



Beacon for Life

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Walton Priory Middle School Debt Recovery Policy 19-20

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. The Debt Recovery Process

Walton Priory Middle School has its 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 being followed.

4. Dinner Money

Payment for school meals should be made on via ParentPay and income is allocated directly to Chartwells.

The School currently offers an overdraft facility of up to 5 meals after which no further credit will be extended. The Parentpay system is easy to use and parents can set up payment / low credit reminders. The School does all it can to remind parents of low credit however payment for meals is the parent/ carer's responsibility. In the event of insufficient credit on a pupil's account every effort will be made to contact the parent by phone but if the parent cannot be contacted, an emergency meal may be provided.

If the situation continues, the School may consider the matter to be a safeguarding issue and act accordingly and the parent/carers will be informed that the matter will be referred to the County Council and that recovery action will be pursued.

5. Music Tuition

Music lessons are provided by the school at a charge agreed by governors to the parent/carer of a child. Parents/carers are informed of the cost and have a commitment to pay for a full year regardless of whether the child continues with the lessons. A letter is sent to the parent/carer on an annual basis asking for payment and offering an instalment option. If payment has not been received by an agreed date, a further reminder is sent. In the event that no payment is received by a date agreed by the School, music lessons will cease, an invoice will be raised and the debt will be referred on to the County Council for recovery.

6. 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 (unless an alternative payment plan is in place) or the child may not be allowed to attend.

7. Remissions

Governors have agreed that, in some cases, certain categories of pupils are not liable for the 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).

8. Lettings

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

9. Costs of debt recovery

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Headteacher 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 Governor Committee.

10. Negotiation of repayment terms

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue payment' reminder.

However, 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, taking the following factors into account.

- Hardship - where paying the debt would cause financial hardship.
- Ill health - where our recovery action might cause further ill health.
- Time - where the debt is so large compared to the person's income that it would take an unreasonable length of time to pay it all off.

- Cost - where the value of the debt is less than the cost of recovering it.
- Multiple debt - where someone owes more than one debt to the School. In this situation an attempt to agree one repayment plan to include all debts will be established.

If a debtor requests for 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Headteacher and an authorised payment plan established.

A record of all such agreements entered into will be retained.

The Headteacher 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 Governor Committee

11. Bad debts

This debt recovery policy should be cross-referenced to the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools.

When all practical and cost effective methods of debt 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 body will take into account the age and size of each debt and any advice from the County Council before making a decision to write off debt.

A record of the write-off, the reason for it, and the approval for it, will be retained for seven years.

Signed:

Governor with responsibility for Finance (print name):

Date: