

Endon Hall Primary School

'Learning Together and having fun'



Debt Recovery Policy

Policy in place: March 2016

Reviewed: March 2017

Review date: March 2018

Statement of intent

Endon Hall Primary School is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all children, regardless of financial circumstances, and has established policies and procedures to ensure that no child is discriminated against by our offering of school trips, activities and educational extras.

While this is the case, Endon Hall School must have a policy in place to ensure the repayment and recuperation of any outstanding debts incurred by the school on behalf of a child. The school will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debts as part of its management of public funds. A debt will be written off only after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it.

Each case is to be treated individually and the circumstances that have led to the outstanding debt will be taken into account to determine the best course of action and whether it is fair and reasonable to pursue the debt in its entirety, if at all. Endon Hall Primary School is committed to adhering to legal requirements regarding charging for school food, activities and materials, and meeting all statutory guidance provided by the DfE.

Introduction

The school's Board of Governors has a responsibility to have a Debt Recovery Policy which ensures that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school to receive all income to which it is entitled.

Legal framework

This policy will adhere to the relevant legislation and statutory guidance surrounding school payments and debt recovery, including the following:

- DfE (2014) 'Charging for school activities'
- DfE (2015) 'Schemes for financing schools'
- DfE (2017) 'Governance handbook'

Aims and Objectives

- To ensure that the Board of Governors complies with the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools and Financial Regulations;
- To protect the school budgets;
- To apply this policy consistently to ensure debt is dealt with in a timely manner;
- To ensure further goods or services are not supplied to parents/carers or customers who have not paid for items already received or used.

Endon Hall Primary School's Governing Board's Finance & Premises Sub-committee:

- Will regularly review details of its debts and what recovery action is needed.
- Must be consulted if legal services are required for debt recovery.
- Will adhere to the privacy rights of children and their parents/carers in all cases.
- May decide to leave a case of debt recovery to the decision of Headteacher.

The debt recovery process

Endon Hall Primary School has its own procedures in place which are used to collect income. However, in the event that payment is not forthcoming then an official invoice will be raised via the County Council's finance system which will lead to the Council's debt recovery procedures as follows:

- Invoice raised with payment terms of 28 days
- A reminder is sent 3 days after the 28 days has expired
- A final notice is issued before the school can request the debt recovery officer to contact the parent/carer/customer at their home/business address (minimum value £150) or the matter referred onto the courts (minimum value £250).

Dinner Money

Payment for school meals should be paid in advance and clearly marked in a sealed envelope with the child's name, class and amount. From financial year 2017/2018 dinner money will be collected via ParentPay.

The school office will reconcile each week the payments received to the meals ordered and any discrepancy will, in the first instance, result in a phone call to the parent/carer to request payment. Any parent/carer that has not made payment by the end of the month will be sent a letter requesting immediate payment. This will be sent with the child.

If payment is still not received within 5 school days then the parent/carer will be informed that the matter will be referred to the County Council and recovery action will be pursued.

Governors have decided on the following policy regarding unpaid meals:

- A meal will be served irrespective of whether the parent has paid

Extended school activities

Payment for extended school activities should be made in advance. Our preferred method of payment is via ParentPay. Accounts are reviewed on a weekly basis and statements will be sent out to parents/carers every half term. If in the event that payment has not been made by the end of the term, parents/carers will be sent a letter and email requesting payment.

Any non-payment will result in the parent/carer being informed that they can no longer use the facility and the debt will be referred onto the County Council for recovery.

Music tuition

Music lessons are provided by the school (via Staffordshire Performing Arts) at a charge to the parent/carer of a child. Parents/carers are informed of the cost upfront and have a commitment to pay for a term regardless of whether the child continues with the lessons.

A statement is sent to the parent/carer on a termly basis asking for payment. If payment has not been received by the end of the term a further reminder is sent. In the event that no payment is received the debt will be referred on to the County Council for recovery.

Board and lodging on residential visits

The board and lodging element of a residential visit can be charged to parents/carers and they are notified of the cost in advance and are given to opportunity to pay in instalments should they wish. Payment must be made in full before the departure date.

Remissions

In some cases Governors have agreed that certain categories of children are not liable for the fee or are eligible for a reduced fee for some or all of; extended school activities, music tuition or residential visits. This is included within the Charges and Remissions Policy (reviewed annually).

Lettings

Contracts for lettings of the school premises will be drawn up as necessary between the school and the client in line with the Charges and Remissions Policy. Failure to pay on time will result in the debt being referred to the County Council for recovery. The letting agreement will be void and the client will be refused future hires.

Declaring outstanding debt levels

The Headteacher and Finance & Premises Sub-committee will review the level of outstanding debt every **term** to determine whether current debt levels are acceptable and whether current methods and procedures to recover debts are effective.

Exceptional circumstances and remissions

The school must ensure that parents/carers of children are aware of the help the school can extend to those in financial difficulty. Parents/Carers who may be eligible for remissions are those in receipt of any of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit, provided that Working Tax Credit is not also received and the family's income (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) did not exceed £16,190 in the previous financial year
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- An income related employment and support allowance

In addition to the remission allowances outlined above, it may be advisable to waive or partially waive debts where it is deemed that it does not make financial sense to continue allocating time and resources to pursuing.

Writing off debts

When all practical and cost effective methods of debt recovery have been exhausted by the County Council the school will be notified of the amount of debt that is considered to be irrecoverable.

The Board of Governors will take into account the age and size of each debt and any advice from the County Council before making a decision to write off the debt.