

St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

"Living and growing in Christ"

Payment and Debt Management Policy



Drafted by:	School Business Manager
Approved by:	Finance Committee
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1. Background

The school has a debt policy for the collection of outstanding monies owed. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. The school cannot afford to divert school education funding in support of non-payment of school meals, breakfast club, after school club, school trips or any other item or event as this would be against government and local authority directives.

The school is unable to cover the cost of non-payment of school meals, clubs, trips or costs incurred for other events.

2. Debt Management

The school has a strict policy of no bad debts. Our debt policy is to always seek reimbursement for any outstanding debt. Payments for school services, including school meals, clubs, school trips and other items must be paid for in advance on Parent Pay or Scopay. It is the parent's responsibility to keep track of the child's account and to ensure it does not go into debt. The school recognises that a child on Pupil Premium will be entitled to financial support for any of the above as outlined in the schools Pupil Premium Statement.

3. Debt Recovery

The school office will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is monitored twice half termly. Accurate records will be maintained to detail individual debts and the total value of debt to the school. Where individual debts exceed set limits or agreed calendar points, these will be brought to the attention of the head of school so that additional actions to seek recovery of these debts can be agreed.

The school may choose to write off a debt where all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted, where it is not cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action, or there are extenuating circumstances.

Where debts are required to be written off, after every effort has been made by the Executive Head Teacher and Governors to recoup the monies, the following thresholds apply:

Limits	Authority
Up to £500	Executive Head Teacher
Above £500	Finance and Premises Committee

4. Non Payment

In the event of non-payment, the school in the first instant will not refuse service but will start a more formal process of debt recovery with the following reminders being sent:

- **1st Reminder**
After 5 days in arrears the parent is reminded by text that they owe money.
- **2nd Reminder**
When the debt has accrued to 10 days, an email is sent from the school office/breakfast/After school club outlining the details of the debt. The debt must be cleared within 24 hours.
- **3rd Reminder**
In the event of non-payment by 48 hours after the 2nd reminder has been sent, a meeting will be arranged with the Head of school to discuss the debt and an appropriate payment plan. A £10 charge to cover additional administrative charges will be added to the parents account if a 3rd reminder is sent.

Where there is continual non-payment of the debt after the 3rd reminder stage, a child who is expecting a hot school meal will be offered a cold sandwich lunch charged at the normal rate, until the debt is cleared. Where this relates to the breakfast and after school clubs the child will not be allowed to attend these clubs until the debt is cleared.

Throughout this process our intention is that the situation is discussed amicably and the payment made without causing distress for all parties.

In the event of continual bad debts from parents the Head of School can elect to advise the Chair of Finance & Premises for Governor action.

5. Free School Meals and Pupil Premium

Provisions are available for FSM for children and this is based on government set criteria. Parents and carers may discuss their eligibility with the school office. The guiding principle is that a child should not expect a school lunch unless paid for in advance or eligible for FSM.

6. Exceptional Circumstances

The school does accept that unusual and unforeseen circumstances may occur on a particular day whereby payment for that day cannot be made. The Head of school can direct the school's administrator to permit the school meal as a 'controlled' debt. Payment of this overdue amount must be reimbursed the next school day. If payment is not forthcoming a reminder telephone call will be made. If the debt continues to be unpaid the parent/carer will be asked to attend the school to discuss the matter.

7. Payment for Educational Trips

Trips and visits are an important part of our pupils' education and we always strive to provide free/cheap trips for pupils wherever possible. The school sometimes asks for a voluntary contribution to cover the cost of some trips. No child will be excluded from a trip because of financial hardship. However, if the school doesn't receive enough voluntary contributions to cover the cost of the trip then the trip may have to be cancelled.

8. Other Invoiced Income

An invoice must be raised by the school as soon as possible after the goods or services are delivered or have been provided. All invoices issued and income received, must be accurately recorded.

If payment has not been received within 28 days from the date of issue of the invoice, then this should be followed up with a reminder phone call/email. If no payment is received after 35 days, a final reminder invoice should be issued to the debtor. This 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.