

DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

As from *Monday 3rd November 2014*, the Governors of Coppice Junior School have adopted 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 are adopting 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 Before and After School Club, holiday play scheme
- Music tuition
- Extra-curricular clubs e.g. after school sports clubs, selective schools club, orchestra etc.
- 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 services provided by the school in advance by making a payment to their child's account on the Parent Pay system.

On the Parent Pay system, separate payment items are listed for every child, e.g. School Meals, Individual School Trips and 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 any before and after school 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. 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 Headteacher 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 14 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.

The Den

- Invoices for payment of sessions booked for the following month the Den are sent out on 20th of each month.
- The invoice is to be paid by the end of the month.
- If no payment is received 5 working days after the end of the month a late payment letter is sent home and a £10 penalty is added to the invoice.
- If no payment is received after a further five working days a notice is sent explaining that the child's place at the Den will be withdrawn at the end of the month if payment is not received before the next invoice is sent out on the 20th.
- At all times parents are encouraged to speak to the Den staff if they are experiencing difficulties in paying so that a personal payment plan can be set up.