



Debt Recovery Policy

Date of Policy creation	November 2019
Policy lead	Tracey Smith
Date of Policy adoption by Governing body	Autumn 2023
Frequency of review	Annually
Review due	Autumn 2024

School Debt Policy

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

Doxey Academy has its own procedures in place which are used to collect income:

Dinner Money

Payment for all school meals should be made in advance. Payments must be made via Parent Pay, our online payment service. The school office reconciles payments received against meals ordered. Discrepancies identified will in the first instance result in a text message to the parent / carer requesting a payment to be made to return the account to credit immediately.

Sparkles - Extended school activities

Payments for all booked Sparkles sessions must be made in advance on or before the first day of the month. Payments for short notice requirements are to be made on the day of the booking being requested. These details are fully explained in the Terms and Conditions for the Sparkles Provision which are signed by all persons accessing the service.

Payments must be made either via Parent Pay, our online payment service, or by workplace voucher schemes. Parent Pay accounts are reviewed weekly. In the event that an account has an outstanding balance then a text message/phone call or email will be sent to parents/carers requesting a payment to be made to the account immediately.

Music tuition

Where applicable, music lessons are provided by the school at a charge to the parent / carer of a child. Parents / carers are informed of the cost of these lessons before they sign up to them.

A request is sent to the parent / carer on a termly basis asking for payment via Parent Pay. If payment has not been received by the start of the first lesson a reminder is sent. In the event that no payment is received by the second week the lessons will be withdrawn.

Board and lodging on residential visits

The board and lodging element of a residential visit can be charged to parents / carers. Parents/carers are notified of the cost in advance of the trip 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 may 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.

The school debt recovery process

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

When arrears occur, procedures aimed at recovering the payment include –

- Communication of any arrears will be made by school office staff within one week of the debt occurring.
- An informal text, telephone call, letter or email is sent to the debtor communicated as a polite reminder requesting payment by a given date.
- Formal letter sent by the Office and Financial Services Manager informing the debtor that debt will be referred to Staffordshire County Council's Debt Collection Team if no response is received by a given date.
- A Final Formal Letter –stating that the Debt has now been referred to Staffordshire County Council.

The Head Teacher has a discretionary right to not provide a service.

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/carer/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.

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 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 Finance Committee (other than the waiving of debts between £100 and £500).