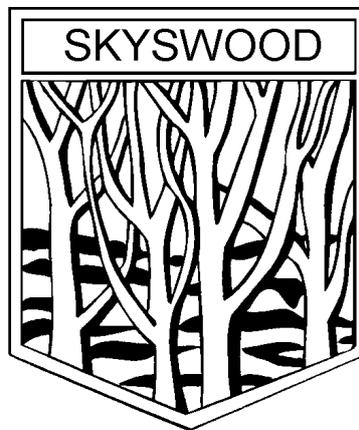


Skyswood Primary & Nursery School

Debt Recovery Policy



June 2020

Review Date – June 2022

The school has a duty to take 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.

The school's debt recovery policy observes the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out for schools, and any other legal requirements.

- A debt may only be written off with the prior approval of the relevant officer or body, which depends on the amount of the debt as follows:
 - Up to £500 – the Governing Body may authorise a write off, where income accrues to the school; otherwise the approval of the Finance Business Partner for Children Services is required.
 - Over £500 – the Governing Body, with agreement of the Finance Business Partner for Children Services.
- Where the Governing Body writes off debts this must be formally recorded and the record retained for seven years.
- The school must contact the Debt Management Team in respect of pursuing outstanding debts.
- The school will NOT write off any debt belonging to the County Council or another party. If in doubt as to the appropriate action to collect any such debts the school will seek advice promptly from officers of the County Council.

School staff are expected to follow the following procedures to secure the collection of all debts.

Recording of goods or services supplied where payment is not received in advance or 'at the point of sale'.

A record will be kept of all such supplies that details what was supplied, the value, the date(s) and the identity of the 'debtor', e.g. child, parent, hirer, etc.

Where invoices are raised these should state the date by which payment is due.

In all other cases correspondence with parents, etc. should indicate the maximum period that the school regards as reasonable before payment is overdue, e.g. contributions for a school trip should be received by, payment for items purchased should be sent to the school office by, etc.

The Headteacher should determine what the reasonable 'credit period' is if this is not otherwise specified, e.g. the governors may stipulate the maximum settlement period for school lettings in a separate Lettings Policy.

We are aware that for some families making numerous payments to school can be difficult, particularly where there is more than one child in the family. We endeavour to keep such payments to a minimum. However, in order to ensure that, as far as is possible, payments are made regularly and that debts do not accumulate we have set out the following guidance:

Dinner Money

Dinner money is paid in advance via Wise Pay and meals can be paid for on a weekly, half termly or termly basis. School dinners are not compulsory.

After 1 week	Reminder invoice sent
After 2 weeks	Second reminder invoice sent
If debt reaches £30.00	Referred to Hertfordshire Catering Ltd for collection.*
If debt remains unsettled at the end of the half term	Parent informed that school meals will no longer be provided until the debt is cleared and the child must bring in a packed lunch from home

*If the debt remains unsettled after pursuit by HCL, the debt is referred back to the school for payment out of the school budget share. Therefore, dinner money debts will be pursued vigorously by the school at all times.

Music Tuition

Lessons are invoiced termly in advance and must be paid by the end of the term prior to that to which the invoice relates.

Any parent/carer wishing for any alteration or termination of the agreed lesson needs to give a full half-term's notice in writing to the school.

Any invoices still outstanding when lessons are due to start will result in the parent/carer being informed that lessons will not be provided until full payment is received.

School Trips and Voluntary Contributions

Although payment is voluntary letters requesting payments are always clear in stating that where there are insufficient funds such trips or activities are not viable and will therefore not take place in future.

For long residential trips eg. Year 6 school journey, parents are issued with a payment record card well in advance of the trip. Payment deadlines are set in the months leading up to the trip giving an amount required by a certain date.

In exceptional circumstances the Headteacher approaches parents who are likely to find payments very difficult (or encourages such parents to approach the school). The Headteacher informs the parents that although school will endeavour to meet a small proportion of the costs, the bulk of the cost has to be met by them. Parents must give consideration to costs before confirming their child's place on the trip. Also, parents are made aware that once a place is confirmed, cancellation payments will come into effect if that place is later withdrawn. Parents of pupils who qualify for pupil premium will be offered financial support for school trips and the school will work alongside parents to apply for grants where appropriate.

Where deadlines are set, for class activities, day trips or longer trips;

1. After 1 week Letter sent to parents
2. After 2 weeks Second reminder sent

The school acknowledges that in some cases, where payments are made on a voluntary basis, there will be some that do not pay.

The amount of debt that the school is prepared to write off will be no more than 10% of the total cost of the trip or activity. A small budget is set each year in order to offset these costs. The school governors have agreed that the school will fund certain events, such as the cost for coach travel to rehearsals and performances during the school day where children are publicly representing the school (eg. events such as the Alban Arena and Abbey Carol Service).

The school will always investigate the possibility of securing grants to assist parents who find it difficult to support their children financially.

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue reminder'.

If a debtor asks for 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Headteacher/Resources Committee. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

In exceptional circumstances, such as the Covid-19 outbreak in March 2020, the school may have no option but to cancel trips. Both residential and day trips were cancelled as a result of coronavirus. Whenever trips are cancelled, parents will receive a refund for the cost of the trip, wherever possible.

Damaged Property

We acknowledge that 'accidents' happen and that there will be times when school equipment is broken. If this is a result of 'carelessness' then the child/children involved will obviously be spoken to about their actions/the incident but there will not be a request for reimbursement for broken property. If there was a situation of repeated carelessness then the parents of the child/children would be invited in to discuss the situation, with the hope of agreeing a sensible resolution. Each case will be taken on its own merits.

If property is damaged as a result of deliberate misconduct, or as a result of any action that is contrary to our school behaviour policy, then the child/family will be expected to replace the property that has been damaged. This could include possessions of other children or staff members as well as school property.

In the event of more substantial damage, such as acts of vandalism, (where the facts are established and perpetrators known), the school will always involve the parents/ carers in the first instance in an attempt to agree a reasonable resolution to compensate the school. The school will, where necessary, inform the police over any acts of vandalism and act upon the advice given.