



Willow Fields Primary School

Arrears Policy

Statement of intent

The Governing Body has a duty to ensure that Willow Fields Community Primary School receives all the funds to which it is entitled. This policy has been created to ensure the appropriate procedures are in place to deal with debts and the recovery of assets.

It encompasses all debts owed to the school including, but not limited to, payments for goods, care services, school residential trips, school meal payments and any other service provision which is deemed to fall outside of the 'voluntary contributions' umbrella.

Parents should be made aware of, and given access to this policy and it will be included on the school's website and made available to view at the school on request.

1. The principles

- The governing body will not write off any debt which exceeds £50.
- The school will not write off any debts owed by the local authority (LA).
- A full record will be kept of debts owed to the school for 7 years. This will include all letters requesting money, reminders and invoices.
- The school will not initiate legal action to recover debts. However, we will refer uncollected debts to the local authority who may consider such action.

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher and Office Manager will ensure that:

- Letters requesting money are accurately recorded and those records maintained.
- Evidence of the steps taken by the school in pursuance of debt is recorded, including dates and times of both letters and phone calls.
- A final reminder is sent by recorded delivery to the debtor.
- Family cases will be judged fairly and according to the circumstances of the family involved.
- The privacy of the family involved will be respected and they will only be made known to those who need to know.
- The level of outstanding debt can be determined at any time.

3. The Governing Body:

- Will prescribe and regularly review the arrangements for debt recovery.

- Record approved actions in the minutes of the relevant meeting.
- Will adhere to the privacy arrangements.
- May delegate its responsibilities under this policy to the Headteacher and/or Office Manager.

4. Requirements of School

- Dinner money and residential visit costs should all be paid in advance either weekly, monthly or half termly.
- All parents should regularly come into school to check their account status.
- Any balance queries should be raised with the school office as soon as possible.
- Once arrears exceed £50, the Headteacher has the right to withdraw provision and parents/carers will be notified of this decision in writing.

5. The process for pursuing debts

Informal reminder:

- The debtor will be informally reminded, via text or e-mail, that they owe money to the school. Weekly contact will continue to be issued for all arrears below £50.
- **First reminder letter:**
- If debts exceed £50, a formal letter will be sent to the debtor requesting the accounts be brought up to date within 14 days.
- **Second reminder letter:**
- If, following the first formal reminder the debt remains outstanding, a second formal letter will be sent to the debtor giving a further 7 days to make payment.

At the Headteacher's discretion, parents may be offered a weekly or monthly payment plan. At this stage, parents may also be informed that service provision is withdrawn until such time the account is cleared. This mitigates risk to the school of arrears further increasing.

These letters allow the debtor every opportunity to settle their debt and ensure the school can prove all reasonable steps have been taken to recover the debt should the issue proceed further.

6. Final reminder letter:

If no response is received 7 days following the second reminder, the school will send a letter to the debtor advising that service provision is withdrawn with immediate effect. The debtor will also be informed that unless payment is received within 7 days, the matter will be referred to the local authority. This letter will be sent by recorded delivery to ensure the debtor has had every chance to respond.

7. Referral to Local Authority:

If payment is not received within 7 days of the final reminder letter being issued, at this juncture, a Sales Invoice will be raised via the local authority finance system and the debt will transfer to City of Sunderland. Parents will be required to make payment to City of

Sunderland quoting their invoice number. Should the account remain unpaid, the local authority may take legal action to recover the debt.

8. Waiving of debts

The waiving of debts is at the discretion of the Headteacher and the Governing Body. A debt may be waived when it is believed the debtor is experiencing serious financial hardship, or if all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted and it is believed it would not be cost effective to pursue the debt.

NOTE: The waiving of debts will generally only be considered for areas of curriculum enrichment e.g. school trips and residential visits. The waiving of debts will not occur for dinner money or anything else which is deemed to fall outside of the heading of 'voluntary contributions'.