

St. Matthew's Catholic Primary School

Debt Management Policy



Through respect we will work together in Christ to develop the whole person

Written: November 2021
Date of Review: November 2022
Lead: Mrs T Latham

Introduction

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that procedures are in place for the recovery of outstanding debt.

This policy sets out the procedures for debt recovery and for the write-off of any debt which is deemed to be irrecoverable.

General Debt

Payment should be obtained as and when goods/services/facilities are provided wherever possible, where the value of goods and services are relatively small i.e. less than **£100**.

Where payment is not received at the time when the goods/services/facilities are delivered an invoice must be raised as soon as possible, but normally within 7 days of the goods/services/facilities being provided.

Invoices should state that the bill is due and payable at the invoice date.

If no payment is received within 21 days from date of issue of the invoice a final reminder should be issued to the debtor. The final reminder should clearly state that legal action will be taken if the debt is not settled in full within a further 14 days of the date of the reminder.

Where only part of the debt has been settled a final reminder for the balance outstanding should be issued 21 days from the issue of the invoice. The final reminder should clearly state that legal action will be taken if the debt is not settled in full within a further 14 days of the date of the reminder.

Where a debtor requests permission to settle the debt by instalments and extend the normal terms and conditions of supply they must submit an application in writing explaining the reasons for their inability to meet the original contract terms. The Head Teacher and Chair of Governors will agree the revised terms, which must not exceed 49 days from the date of issue of the invoice. If the debt is not settled within the terms set by the Head Teacher and Chair of Governors then a final reminder should be issued to the debtor. The final reminder should clearly state that legal action will be taken if the debt is not settled in full within a further 14 days of the date of the reminder.

At each meeting of the Governors, the Head Teacher is required to inform the governors of any debt which is still outstanding after the 14 day period following the final reminder, together with any proposed action: This may be a referral to solicitors for legal action, a debt collection agency or to write-off the debt if there is no realistic prospect of debt recovery being successful, or if further action is not cost-effective.

Outstanding debt of up to **£50** may be written-off by the Head Teacher provided that the appropriate follow-up actioned outlined above has been taken and the details of the debtor, amount written-off and the reason for no further action being taken is reported to the Governors for information at their next meeting.

Write-off of outstanding debt in excess of **£50** must be approved by the Governors following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

A write-off must not be communicated to the debtor. It is not an acknowledgement that the debt does not exist, but is an internal transaction in the accounts of the school, which removes the debt from the records.

Individuals or organisations that have previously defaulted on payments to the school are not allowed credit facilities.

Where a debtor's payments are regularly or consistently paid outside the terms of supply the Head Teacher must consider withdrawal of credit facilities and request the individual/organisation to pay for goods/services/facilities at the time they are consumed.

School Meals

Payment for school meals should be made in advance. The school uses Parent Pay and parents should ensure that enough funds are added in advance to cover the costs of school meals for their child/children.

Children cannot be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except for those that are entitled to free school meals. If parents/carers believe that their child may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, they should be advised to contact the 'One Stop Shop' or school office. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that parents/carers are encouraged to register for free school meals if they are entitled as this also enables the school to access Pupil Premium funding. Parents/carers will be asked to bring packed lunches for their children.

Any arrears of dinner money that arise must be pursued by the school on a weekly basis.

On the first day of non-payment, a member of school staff will attempt to contact the parent/carer by telephone to discuss the debt and requesting payment on the following day.

If dinner monies remain outstanding at the beginning of the second week, a reminder letter should be issued to the parent/carer.

If dinner monies remain outstanding at the beginning of the third week, a final warning letter must be issued to the parent/carer. This letter will remind the parent/carer of the previous reminder letter and the current amount outstanding. The letter will also inform the parent/carer that if the debt remains unpaid, the school will refuse to provide a school meal for the child and the parent/carer will need to provide the child with a healthy packed lunch or be taken home for lunch and requests contact with the school to discuss any problems in making the outstanding payment.

If dinner monies remain outstanding at the beginning of the fourth week, a notification of withdrawal of school meals letter must be issued to the parent/carer. This letter will give the parent/carer a final opportunity to clear the outstanding debt. The letter will inform the

parent/carer that if the debt is not cleared in full, the child will not be provided with a meal with effect from the following Monday. The parent/carer will be advised makes alternative arrangements for the child's lunch.

Arrangements can be made to clear any dinner money debt by instalments, however, the amount should be acceptable to both the school and the parent/carer.

Whilst looking at the whole picture and the vulnerability of the child social services may also be informed that these parent/carers are not carrying out the 'responsibility of care' by failing to provide food for their child at lunchtime. It is not the responsibility of the school to provide lunch for pupils, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to provide a meal, either a school lunch, packed lunch or to take the child home.

This debt management policy in respect of dinner monies includes the refusal to provide a school meal when the parent/carer has not paid or made contact with the school and payment has been outstanding for 4 weeks. This policy is intended to keep debts to a minimum and thereby avoid the cost of a referral to solicitors for legal action or debt collection agency, or to write-off the debt if there is no realistic prospect of debt recovery being successful. This course of action would not be cost-effective with the amounts concerned.

At each meeting of the Governors, the Head Teacher is required to inform the Governors of any outstanding dinner money debt.

Outstanding individual school meals debt of up to **£50** may be written-off by the Head Teacher provided that the appropriate follow-up action outlined above has been taken and the details of the debtor, amount written-off and the reason for no further action being taken is reported to the Governors for information at their next meeting.

Write-off of outstanding debt in excess of **£50** must be approved by the Governors following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

A write-off must not be communicated to the parent/carer. It is not an acknowledgement that the debt does not exist, but is an internal transaction in the accounts of the school, which removes the debt from the records.

Early Birds

Payments for Early Birds are calculated by dividing the cost for the whole school year by 10 monthly payments. These should be paid via Parent Pay in advance on 1st of every month from 1st September to 1st June.

The school office will remind parents by text when their payment is due each month.

Failure to pay in advance 2 months running despite reminders will result in the place at Early Birds being withdrawn.

Conclusion

We hope that by implementing this debt policy, we are able to help parents/carers manage school dinner money effectively, reduce the administration time and costs involved chasing dinner money and general debts and at the same time ensure that money which should be spent on the children's education is not used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers and debtors.

(1) REMINDER LETTER – SCHOOL MEALS

Date

Dear

Name of Child/Children:

Class (es)

Our records show that despite a phone call on _____ you have not paid dinner money for your child/children.

As at _____ our records show a total debt of £

Please arrange for this money to be paid into your Parent Pay account immediately.

The cost of a school meal is £ 1.80 per day - £ 9.00 per week and must be paid in advance.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Sime
Head Teacher

(2) FINAL WARNING LETTER – SCHOOL MEALS

Date

Dear

Name of Child/Children:

Class (es)

Our records show that despite a previous 'reminder letter' on _____ you have still not paid dinner money for your child.

As at _____ our records show a total debt of £

Please arrange for this money to be paid into your Parent Pay account immediately.

The cost of a school meal is £ 1.80 per day - £9.00 per week and must be paid in advance.

If the debt remains unpaid, the school will refuse to provide a school meal for the child and you will need to provide the child with a healthy packed lunch or take him/her home from school for lunch.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Sime
Head Teacher

(3) NOTIFICATION OF WITHDRAWAL OF SCHOOL MEALS LETTER

Date

Dear

Name of Child/Children:

Class (es)

Our records show that despite several 'reminder letters', you have still not paid dinner money for your child.

As at our records show a total debt of £

Please arrange for this money to be paid into your Parent Pay account immediately.

The cost of a school meal is £ 1.80 per day - £9.00 per week and must be paid in advance.

Since non-payment for school meals affects the quality of service we offer to the children, we need to ensure that all payments are up to date. If the debt is not cleared by the end of this week, it will not be possible to provide your child with a school lunch with effect from Monday , and you will need to provide your child with a healthy packed lunch or take him/her home from school for lunch.

The school reserves the right for the Head Teacher to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt and to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunchtime.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Sime
Head Teacher

REMINDER LETTER 1 – EARLY BIRDS

Date

Dear

Name of Child/Children:

Class (es)

Our records show that despite a phone call on _____ you have not paid
Early Birds money for your child/children.

As at _____ our records show a total debt of £

Please arrange for this money to be paid into your Parent Pay account immediately.

Your monthly payment for Early Birds is £ _____ and this must be paid in advance into
your Parent Pay account on 1st of the month from September to June.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Sime
Head Teacher

FINAL WARNING LETTER 2 – EARLY BIRDS

Date

Dear

Name of Child/Children:

Class (es)

Our records show that despite a previous 'reminder letter' on _____ you have still not paid Early Birds money for your child.

As at _____ our records show a total debt of £

Please arrange for this money to be paid into your Parent Pay account immediately.

Your monthly payment for Early Birds is £ _____ and this must be paid in advance into your Parent Pay account on 1st of the month from September to June.

If the debt remains unpaid, the school will withdraw your child's place at Early Birds.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Sime
Head Teacher

NOTIFICATION OF WITHDRAWAL OF EARLY BIRDS PLACE LETTER - 3

Date

Dear

Name of Child/Children:

Class (es)

Our records show that despite several reminders by phone and letter, you have still not paid Early Birds money for your child.

As at our records show a total debt of £

Please arrange for this money to be paid into your Parent Pay account immediately.

Your monthly payment for Early Birds is £ and this must be paid in advance into your Parent Pay account on 1st of the month from September to June.

Since non-payment for Early Birds affects the quality of service we offer to the children, we need to ensure that all payments are up to date. If the debt is not cleared by the end of this week, it will not be possible to provide your child with a place at Early Birds with effect from Monday .

The school reserves the right for the Head Teacher to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Sime
Head Teacher



St. Matthew's Catholic Primary School
Record of Debts Written Off

Debtor	Details of debt	Amount (£)	Invoice reference and date (<i>where applicable</i>).	Reason for write-off (<i>including brief details of measures taken to secure payment - as appropriate</i>).	Authorisation of write off – <i>name & signature of the authorising individual & date.</i> <i>Cross reference to entry in the accounts where applicable.</i>

**This record must be kept for a minimum of 7 years from date of the debt.*

