Langley Fitzurse Church of England School

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Amaze Excite Inspire

‘Jesus offers life in all its fullness’

**Debt Management Policy**

**March 2020**

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**Chair of Governors: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**INTRODUCTION**

The School has a duty to collect all monies owed and will take all reasonable measures to collect debts as part of its management of public funds.

This policy sets out the procedures for debt recovery and for the write-off of any debt, which is deemed to be irrecoverable.

Debts can be incurred through non or part payment of the following:

* Charges for residential visits
* Dinner money, including Free School Meals
* Early morning and after school clubs

Activities which are funded through voluntary contributions fall outside of the School’s debt management policy.

**CHARGES FOR RESIDENTIAL VISITS, ETC**

Some activities require a commitment from parents/carers to pay the whole cost, which is detailed in writing at outset, even if their child does not attend the visit for whatever reason. This is because the activities are priced and booked with the supplier in advance according to the number of pupils signed up to participate.

Parents/carers are asked to acknowledge and agree to this commitment by signing a declaration at outset.

If a parent/carer wishes to withdraw their child from the activity, they will be reminded in writing that the full cost still needs to be paid by the original deadline set for the activity.

If payment is not made by the deadline, the School will issue an invoice for the amount due. The invoice will stipulate payment is required within 30 days of the date of the invoice.

Should the invoice remain unpaid at the due date, steps 3 – 7 detailed below will be followed.

**DINNER MONEY (INCLUDING FREE SCHOOL MEALS)**

Dinner money debts are not permitted by the school’s catering contractor. All meal payments are administered by the school, via the ParentMail system, on behalf of the catering contractor. Parents are responsible for topping up their online dinner money ‘wallets’ in their ParentMail accounts with enough money to cover their child/rens meals. Should wallets contain insufficient funds to pay for ordered meals, the Finance Officer contacts the parent/carer concerned, by telephone and/or email, to remind them to ‘top up’. Should a parent/carer fail to ‘top up’ despite being reminded, the Finance Officer will discuss the next step with the Headteacher. Depending on the value of the debt, it is possible that no further meals will be provided to the child/ren until it has been settled in full.

There are occasions when a pupil may continue to claim Free School Meals (FSM) for a short period after their FSM eligibility has ceased. This period results from the timescales involved in either the parent advising the Local Authority (LA) about their change of circumstances, or the LA finding out through their regular checking processes that the child/ren is no longer eligible for FSM.

In these situations, the parent must pay for any meals claimed after the date their children became ineligible. This money is owed to the school, and not the catering contractor (because the FSM have already been recorded on the weekly meal figures that the catering contractor uses to invoice the school).

In order to recover the money owed, steps 1- 7 detailed below will be followed.

**EARLY MORNING CLUB & AFTER SCHOOL CLUB/S FEES**

Parents are asked to arrange payment of club fees at the time of booking to secure a place for their child/ren at the club. The Finance Officer contacts any parents/carers who have not paid within three weeks of the start of term. Should payment still not be received after this contact (without a valid reason) the child/ren’s name will be removed from the club register/s and the parent/carer informed.

In order to recover any money owed for club sessions attended, steps 1-7 detailed below will be followed.

**NEGOTIATION OF PAYMENT TERMS**

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible. However, they may request ‘repayment terms’ to spread the cost of the amount they owe. Any such requests should be addressed to the Headteacher.

The requests will be considered sensitively by the Headteacher for debts £100.00 and under, and by the Leadership & Resources Committee for debts over £100.00. Details of the agreed repayment terms will be recorded and retained by the Finance Officer.

**UNPAID CHEQUES**

Cash and cheque payments from parents/carers are now infrequent. However, if a cheque payment has been made to the School which is subsequently returned unpaid by the drawer’s bank, the parent/carer will be informed by letter immediately. The parent will be asked to make alternative arrangements to pay the amount due, by the due date. The School’s bank will usually levy a charge for handling the unpaid cheque, and the parent will be requested to reimburse the School with any bank charge levied.

**ACTION IN THE EVENT OF NON-PAYMENT OF MONIES OWED**

1. When a debt is first identified, the Finance Officer will write to the parent via the Parentmail communications system and give details of the money owed, requesting prompt payment. The Headteacher will be informed.
2. If the debt has not been paid within 14 days, and the parent has not contacted the school to discuss the issue, an invoice will be raised for the amount due. This will be sent through pupil post, along with a reminder letter signed by the Headteacher, asking for settlement within 30 days.
3. If the debt has still not been paid after 30 days, a more formal reminder letter will be sent through Royal Mail requesting payment within 14 days.
4. If the debt has still not been settled after 14 days, a final reminder letter will be sent by Royal Mail recorded delivery, requesting payment within 7 days.
5. The Headteacher may write-off an outstanding debt of up to £100.00, provided that the appropriate follow-up action outlined above has been taken. For example, it may not prove cost effective to spend further administrative time in dealing with the recovery of a small debt. For debts between £50.00 and £100.00, details of the debtor, amount of write-off, and reason for no further action being taken will be reported to the next Leadership & Resources Committee meeting and duly minuted.
6. If the outstanding debt is between £100.00 - £500.00, the Leadership & Resources Committee may write it off provided the appropriate follow-up action outlined above has been taken. A write-off at this level will only be considered in extenuating circumstances. If the Leadership & Resources Committee do not wish to write-off the debt, advice will be sought from the appropriate department at the Local Authority.
7. If the debt is higher than £500.00, the Finance Officer will inform the appropriate department at the Local Authority and seek their advice.

A log of all correspondence, including any telephone calls, will be kept by the Finance Officer for audit and legal purposes. Records of write-offs, with reasons and approval details will be retained for seven years.

**OTHER NOTES**

Charges for music lessons with peripatetic teachers is an arrangement between the parent and the music teacher and the school no longer becomes involved in the booking or payment arrangements for music lessons.

Occasionally the School will issue invoices to other local schools/agencies, for example when sharing the cost of an activity or service. Simple reminders will be telephoned or emailed to the relevant school/agency should the invoice not be paid within 30 days. If no payment is forthcoming, then the matter will be referred to the Local Authority for advice.

Langley Fitzurse School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

This school aims to be part of the wider community, through fostering Christian values and the development of spirituality through reflection, to enhance relationships.