

HAYES MEADOW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Be the Best We Can Be



Debt Recovery Policy

Policy adopted on ...01.09.2024.....

Review Date01.09.2025.....

Signed: HeadteacherMrs S Sivieri.....

Chair of GovernorsMarie Brown

Introduction

The schools governing body 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 body 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.

Hayes Meadow Primary School Governing Board:

- Must be consulted if legal services are required for debt recovery.
- Will adhere to the privacy rights of pupils and the parents/ carers in all cases.
- May decide to leave a case of debt recovery to the decision of the Headteacher.

The Headteacher/ School Business Manager will ensure that:

- Debt reminders are recorded and maintained for a period of seven years.
- Instances of debt are judged on an individual basis, with consideration of the nature of the debt and the circumstances of the family involved.
- The privacy of the pupil and their family will be protected by all staff.

The Debt Recovery Process

Hayes Meadow Primary School has their own procedures in place which are used to collect income. However, in the event that payment is not forthcoming then 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 invoice is sent 3 days after the 28 days has expired
- The school can then request the debt recovery officer to contact the parent/ carer/ customer at the home/ business address or the matter referred onto the courts.

Extended School Activities

Breakfast Clubs/ After School Club

Bookings can be made via ParentPay for these facilities or booking via the school office. The office manager will charge for the sessions the child/ ren has attended on the ParentPay system. Payments should be made within 1 month of using the facility. In the event that no payment is received a reminder will initially be sent to the parents/ carers. If no payments are made letters requesting payments are sent to the parents/ carers and access to the facility may be restricted or denied.

Nursery Payments

Your child is entitled to attend Nursery for their funded hours. The funding for these hours is claimed from the Early Years portal and comes direct to Nursery. It is the parents/ carers responsibility to ensure the code issued to them for their funding remains in date. Funding codes that are no longer valid may result in parents being charged for their Nursery care.

For pupils without funded hours invoices are issued to parents/ carers each month with the amount of money owed. Parents can choose to pay by cash, cheque or the online payment system. If no payment is made a reminder invoice will be sent. In the event that no payment is received the debt will be referred onto the County Council for recovery.

Governors have decided on the following policy regarding unpaid Nursery fees:

- If there are 3 months of outstanding Nursery fees no further sessions will be offered for your child.
- Your child may attend for a mixture of funded and unfunded sessions. If there is non-payment of fees the governors may decide to only allow your child to attend Nursery for their funded sessions.

Dinner Money and Snack (toast)

Payments for school meals should be paid on ParentPay.

The office manager will reconcile the payments received to the meals ordered and any discrepancy will, in the first instance, result in an email or text to the parent/ carer to request payment. Any parent/ carer that has not made payment by the end of the month will be sent a letter requesting immediate payment. This will be sent with the child.

If the payments are not received within 5 school days then the parent/ carer will be informed that the matter will be referred to the County Council and recovery action will be pursued.

Governors have decided on the following policy regarding unpaid meals:

- Each family circumstances will be taken in consideration and a meal may still be provided.
- Pupils may be refused any further school meals.

Music Tuition

Keyboard lessons are provided by the school at a charge to the parents/ carers of a child. Parents/ carers are informed of the cost upfront and have a commitment to pay for a term regardless of whether the child continues with the lessons.

A statement is sent to the parents/ carers on a termly basis asking for payment. If the payment is not made by the date stated then the pupil will not be able to continue lessons.

Residential visits

The residential visits will be charged to parents/ carers and they are notified of the cost in advance and are given opportunity to pay in instalments should they wish to. Payment must be made in full before the departure date.

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 residential visits, educational visits and extended school activities. This is included in the charging and remission policy (reviewed annually).

Lettings

Contracts for lettings of the school premises will be drawn up as necessary between the school and the client in line with the Charging and Remissions Policy.

Failure to pay on time will result in the debt being referred to the County Council for recovery. The letting agreement will be void and the client will be refused future hires.

Exceptional Circumstances and remissions

The school must ensure that parents/ carers of pupils are aware of the help the school can extend to those in financial difficulty. Parents/ carers who may be eligible for remissions are those in receipt of any of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance. Please note the 'new style' job seekers allowance is not a qualifying benefit, as this is based upon payment of National Insurance contributions and not the household income
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance. Please note the 'new style' employment and support allowance is not a qualifying benefit, as this is based upon payment of National Insurance contributions and not the household income
- eligible for Child Tax Credit but not Working Tax Credit and the household income (as used by HMRC to assess tax credits) is not more than £16,190. Please note: anyone eligible for Working Tax Credit, or if you have a partner and they receive it, regardless of Income, you will not qualify
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- In receipt of the 4 week run on of working tax credit (this is where someone becomes unemployed or reduces their hours and so is no longer entitled to working tax credit but will continue to receive it for a further 4 weeks and is entitled to free meals during that time)
- Universal credit (provided you have an annual net earned household income of no more than £7,400 as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods). Your net earned income is your household income after taxes and deductions and does not include income from Universal Credit or any other benefits you may receive.

In addition to the remission allowances outlined above, it may be advisable to waive or partially waive debts where it is deemed that it does not make financial sense to continue allocating time and resources to pursuing.

Writing Off Debts

When all practical and cost-effective methods of recovery have been exhausted by the County Council, the school will be notified of the amount of debt that is considered to be irrecoverable.

The governing board 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;
- Consider the use of a small claims court procedure.

Lettings

Contracts for lettings of the nursery school premises will be drawn up as necessary between the school and the applicant. Charges will reflect the school's costs for energy, water, lighting and opening up and closing of the school by the janitor. Please see the School's Lettings Policy.

Implementation, Monitoring and Review

Day to day implementation of the procedures is carried out by the Office Manager and Headteacher. The Office Manager will present a report to the governing board of any outstanding debts and explain the procedures followed to date.

Review of the policy will take place on an annual basis.