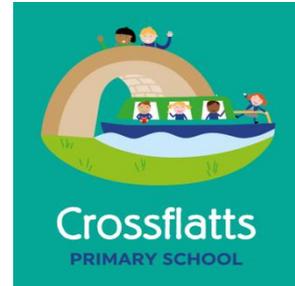


Crossflatts Primary School



Debt Recovery Policy

Approved by the governing body on: _____ February 2023

February 2025

To be reviewed on: _____ *Unless advised of change*

Signed on behalf of the governing body: _____

NB. This guidance will be retained for a period of 7 years from replacement.

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Statement of intent

Crossflatts Primary is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils, regardless of financial circumstances, and has established policies and procedures to ensure that no child is discriminated against by our offering of school trips, activities and educational extras.

While this is the case, Crossflatts Primary must have a policy in place to ensure the repayment and recuperation of any outstanding debts incurred by the school on behalf of a pupil. 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.

Each case is to be treated individually and the circumstances that have led to the outstanding debt will be taken into account to determine the best course of action and whether it is fair and reasonable to pursue the debt in its entirety if at all. Crossflatts Primary is committed to adhering to legal requirements regarding charging for school food, activities and materials, and meeting all statutory guidance provided by the DfE.

Signed by:

N Bennett

Headteacher

February 2023

Date:

M Morgan

Chair of Governors

February 2023

Date:

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy will adhere to the relevant legislation and statutory guidance surrounding school payments and debt recovery, including the following:

- DfE (2018) 'Charging for school activities'
- DfE (2018) 'Schemes for financing schools'

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. As a general rule, to avoid incurring debts, payments for materials and services provided by the school should be collected in advance or at the point of sale.

2.2. Any person(s) involved in the monitoring, recording and pursuing of debts owed to the school must formally record any information gathered and actions taken – data which is to be kept by the school for a period of seven years.

2.3. The governing body is responsible for:

- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis.
- Regularly reviewing details of its debts and what recovery action is needed.
- Consultations if legal services are required for debt recovery.
- Adhering to the privacy rights of pupils and their guardians in all cases.
- Deciding to leave a case of debt recovery to the decision of the headteacher.

2.4. The headteacher is responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy and ensuring that all staff, parents and pupils are aware of their responsibilities.
- Recording debt reminders, and ensuring those records are maintained for a period of seven years – this includes dates and times of letters, phone calls, emails, conversations or any other correspondence.
- Ensuring instances of debt are judged on an individual basis, with consideration of the nature of the debt and the circumstances of the family involved.
- Ensuring the privacy of the pupil and their family will be protected by all staff.
- Ensuring the level of outstanding debt owed to the school can be determined at short notice.

2.5. The School Business Manager and the administration team will ensure:

- Debt reminders are recorded, and those records maintained for a period of seven years – dates and times of letters, phone calls, emails, conversations or any other correspondence.
- Instances of debt are judged on an individual basis, with consideration of the nature of the debt and the circumstances of the family involved.

- The privacy of the pupil and their family will be protected by all staff.
- The level of outstanding debt owed to the school can be determined at short notice.

3. Acceptable 'credit period'

- 3.1. In the case of a debt, the Headteacher and Governing Body resources committee should agree upon a 'credit period' within which the debtor can pay the outstanding sum before debt recovery procedures are exercised. This period of time may vary, at the discretion of the Headteacher and Governing Body resources committee, dependent on the nature and size of the debt.

4. Declaring outstanding debt levels

- 4.1. The headteacher and Governing Body resources committee will review the level of outstanding debts every quarter to determine whether current debt levels are acceptable and whether current methods and procedures to recover debts are effective.
- 4.2. Any individual cases of debt that are deemed to require intervention will then be pursued by the procedure starting from section five of this policy.

5. Debt recovery procedures

- 5.1. Where there is an outstanding payment yet to be received and the acceptable credit period has been surpassed, an official invoice should be created outlining the value and reason for the debt, as well as the debtor's identity.
- 5.2. Upon creating the invoice and stipulating a date on which it must be paid by, there is acknowledgement from the school that the debt has been set up.

6. Verbal and written overdue payment reminders

- 6.1. **Initial verbal reminder** – informal in-person/telephone/email/text correspondence notifying person of debt (date and time should be officially recorded).
- 6.2. **First formal written reminder** – an official, dated letter addressed to the debtor should be written up two weeks after the first informal reminder and should acknowledge that it took place. At this point the child will be unable to attend the club if the debt is not paid, or there no discussion regarding a payment plan, this is to ensure debts do no become unmanageable and prevent large amounts of debt.
- 6.3. **Second formal written reminder** – this should come two weeks after the second reminder, citing the details of both previous reminders and stating that concerted efforts have been made to make the person aware that an outstanding debt is overdue.

7. Failure to respond

- 7.1. If these reminders are not responded to, another letter will be sent to the debtor advising them that the case has been referred to the school's legal advisors and Governing body resources committee. It is then for these parties to agree on a time-frame for a repayment or, if necessary, a payment plan for separate instalments.
- 7.2. The school expects that the debt should be repaid as soon as possible, particularly after repeated reminders; however, this can be negotiated at the discretion of the governing body.
- 7.3. There is case where the debtor is deemed to be refusing to pay without sufficient reason, the school may consider involving the LA's legal services to resolve the issue and recuperate owed funds.

8. Negotiation of debt repayment

- 8.1. It is expected that the debt should be repaid as soon as possible, particularly after repeated reminders; however, this can be negotiated at the discretion of the resources committee, particularly if the circumstances in section nine of this policy apply.
- 8.2. If there is a case where the debtor is deemed to be refusing to pay without sufficient reason, the school may consider involving LAs and the council's legal services to resolve the issue and recuperate owed funds.

9. Exceptional circumstances and remissions

- 9.1. The school must ensure that guardians of pupils are aware of the help the school can extend to those in financial difficulty. Guardians who may be eligible for remissions are those in receipt of any of the following benefits:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
 - Child Tax Credit, provided that they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
 - Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - Universal Credit
- 9.2. In a case where there is, or it is suspected that there is, an overdue debt from a family who may qualify for remissions, details of the different types of bursary available should be sent to the debtor in question.

- 9.3. The Governing Body resources committee is not guaranteed to but may decide to waive or reduce the outstanding debt in these circumstances.

10. Debt recovery costs

- 10.1. In addition to the remission allowances outlined in section nine, it may be advisable to waive or partially waive debts where it is deemed that it does not make financial sense to continue allocating time and resources to pursuing.
- 10.2. The Governing Body resources committee will review any case where a debt may be waived, and come to a final decision based on the value of costs versus value of the debt.

11. Monitoring and review

- 11.1. The school's Debt Recovery Policy will come under review annually, and changes via any updated legislation will be made accordingly.