is Isle of Wight and you will also need to select your child's school. (Wootton Community Primary School, Church Road, Wootton Bridge, Ryde, Isle of Wight, PO33 4PT)

You will then need to supply your Name, NI number and Date of Birth and if eligible you simply print a copy to bring to the office or save the 'Certificate of Eligibility' and send it to the admin address for your school: [admin@woottonpri.iow.sch.uk](mailto:admin@woottonpri.iow.sch.uk)

### **Educational Visits/Residential Trips**

Contributions towards educational visits/residential trips should be received in advance, as detailed in communication sent to parents. Unfortunately, if sufficient contributions are not received to cover the cost, the educational visit/residential trip will not go ahead.

### **Extra-curricular clubs and activities**

After school clubs are run by staff each half term. The majority of sports clubs do not incur a charge as these are subsidised by our Sports Premium funding. All other clubs are charged at £2 per week to cover the staffing costs and to help contribute towards supplies or equipment. Some clubs are charged at a slightly higher rate in order to cover the cost of running them (e.g. cookery club) and sometimes clubs are run by external providers and are therefore charged at a higher rate.

After school clubs should be paid in full by the deadline stated in the club invitation letter. Failure to do so may mean your child is removed from the club list and no longer able to attend, and may not be able to sign up for future clubs if balances remain outstanding.

### **Miscellaneous Items**

Some miscellaneous items can be purchased, for example, leavers hoodies in Year 6 or swimming certificates/badges. These will need to be pre-ordered and the balance paid on School Money. The item will not be released to you unless full payment has been received.

### **Photographs**

School photographs are managed by an external partner. Payment must be made direct to the provider in cash.

### **Lettings**

Contracts for lettings of the school premises will be drawn up as necessary between the school and the hirer. Charges will reflect the school's costs for energy, water and lighting as well as those incurred for opening and closing of the school by the Site Manager or member of staff. Please see the 'Lettings Policy'.

***Please note that payments for Breakfast and After School Club are managed by Little Herons.***

### **Debt procedures**

In collecting any outstanding debts, a step by step process will be followed. Outstanding debt will be reviewed every Friday. If your account is in arrears, the following procedure will apply:

1. Text reminders, via Teachers2Parents, are sent regularly reminding parents to settle any outstanding balances.
2. If the balance remains unpaid after 14 days, the School Administrator will attempt to contact the parent/carer by telephone to remind them to clear the outstanding

balance. If the outstanding balance is in relation to school dinners, we will advise that a packed lunch must be provided until the balance is cleared.

3. If the balance remains unpaid by the agreed date, the School Administrator will send an email chasing payment and advising that failure to do so will result in the matter being referred to the School Business Manager.
4. If payment remains outstanding, the matter will be referred to the School Business Manager who will send a letter home (debt letter one).
5. If payment remains outstanding, Debt Letter 2 will be sent by Royal Mail recorded delivery and the matter referred to the Local Authority for further advice and assistance.

As soon as school are notified that a child is leaving the school, a member of the office staff will run a check on the balance of the child's account. Any debt outstanding must be paid in full, and any credit balance will be refunded.

If parents fall into debt more than three times in a term the school reserves the right to refuse to provide any service that requires payments (e.g. school dinners, trips, clubs etc) for the rest of the term. If any monies are outstanding at the end of the academic year, the school reserve the right to charge an administration fee for time taken to recoup this outstanding debt, as well as claiming the money owed through the Small Claims Court.

We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child.

Debt Recovery Procedure  
Appendix A - Letter 1

.....December 2020

To parent/carer of

[Insert date]

Dear [name of parent],

**Re: Outstanding balance of ..... for .....**

I am writing to remind you of the outstanding balance of ..... Owed to school for ..... which remains outstanding.

It is the policy of Wootton Community Primary School that any school debt must be paid for at the end of the school week in which it was incurred. I would be grateful if you could arrange for prompt payment of this outstanding debt.

You can pay the debt in full using [insert payment method details here]. Alternatively, we can set up a weekly/monthly payment plan to pay the debt off in installments of [insert amount per week or month]. To do this, please contact the school office.

[If the debt results in any sanctions, such as pupils having to be given packed lunches until meal costs are settled or being unable to attend a school trip, insert details of this here.]

If by [insert deadline] you haven't either paid off the debt or contacted us to set up a payment plan, we will invite you to a meeting to explore options to help you pay the amount above. If you don't attend or if we don't reach a satisfactory result together, we may seek legal advice on recovering the debt.

Our school budget is intended to support children's learning, and we cannot use it to cover debt owed to the school.

Thank you for your help and understanding. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or difficulties complying with this letter.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert name and contact details]

Please ensure ..... is provided with a packed lunch until this debt is cleared and school dinners can re-commence.

Debt Recovery Procedure  
Appendix B – Letter 2

[Insert date]

Dear [name of parent],

I am writing to you following [insert dates of any letters sent or meetings had concerning the debt].

Your outstanding debt is [insert amount]. As we have not received payment from you to settle this cost, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to our advisers to see what legal action we can pursue to recover it.

We will continue to offer support where practical. If you would like to hear more about the support available or meet again to discuss options, I would be more than happy to do so. You can contact the school at [insert contact details].

We will contact you in due course over the action we will take, which could include making a claim in the small claims court.

To prevent this, please contact the school office immediately to discuss steps you can take to repay the debt.

Yours sincerely,  
[Insert name]