



**WESTFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY**

**REFUND AND DEBT POLICY**

**Date ratified: January 2021**  
**Ratified by: FULL GOVERNING BODY**  
**Date to be reviewed: January 2024**

**REFUNDS:**

The school aims to implement a consistent system by which refunds may be given to parents, and to ensure parents are aware that refunds will be given by the school where appropriate.

**Dinner Money**

When children leave the school or when granted back-dated free school meals, money will be reclaimed from Herts County Council who will send the refund directly to the parent.

When children leave the school at the end of Year 6 if they have a credit balance on their dinner money account, the school will make a cash refund on the last day of the academic year. If there is a younger sibling at the school then the funds will be transferred to them.

**Milk Money**

No refunds are given for milk not taken. Parents are informed of this when first ordering milk.

**School / Residential Trips**

The school reserves the right not to refund if child is absent on the day / duration of the visit.

If a trip is cancelled by the school, full refunds will be offered to parents.

**Method Of Repayment (Excluding School Meals)**

Sums under £5.00 are paid in cash and signed for by the parent as received (pro-forma used). Sums over £5.00 are paid by cheque from the appropriate account and signed for by the parent as received (pro-forma used). Payments made via WisePay will be refunded online to the payment card.

**DEBTS:**

The school will take all 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 debt recovery policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the Financial Handbook for Schools and any other legal requirements. In particular:

- the Governing Body will not write-off any debt belonging to the school which exceeds £500. Any sums above this will be referred to the relevant person at Hertfordshire County Council for approval and the formal agreement of the County Council's Finance Director obtained before writing-off. (If any debtor has a number of debts which together exceed the write-off limit then these will be treated as a total amount).
- A formal record of any debts written off will be maintained and this will be retained for 7 years.
- The school will not initiate any legal action to recover debts, but will refer any debts which it has not been able to collect (unless a decision to write-off the debt is demonstrably a reasonable course of action) to the County Secretary to consider taking legal or other action to recover the debt.

- 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 adhere to 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 Hirings and Lettings policy.

#### **Initial reminders**

Initial reminders may be informal and made either in person (when a parent comes to collect/drop off the child), by telephone or text message.

Reminder texts will be sent as and when necessary. With regard to school dinner debts, a text or phone call would be sent after a number of reminders advising that non-payment by a specified date would mean that their child was no longer able to have school dinners.

#### **First reminder letter**

A formal reminder letter will be issued after two weeks from any informal reminder / the date of supply.

#### **Second reminder letter**

A second reminder letter will be issued in two weeks after the First reminder letter.

Copies of letters issued will be kept on file as formal written evidence should a debt need to be taken beyond two reminder letters

#### **Failure to respond to reminders / settle a debt**

If no response is received from the reminders issued, a letter will be sent to the debtor advising them that the matter will be referred to the County Secretary's Department, Legal and Administration.

At the discretion of the Headteacher the debtor may be advised that they will be required to pay in advance for all future supplies or the supply will no longer be available to them. This decision and its basis will be recorded.

For the non-payment of school meals, the school will request the parent to supply the child with lunch until the debt is paid.

### **Negotiation of repayment terms**

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. A record of all such agreements will be kept. A letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

The Finance and Premises Committee will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further 'credit' and will be required to pay in advance in future.

### **Costs of debt recovery**

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Finance and Premises Committee will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor. This decision and its basis will be recorded. The debtor will be formally advised that they will be required to pay the additional costs incurred by the school in recovering the debt.

### **Reporting of outstanding debt levels**

The Finance Administrator will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is known / can be determined at any time.

The Headteacher will review the level of outstanding debts every term to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective, and will report any significant debts to the governing body.

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### **Bad debts**

Please refer to Schedule of Financial Delegation to show limits to debt recovery. Write-off of any debt over £50 requires the written approval of the Finance and Premises Committee up to a maximum of £500.

A record of the write-off, the reason for it, and the approval for it, will be retained for 7 years.

Any debt belonging to the County Council will be referred to the appropriate officer for consideration/action without delay once the school has taken reasonable measures to collect the debt (i.e. has followed the reminder notification procedures set out above).

In the case of school meal debts the procedure set out in the School Meals & Milk Administration Handbook will be followed.

### **Policy Review**

This policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Full Governing Body in January 2021.

It is due to be reviewed in January 2024.

### Record of Debts Written-Off

Debtor	Details of Debt	Amount (£)	Invoice reference & Date (Where applicable)	Reason for write-off (Inc. details of measures taken to secure payments)	Authorisation of write-off (Inc. date)