

## Woodmancote School

### Debt Recovery Policy

Designated Members of Staff: G Tucker/Staffing and Finance

Woodmancote School has adapted the 'model' Debt Recovery Policy developed by Staffordshire County Council.

#### **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. Woodmancote School will therefore take all reasonable measures to collect any monies owing to it as part of the management of public funds. Collecting money from parents or carers is a sensitive area; we deal with issues of debt collection with sensitivity and confidentiality at all times.

#### **Aims and Objectives**

At Woodmancote School we have the following aims:

- To make sure there are sound and proper financial procedures in school for dealing with the school's finances;
- To ensure that proper controls are in place;
- To provide a clear framework for managing school finances;
- To protect the school governors, headteacher and school employees.

#### **Procedures:**

As school uses the services of the Local Authority, they will carry out standard debt recovery procedures on behalf of the school.

The following procedure will be employed for all outstanding debts (of 14 days or longer):

- A gentle reminder (telephone, text or one to one);
- A formal letter (by pupil mail, e-mail or post)
- A second formal letter (Recorded post)
- A third letter informing the debtor that the debt has been passed to the County Council Team.

When all practical and cost effective procedures have been exhausted by the County Council Income Team, they will notify the school of the amount of the debt that is considered to be irrecoverable and should be written off. Writing off a debt will lead to a charge being made on the school budget as the income was credited to the school budget when the invoice was raised.

The Governing Body must:

- approve the writing off of any debt in relation to the school budget;
- take into account their review of the age and size of the debt together with the advice from the Local Authority

## **School Meal payments**

Parent/s must pay in advance for the school lunch using any the method of payment outlined below:

- Online using ParentPay

If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that parents use it if they qualify.

Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However this debt must be paid next day and future meals must be paid in advance before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the head teacher/school administrator will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money or ask them to pay online immediately. Otherwise they must provide sandwiches before lunch time or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

If payment of the debt is not received by the next day, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Social services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

(Please refer to Appendix 1 and 2)

**School Uniform:**

School uniform sales are a non-profit making service. All monies from sales of school uniform is paid into the school fund. It is important that debts are not allowed to accumulate so that the school fund does not go into deficit. Payment for school uniform will therefore be expected when orders are made.

**Photographs:**

School photographs are a source of funding for the school. Any profit is paid into the school fund and contributes towards the cost of some pupil based activities. Parents have the option of buying the photographs or returning them to school. Money for photographs of individual pupils and siblings is collected by the school and paid into the school fund. A cheque is then paid to the photographic company when the invoice is received. Any monies made from the sale of these photographs will remain in the school fund. Payments for 'whole school' group photographs are paid directly to, and collected by, the photographic company. Any commission payments made from group photographs are sent to the school by cheque and paid into the school fund. All unwanted photographs are collected by the photographic company. The school will not be liable for any outstanding debt.

**Outdoor Education:**

All children in KS2 have the option to attend two outdoor education centre visits (Year 4 and 6). Parents are notified of the cost in advance and are given the opportunity to pay in instalments should they wish. Payment must be made in full before the departure date. Parent Pay is used to collect payments.

**Lettings:**

Contracts for lettings of the school premises will be drawn up as necessary between the school and the applicant. Charges will reflect the school's costs for energy, water, lighting and opening up and closing of the school by the caretaker. Please see the school's Lettings Policy.

**Implementation, Monitoring and Review:**

Day to day implementation of the procedures is carried out by the Office Services Manager and Headteacher. The Office Services Manager will present a report to the Governors of any outstanding debts and explain the procedures followed to date.

Review of the Policy will take place every three years or sooner if necessary.

**The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment**

Signed..... (Chair of Staffing and Finance)

Reviewed: October 2014

Reviewed: January 2016

## APPENDIX 1

### Example of follow up letter

Parent or carer of Mark Smith  
1 The Court  
Green Lane  
Newtown  
Newshire

01/01/1010

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child Mark Smith Class: 5G

As at 01/01/2010 your account is showing a debt of **£-2.00**

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. Once the debt is cleared please ensure the account is always in credit.

You have 2 ways to pay:

1. In the secure online payment system ParentPay, using the login already provided, go to [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com) NB THIS IS OUR PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD

Your username and password are:

**Username: xxxxxx**

**Password: yyyyyyy**

2. Send in money to school in a marked envelope

No matter how you pay you can check the account balance anytime by logging into your ParentPay account at [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com). You can see what meals have been taken and when.

The cost of a school meal is £2.00 per day - £10 per week.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## APPENDIX 2

### Example of follow up letter

Parent or carer of Mark Smith  
1 The Court  
Green Lane  
Newtown  
Newshire

01/01/1010

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child Mark Smith Class: 5G despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call

As at 01/01/2010 your account is showing a debt of **£-2.00**

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately.

You have 2 ways to pay:

1. In the secure online payment system ParentPay, using the login already provided, go to [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com) NB THIS IS OUR PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD

Your username and password are:

**Username: xxxxxx**

**Password: yyyyyyy**

2. Send in money to school in a marked envelope

No matter how you pay you can check the account balance anytime by logging into your ParentPay account at [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com). You can see what meals have been taken and when.

The cost of a school meal is £2.00 per day - £10 per week.

Since non-payment for school meals affects the quality of service we offer to the children, we need to ensure that all payments are up-to-date and I am afraid that if the debt is not cleared by the end of this week it will not be possible to provide your child with a school meal. You will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceeding to recover the debt and to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunch time.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher