Windy Arbor Primary School

DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Policy written by:	Miss J Taylor
Date:	09 June 2023
Ratified by Governors on:	
Signed:	
Date to be reviewed:	July 2025

At Windy Arbor Primary School we adopt a strict 'no debt' policy in respect of all services provided by the school . This Debt Management policy for parents and carers forms part of our strategy to make sure this is achieved. Voluntary contributions for activities are out of scope of this policy. For the purposes of this policy the term 'parent' or 'parents' will be used to represent any parent, guardian or carer.

Background

Where debts are allowed to build up, it often becomes harder for the person owing the money to pay. If a debt is not repaid then money which should be utilised to pay for children's education is used to subsidise these debts, which is an unacceptable use of public funds. We therefore hope that parents will understand why we adhere to this policy to avoid incidence of debts, and will give it their support in order to protect the education provided to all children in the school.

Therefore, in adopting this policy we aim to:

- reduce the risk of parents incurring large debts that they will struggle to pay off.
- ensure that the entire school budget is used to provide educational services to all of our children.

Services which parents are required to pay for

The services provided to pupils which parents are required to pay for include:

- School Meals (unless pupil is eligible for either Free School Meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals)
- Extended School facilities e.g Breakfast Club, holiday play scheme, tuck shop (toast)
- Extra-curricular clubs e.g. after school sports clubs such as cooking club,
- Chargeable Activities, e.g Residential School trips where board and lodging costs are chargeable to parents

Timing of payments

Parents are required to pay for all catering services provided by the school in advance by making a payment to their child's account on the Parent Pay system.
Payment for breakfast club is to be paid a week in advance, on the Monday of each week.
On the Parent Pay system, separate payment items are listed for every child, e.g. School Meals, Individual School Trips and chargeable After School Activities.
Parents can choose how frequently they make payments to the Parent Pay accounts; this could be termly, monthly or weekly.

Other Parent Pay Services
The Parent Pay system incorporates a Low Balance warning system which can be set up by each parent according to their own needs.
When the balance on a particular payment item for a particular child reaches a pre-set level decided by the parent, the system will automatically send a text or e-mail notification to the parent

Debt Management process

Where payment has not been made for a particular service, that service will no longer be provided to the pupil concerned.

For school meals, this means that the parent will be requested to provide a packed lunch or take the pupil home for lunch. For breakfast club or holiday club services, the pupil will not be allowed to attend and may lose their place.

The only exception to this is that if a parent genuinely forgets to make a payment in advance of the service being provided, the school may grant a debt allowance of one day only. This debt must be paid the following day, and all future services must be paid for in advance.

However, any family experiencing genuine financial hardship is encouraged to come and discuss this with the head teacher before accessing chargeable school services. The Council may also be able to provide support for families experiencing hardship.

In the exceptional instance that pupils have continued to access services and a debt has been incurred, parents will receive a letter requesting payment within 7 days. Any reasonable request for permission to pay in installments will be considered. However, in the absence of either payment or an agreed payment plan within this period, the school will have no choice but to proceed with formal debt recovery which may include legal action.

Applying for Remissions
If a parent believes that their children may qualify for Remissions to certain charges, as per the Charging Policy, they are welcome to contact the school office, Head Teacher in confidence for more details. As for Free School Meals, Remissions cannot be backdated, so it is important you talk to the school as soon as you are aware of any such need. Guidance for the Write off of Debts in detailed in Appendix 1.

Additional points to note

If your child is currently in Year 2 receiving Universal free school meals, please bear in mind that your child will not be able to have a free school dinner when they move to Year 3 in the September unless you quality for Free School meals through your benefits.

Please note your child's account will need to be in credit to receive services going forward.

If your child is in debt with one service, please note that you may be refused the use of another service. For example, if you have a debt with dinner payments you may not be able to use the residential/non educational trip facility.
Also if one of your children have left owing a debt, then they or a sibling will not be able to take up a place on residential trips etc until the debt has been fully repaid.