



DEBT RECOVERY POLICY
ST AUGUSTINE'S C of E (VA)
JUNIOR SCHOOL

Head teacher	Sign and date:	
Chair of Governing Body	Sign and date:	

Date for review: Summer Term 2018
(This policy will be reviewed annually)

St. Augustine's Junior C of E (VA) Junior School

Debt Recovery Policy



Introduction

The school is in regular receipt of monies for school dinners, school uniform, after-school clubs, music lessons, residential/day trips and swimming lessons. In all communication with parents/ carers, payments for the goods and services offered through the school are asked for, in most cases in advance or a clear payment schedule is communicated to parents. This policy details the School's approach to recovering money owed to the school where activities or a provision has been undertaken by a child and there has been no payment received for the activity or provision.

School Dinner Money

It is normal and expected practice that children are asked to pay for the school dinners to be taken that week along with the dinner selection slip on a Monday. However, many children pay for their school dinners on a daily basis and others may pay a lump sum on account and the school dinners are drawn down against this balance.

School dinner money is logged on 'School Cash Office' as and when received by Office Staff during the school week and the money is banked weekly. School dinner monies owed to the school are checked regularly on a Friday afternoon and a dinner money statement is sent to the parents where money owed to the school is greater than £11.00 (being the cost of a full week of school dinners). See **Appendix A** for template of letter that is sent out to parents/ carers with the school dinner money statement. There is an expectation that whilst in arrears, the parent/carer provides his/her child with a packed lunch until the outstanding balance is settled. If a packed lunch is not provided to the child in this situation, a telephone call will be made to the parent/carer to ask for a packed lunch to be brought into the school, where practicable. Where parents/carers do not respond to the school dinner money letter and statement, the debt recovery policy is adhered to as detailed below.

Day Trips and Swimming Lessons

Money for day trips and swimming lessons is asked for at the time of returning the permission slip. As a school can only ask for a voluntary contribution for any curricular activity undertaken off-site that incurs a cost to the school, the school is not in a position to ask for payment if a parent is unwilling or unable to do so. However, where the level of contributions from parents and carers is significantly low, there may be a need to cancel the trip as the school budget cannot subsidise these activities.

Residential

Residential are offered to all pupils at the school. Every effort is made to keep the cost of these trips to a minimum so that they are affordable to the majority of our children. Each parent/ carer is given a letter outlining the deadline for payments and every consideration is given to make sure the time between payment requests is considerable so that parents/carers have time to put aside money for the next payment. The school is happy to discuss individual payment plans where appropriate. Where money is owed to the school e.g. school dinner money, music lessons, your child will not be able to participate in any paid-for residential until the outstanding balance is recovered in full. The debt recovery procedure is followed as highlighted below if there is an outstanding balance owed for residential trips.

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Music lessons

Music lessons are invoiced for at the end of the term for the following term's tuition and payment is expected for the whole term in full in advance. As this is an external provision hosted by the school, if payment is not forthcoming, the pupil will not be allowed to undertake the private tuition and his/her place will be offered to the next person on the waiting list. Pupils may be allowed to pay for music lessons on a weekly basis; prior permission must be given for this payment method in writing by the Head teacher or School Business Manager. The debt recovery procedure is followed as highlighted below if there is an outstanding balance owed for music lessons.

External After-School Clubs

There are several after-school clubs hosted by the school where the School Office collects payments from the parents/carers and the money is handed directly to the third party provider. If the payment is outstanding, the child is denied a place in the club. Where the school pays for the third party provision and recharges to the child, parents/carers are able to pay in advance or on a weekly basis. The debt recovery procedure, as detailed below, is followed if money is owed to the school for these clubs.

Debt Recovery Procedure:

1. If there is no response to communications e.g. dinner money letter (Appendix A), dinner money statements, parentmail alerts, the office administrator will contact the parent/carer by phone.
2. Confirmation is sought as to when the outstanding balance will be settled and the parent is expected to come to the office and settle that amount as agreed.
3. A repayment schedule may be discussed verbally at this time with the parent, depending on the amount owed and the circumstances of the family.
4. If the parent/carer does not settle the outstanding balance as agreed with the office administrator, the School Business Manager will contact the parent to ask for an explanation and seek again a repayment date, if appropriate.
5. If this process is not successful, the Head teacher will make a call directly to the parent/carer to discuss the outstanding debt. The parent/carer is welcome to come into school to discuss the outstanding debt in person, if preferred. The Head teacher will agree a repayment schedule with the parent/ carer and a letter (Appendix B) will be sent out for written agreement and acknowledgement of the repayment schedule from the parent/carer.
6. If the Head teacher is unable to contact the parent/ carer by phone, then a letter (Appendix C) will be sent to the parent/carer inviting him/her to a meeting with the Head teacher.
7. Once a detailed repayment schedule is agreed, the letter in Appendix B will be sent to the parent/carer for his/her agreement (as for step 5).
8. All communication and contact with parents is recorded by the Office Administrator on the 'Debt Recovery Contact Record' in Appendix D.
9. As a last resort, advice will be sought from the Local Authority how to address repayment of the outstanding debt.
10. If the amount is significant and material, the School may be forced to seek redress through the 'Small Claims' court.

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Whilst the matter is being settled and the debt has not been recovered in full, the child unfortunately **is not allowed to participate in any paid activities at the school (e.g. residentials, music lessons)**, and in the cases of school dinner money arrears, **is not able to have a school dinner and must bring in a packed lunch.**

Summary

It is school policy to offer children a rich and diverse extra-curricular provision. Every effort is made to ensure that costs are kept to a minimum whilst quality is assured. There is open and transparent communication with parents/carers to facilitate the most appropriate repayment of any debts outstanding. However, the school cannot subsidise these activities (unless a decision is made by the Head teacher that the additional cost can be justifiably paid from pupil premium) and the debt recovery procedure is adhered to consistently and fairly. The 'Debt Recovery Policy' is hosted on the school website and distributed to all new parents in the admissions pack. Every effort is made to communicate this policy to parents and carers and that the contents of the policy are clear and fully understood. **Deviation from the 'Debt Recovery Policy' is only allowed in circumstances where the Head teacher has met with the parent/ carer and has given her explicit permission and it is agreed in writing.**

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Appendix A

Date.....

Parent / Carer of _____

Please be aware that your child's dinner money account is currently showing an outstanding balance of _____ (dinner money statement attached).

I am sure you are aware that our school policy states that school dinners should be paid for in advance each week and that should there be an outstanding balance of more than £11.00 (the equivalent to a full week's meals) we will be unable to provide any more school meals until the balance has been cleared. We would also like to bring to your attention that if the outstanding balance is not cleared and the situation persists, your child will be unable to participate in any paid for activities at school such as paid clubs and residentials (see 'Debt Recovery Policy' for full details).

As a school we try to work alongside and support our families; our aim is to be as flexible as possible in our approach to doing this. Therefore, can you please arrange for the balance of the dinner money account to be paid into school before the end of the day on _____ so that we can avoid having to withhold the school meal service.

If you would like to discuss the outstanding balance or any other matters then please feel free to either pop into the school office or contact the school directly on 01733 563566.

Kind regards

School Office

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Appendix B

Dear _____,

Recovery of monies owed to the school

As you will be aware, as of today, you owe _____ to the school for _____.

To date, we have followed school policy notifying you of this debt. As per our records, you last made a payment towards reducing your debt on _____, the amount being _____.

As you will appreciate, it is normal to pay for any goods or services at the outset and you would never expect not to pay. We would ask that you consider this whilst not having paid your outstanding debt. Further, we would like to highlight that considerable school resources have been re-diverted to address the issue of your debt owed to the school, which should normally be dedicated to your child's teaching and learning requirements.

Following our conversation, we have agreed the following repayment schedule:

Repayment Amount: £ _____

Frequency: weekly/monthly (please circle)

First repayment date: _____

Please be assured that we would like to support you in repaying the money owed to the school. However, unfortunately your child will not be allowed to attend any paid clubs, take part in any residentials or have school dinners until this matter is addressed and the outstanding balance is recovered or the repayment schedule is being met without exception. If the situation persists, we will have to seek advice directly from the Local Authority or, as a last resort, may be obliged to seek repayment through the 'Small Claims' court.

Attached below is an agreement which we ask you to sign to show your commitment to repaying the debt and that the repayment schedule is affordable and you will endeavour to adhere to this schedule.

Regards

Mrs N Pierce
Head teacher

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Appendix B (cont'd)

Agreement to debt repayment schedule St. Augustine's C of E (VA) Junior School

I, _____, agree to repay £_____ on a weekly/monthly basis (please circle), commencing _____ in order to repay my debt of _____ in full.

I have read the 'Debt Recovery Policy' and fully understand the contents of the policy and the debt recovery procedure that the school adheres to.

I understand that my child will not be allowed to participate in any further paid activities or provisions within the school until this debt is cleared.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix C

Dear _____,

Recovery of monies owed to the school

As you will be aware, as of today, you owe _____ to the school for _____.

To date, we have followed school policy notifying you of this debt. As per our records, you last made a payment towards reducing your debt on _____, the amount being _____.

I have tried to contact you by phone with no success. Therefore, could you please contact the School Office directly to arrange an appointment to meet with me to discuss the repayment of the money owed to the school.

Please be assured that we would like to support you in repaying the money owed to the school. However, unfortunately, as per school policy, your child will not be allowed to attend any paid clubs, take part in any residentials or have school dinners until this matter is addressed and the outstanding balance is recovered. As per the school's 'Debt Recovery Policy' if the situation persists, we will have to seek advice directly from the Local Authority or, as a last resort, may be obliged to seek repayment through the 'Small Claims' court.

I look forward to meeting with you in person and if you have any queries in the meantime, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Regards

Mrs N Pierce
Head teacher

