



Debt and Debt Recovery Policy

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INTRODUCTION

The Governing Body of Cranham Church of England (VA) Primary School ("Cranham School") recognises that any monies owed to the school has an impact on the budget and may affect the resources we can provide to all children. We hope that parents understand this and will make every possible effort to avoid owing the school money.

The school will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debts as part of its management of public funds. This debt recovery policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance and any other legal requirements

LUNCH ORDERS

School lunches should be ordered in advance via parentpay, no later than Tuesday evening of the preceding week. Payment must be made in full at the time of booking.

If no money is received on a day that a school lunch is to be taken, and it is too late to request that a packed lunch be brought into school, a meal will, on the first occasion, be provided in the interests of the child. However an informal email and text message will be sent asking for payment by return.

If no money is received following the issue of the note/text message, and the pupil presents themselves for a school meal, the parent should be contacted by phone asking for payment and to be reminded about the 'pay in advance' policy.

If the debt remains outstanding then debt collection as per the Debt Recovery Procedure stated below should be started.

In the event that a parent consistently sends their child to school without payment, or a packed lunch, a concern must be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

BREAKFAST & AFTERSCHOOL CLUBS

Bookings for Breakfast and Afterschool Club should be made online via parent pay. Parents should book in advance and make payment in full. If there is a last minute requirement for afterschool club, then the school must be contacted no later than midday on the day in question.

If no payment is received when a child is brought to Breakfast or Afterschool Club, then the child may be allowed to stay on the understanding that the debt is settled within a week. However an informal email and text message will be sent.

If there are repeated instances of non payment then the Headteacher may withdraw the child's access to afterschool club.

CANCELLATIONS

Cancellations of a lunch order, breakfast club attendance and/or after school club attendance will, if made more than 24 hours prior, be fully refunded. Cancellations made in under 24 hours will usually not be refunded.

ACCEPTABLE 'CREDIT PERIOD'

The Full Governing Body has determined that four weeks is an acceptable 'credit settlement period' before the debt recovery procedures are applied.

REPORTING OF OUTSTANDING DEBT LEVELS

The Head teacher will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is regularly monitored. Suitable records will be maintained to detail individual debts and the total value of debt to the school in order that it can be determined at any time and reported to the Governing Body. The Governing Body will review the level of outstanding debts at every meeting to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective.

DEBT RECOVERY PROCEDURES

Where payment from the parent/guardian has not been received in advance, or 'at the point of sale', the following process should be applied:

- Initial 'overdue payment' reminder sent, via the parent system, by text message as soon as possible.
- There will also be an additional verbal reminder, which can be made either in person (when a parent/guardian comes to collect/drop off the child), or by telephone. The date of the initial reminder should be recorded.

First 'overdue payment' reminder letter

A formal reminder letter is issued 2 weeks after the informal reminder. If action is to proceed further, it is necessary to prove that all reasonable attempts have been made to recover the debt, and that these attempts have been made in a timely manner, i.e. at the time that the debt first became overdue.

The date of the initial reminder letter should be recorded.

In the case of school meals, if the debt is not settled on the following school day (after the formal reminder letter is received) then we will be unable to provide your child with a school dinner and you must provide a packed lunch. If a child comes to school without clearing the debt and requires a hot meal then the School Office will telephone the parents to make alternative arrangements for lunchtime. If the parent does not provide a packed lunch then the school may refer the family to Social Services under our child protection procedures.

In the case of breakfast, afterschool club and after school sports clubs, if the debt is not settled on the following school day then we will be unable to accept your child into breakfast, afterschool club and after school sports clubs. If a child is left unsupervised by a parent then the school may refer the family to Social Services under our child protection procedures.

Second 'overdue payment' reminder letter

A second reminder letter will be issued 2 weeks after the First Reminder Letter. The date of the second reminder letter should be recorded.

Failure to respond to reminders / settle a debt

If there is no response to the second 'overdue payment' reminder letter the debtor will be invited to meet the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to discuss how the debt will be settled. Failure to respond to this letter and/or failure to attend this meeting will result in the school taking legal action to recover the monies.

The Governing Body will make every effort to work with parents to prevent debts mounting. At the discretion of The Governing Body an official invoice may be issued for the full amount.

The debtor may be advised that they will be required to pay in advance for all future supplies and services or the supply will no longer be available to them.

This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Governing Body.

If a mutual agreement cannot be reached or if any agreed repayment is missed then the school will commence legal action to recover the monies.

Repayment terms

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue payment' reminder. Failure to meet any repayment terms will result in the school commencing legal action to recover the monies.

IF PEOPLE ARE UNABLE TO PAY

The Headteacher in discussion with the Governing Body may choose to reduce or cancel a debt in certain circumstances. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be carried out, taking the following factors into account.

- Hardship – where paying the debt would cause financial hardship.
- Ill health – where our recovery action might cause further ill health.
- Time – where the debt is so large compared to the person's income that it would take an unreasonable length of time to pay it all off.
- Cost – where the value of the debt is less than the cost of recovering it.
- Multiple debts – where someone owes more than one debt to the School. In this situation an attempt to agree one repayment plan to include all debts will be established.

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue payment' reminder. If a debtor requests for 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Governing Body. A record of all such agreements entered into will be retained.

In all cases, a letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms for repayment. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable. The Governing Body will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further 'credit' and will, in future, be required to pay in advance. This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Governing Body.

COSTS OF DEBT RECOVERY

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Governing Body will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor. The debtor will be formally advised in writing that they will be required to pay the additional costs incurred by the school in recovering the debt. This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Governing Body.

BAD DEBTS

Write-off of any individual debt over the value of £50 requires the written approval of the Full Governing Body.

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

HEADTEACHER DISCRETION

The Headteacher has, in discussion with the Chair of Governors, discretion to vary the school Debt Recovery Procedure for individual circumstances.