

# **Debt Recovery Policy**

## **Purley CE Primary School**

**Date of policy: January 2016**

**Review Cycle: 2 years**

**Reviewed By: Finance & Staffing Committee**

**Last Reviewed: Summer 2019**

**Approved By: Finance & Staffing Committee 24/6/19**

**Next review date: Summer 2021**



# Purley CE Primary School

## DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

### Introduction

The school's Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school to receive all income to which it is entitled. Purley Primary School will therefore take all reasonable measures to collect any monies owing to it as part of the management of public funds. Collecting payment from parents and carers is a sensitive area; we deal with issues of debt collection with sensitivity and confidentiality at all times.

### Aims

- To ensure proper controls are in place
- To provide a clear framework for managing school finances

### How the debt is accrued

#### Trips/Activities

The school differentiates between school trips that are part of the curriculum and which are funded from voluntary contributions and trips/activities that are outside of the curriculum which can be funded by charging. Where charges are not paid in advance of a non-curriculum trip, the school will not fund participation (refer to Charging Policy). Parents/ carers are advised of the cost of trips/activities prior to signing up for the trip/ activities.

If a child is in receipt of Pupil Premium (PPG), the headteacher can decide if this money can be used to pay towards / or in full for trips.

#### Breakfast Club and After School Club

Booking forms clearly state that any bookings made should be paid half termly in advance or by the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. The form will be signed by the parents or consent will be accepted by email with the form attached.

- When a debt of **over £100** is accrued, parents will be asked not to bring their child to either club until the debt has been paid in full.
- Any further bookings **MUST** be paid in advance once parents have accrued a debt
- A payment plan will be offered in writing, either by letter or an email, to avoid any further action being taken
- In the event of non-payment from the agreed payment plan, steps will be followed from the debt collections procedures below.
- If a child is in receipt of Free School Meals, the headteacher can agree to paying for clubs from the PPG fund 08
- Acceptances based on individual circumstances can be made at the discretion of the Headteacher.

## School Lunches

Payment for meals should be paid direct to the lunch provider and in advance. The School Business Manager will print off a weekly debt list and email parents reminding them to pay. It is at the Headteacher's discretion to block a child's account if it reaches a debt of over £10.

## **DEBT COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

### Step 1

When a parent has accrued a debt of £10, the school will make contact with parent/ carer setting out the amount that is owed and asking for payment within 7 days. A payment plan will be encouraged to avoid further action *See Appendix 1.*

### Step 2

If payment is not received within 7 days, a letter will be sent reminding those who have outstanding debts. This letter will inform parents that in the event that no payment is made within 21 days, the school may be forced to refer the matter to West Berkshire Council Legal Services *See Appendix 2.*

### Step 3

If in the event that parents do not respond to a letter from the school, or if they do not make payments in line with any agreed schedule, it may be necessary for the school to make a referral to the West Berkshire Legal Services. The school will ask the Council to send a final demand letter. The letter will set out the amount of debt, the previous communication that the school has sent and the final deadline by which payment should be received. It will also outline the potential for court action and the consequences that non-payment might have.

### Step 4

With the assistance of West Berkshire Council legal services we may issue proceedings in the County Court (small claims court) to recover the money. This action could result in a County Court Judgement being placed against a debtor's name and address.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

Parents having financial difficulties are routinely offered the opportunity to speak to the Headteacher or School Business Manager when trip and letters are issued. Where, at any stage, parents respond to the letters sent out in relation to the debt, the school will cooperate with parents in attempts to agree, in writing, a schedule of payments that will enable the debt to be repaid. The school is happy to help with alternative arrangements and encourages the appropriate claiming of Free School Meals Eligibility. The Headteacher will decide whether to agree to the revised terms.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES**

This policy does not alter or affect the position in relation to any voluntary contributions that are requested by the school in relation to trips in support of the curriculum. Pupils will not be excluded from trips if these voluntary contributions are not paid, however, if insufficient contributions are received trips may be cancelled.

This policy does not place any other requirement on the parent or change any responsibility of the school to provide a broad and balanced education for the children.

## **WRITING OFF DEBTS**

The Headteacher has authority to write off a debt of under £50, which must be recorded.

In the event of a debt of over £50 having to be written off, the Headteacher will bring this to the attention of the Governors for discussion and approval at the next available Finance and Staffing Committee meeting.

A record of each write-off, the reason for it, and the approval for it, will be retained for 7 years:

**Debtor** – The name of the person owing the debt

**Details** – How the debt was accrued e.g. Name of trip, Breakfast or Afterschool cubs, lunches. The term in which the debt was accrued.

**Amount** – Total amount of debt

**Reason** - Include brief details of measures taken to secure payment. Cross reference to entry in the accounts where applicable. Detail parents situation.

**Authorisation** - name and signature of the authorising individual and date.

*See Appendix 3*

## **APPENDIX 1**



## Purley Church of England (VC) Primary School

Purley Village, Purley on Thames, Reading, Berkshire, RG8 8AF  
Telephone: 0118 984 2384 Fax: 0118 984 1315 email:finance@purley.w-berks.sch.uk  
Headteacher: Mrs K Fakes

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[Date]

Dear parents/carers of

**Debt due to Purley Primary School in the sum of £[ ]**

According to our records, and in line with our Debt Recovery Policy, you owe the school a sum of over £10.00. The total amount owing is £[ ] for [ ].

You received a payment request on [ ] and we would be grateful if you could pay this sum in full within seven days of the date of this letter.

If you are unable to pay this sum in one go then please contact me within the next 7 days to discuss options for payment of the debt in affordable instalments. A payment plan will be submitted in the form of an application in writing explaining the reasons for your inability to meet the original contract terms. The Headteacher and Chair of the Finance Committee will decide whether to agree to the revised terms.

If this is an oversight on our part, please accept our apologies and please provide payment details so we can amend our records.

Yours sincerely

Mrs K Fakes  
Headteacher

## APPENDIX 2



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Headteacher: Mrs K Fakes

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[Date]

Dear parents/carers of

### **Debt due to Purley Primary School in the sum of £[ ]**

According to our records, and in line with our Debt Recovery Policy, you owe the school a sum of over £10.00. The total amount owing is £[ ] for [ ].

You received a letter on [ ] informing you that the above sum needed to be paid in full within seven days of the date of the letter, and the opportunity to adopt a payment plan. As yet, we have had no further correspondence from you.

Unfortunately, if we do not receive payment within 21 days of the date of this letter, then we will be contacting West Berkshire District Council Legal Services and asking them to take steps to recover the money from you. This may include issuing proceedings in the county court. It is therefore in your best interests to repay this sum as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Mrs K Fakes  
Headteacher

**APPENDIX 3**



**PURLEY CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Debt Write Off Record**

Debtor	Details	Amount £	Reason	Authorisation