

Debt Recovery Policy

Name of Responsible Manager / Headteacher:	Mr J DF Martin
Policy Owner:	Mrs L Riordan
Date of Policy Approval by Governing Body:	March 2018
Date of last Policy Review:	May 2024
Date of next Policy Review:	May 2026

Statement of Intent

This policy has been written to help our school to adopt a consistent approach to debt with a view to complete elimination. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents and carers clearly understand what is expected of them.

Services provided by Castle Hill Primary School are no different to those provided by any other business in that meals and other services must be paid for in advance and on demand. Most parents and carers understand this principle. However, there are a minority of parents or carers who do not pay on time for services provided by the school, putting the school in the position of subsidising these few families with funding that is intended by law for all children, as well as causing considerable extra work for office staff and embarrassment for all concerned by chasing outstanding money owed to the school.

This policy currently includes, but is not limited to, contributions for school meals (KS2 only), the year 6 residential trip transport, and the cost of book/badge replacements which are the only non-voluntary payments that the school presently collects. Where appropriate, this debt collection model may be used for any other monies the school wishes to collect in the future.

Within this policy, the use of the term “parent” shall relate equally to parents, guardians and/or carers.

In individual cases of hardship, the Head Teacher may, at their discretion, agree a repayment plan with parents in order to recover a debt. In the event that the agreed repayment plan is not adhered to, the conditions laid out in the remainder of this policy will apply.

School Meals

The Governing Body has resolved to ensure that all children receive a meal at lunch time whilst recognising the school budget should not be used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers.

School meals must be paid for in advance and your meal account will have to be in credit in order for you to order a meal for your child.

The cost of meals can be found on the school website <https://www.castlehillprimary.net/parents/school-meals>. The charge for a school lunch is £3.00 per day (prices @ 1st June 2023).

Castle Hill Primary School is a cash free school and payment should be made via the school online payment system, ScoPay at <https://www.scopay.com/chjs> If you do not have a ScoPay account please contact the school office.

Parents and carers of children who arrive without their packed lunch will be contacted and asked to pop back with the lunch or make an on-line payment for a school before 10.00am so that their child can be told what has been arranged, and in time for the office staff to order a school meal from the kitchen if required. After this time the school meals are being prepared and cooked.

If debts are incurred, these have to be paid from the school budget. This means that money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

Free School Meals

KS2 pupils (years 3 – 6) will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for in advance, except those confirmed as entitled to free school meals (FSM).

If you believe that you may qualify for entitlement to free school meals (FSM) please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you with your application. Details about the application process can be found on the school website -> <https://castlehillprimary.net/parents/school-meals/free-school-meals>. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where entitlement has been verified.

All pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key stage 1 are entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School meals.

Procedure for collection of School Meal Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise:

- in these exceptional circumstances the school may grant a debt **allowance of one meal**. However, all accounts must be settled in advance of any further meals being provided
- credits on siblings' accounts maybe transferred between siblings in order to address any debts
- in a case where a debt payment is not cleared nor a packed lunch provided, the office will contact the parent and ask them to make payment before 10:00 a.m. or provide a packed lunch so that their child can be told what has been arranged, and in time for the office staff to order a school meal from the kitchen if required. After this time the school meals are being prepared and cooked.
- A gentle reminder will be sent home after 1 week / in excess of £15 accumulated arrears (Appendix 1)
- The parent/carer will be informed in writing where 2 weeks / in excess of £30.00 arrears has accumulated and advised to make immediate payment (Appendix 2)
- A final letter to the parent/carer informing them that no meals will be provided for their child/children if payment has not been received by a specified date in accordance with the policy, the date when 4 weeks of arrears have been accumulated. (Appendix 3)
- No meals will be provided to pupils when arrears exceed 4 weeks / in excess of £60.00
- Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

- Once the final letter deadline has expired the Governing Body will decide whether legal proceedings should begin.
- If the debt is outstanding once a pupil leaves the school the governors may instruct the Head Teacher to pursue the outstanding debt through the small claims court.

Year 6 Residential Trip Transport

For payments not received, where alternative arrangements have not been made, the following procedure will be followed:

1. Notice will be sent to parents to remind them that payment must be made in order for their child to be able to participate.
2. A member of the SLT will discuss with the parents concerned a payment strategy.
3. If full payment has not been received 1 month prior to the start of the planned trip, the head teacher will contact the parent by phone and will remind them that their child will be unable to take part unless payment is made.

Debt Write Off

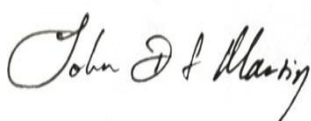
If the Executive Head Teacher is of the opinion that a debt is impossible to recover, the write off limits as set out in the Finance Committee Terms of Reference will apply:

1. Approval by the Executive Head Teacher for any debts of less than £100.
2. Approval by the Finance Committee for any debts between £100 and £250.
3. Approval by the Full Governing Body for any debts over £250.


It is hoped that by implementing this debt recovery policy we are able to manage the debts owed to the school better, minimising the money we lose from our school budget supporting these debts and at the same time ensuring that all the money is made available to support the children's learning.

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours Sincerely,



John Martin
Executive Head Teacher



Graeme Train
Chair of Governors



Jeff Bennett
Chair of Pay & Finance

APPENDIX 1

Date

Gentle Reminder Letter School Meal Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

According to our records, there are outstanding dinner monies for your child/children.

The arrears are for the week commencing Please make the payment of £
..... tomorrow.

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

Yours sincerely



John Martin
Executive Head Teacher



Graeme Train
Chair of Governors



Jeff Bennett
Chair of Pay & Finance

APPENDIX 2

Date:

Accumulated School Meals Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Following our letter dated regarding outstanding dinner money, our records show that this has not been paid.

To date, the amount of arrears is £..... We now request that you attend a meeting to discuss the situation with a member of the Senior Management Team. Please telephone the school office to arrange an appointment.

Until the debt is cleared, you must provide a packed lunch for your child/children. In a case when payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with either the money or a packed lunch before lunch time.

These arrears need to be cleared as soon as possible. Payment can be made via Scopay.

Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

If you have any queries and/or wish to discuss this matter, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely



John Martin
Executive Head Teacher



Graeme Train
Chair of Governors



Jeff Bennett
Chair of Pay & Finance

APPENDIX 3

Date:

Non-payment of School Meal Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your child/children despite previous letters sent home on and

Arrears to date total £

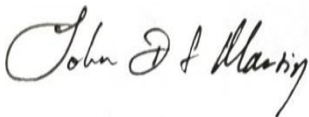
Following the school policy on dinner money debt recovery, a copy of which was sent to you when your child started school/started in KS2, I must inform you that if payment is not received with 5 working days, the Governing Body will be asked to consider starting legal proceedings for debt recovery. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to Court.

Until the debt is cleared no meals will be provided in school and you need to provide a packed lunch for your child/children.

Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely



John Martin
Executive Head Teacher



Graeme Train
Chair of Governors



Jeff Bennett
Chair of Pay & Finance