



DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

Overview

1.0 Evergreen School recognises that the physical and emotional wellbeing of the children in its care is of paramount importance. The School however has a legal and moral obligation to apply the resources it receives fairly, for the benefit of all pupils, and is not in a position to subsidise any one child or group of children. It has therefore adopted a debt recovery policy aimed at supporting parents/carers in avoiding accumulation of debts in relation to services within its schools such as school dinners (but will equally apply to any after school activity clubs, breakfast and extended day clubs that may be implemented in the future). Parents/carers are expected to pay in advance for services provided by the school and this can be paid using the online payment system, SIMS Gateway App.

1.1 All debts owed to a school including those due from parents/carers have an impact on the school budget as the school has to meet the actual costs incurred. This means that any money owed to the school diminishes the resources that can be provided to all children. We hope that parents/carers understand this and that they will make every effort to avoid owing the school money.

School meals debt

2.0 It is the duty of parents/cares, not the school, to provide a midday meal for their child. Parents/carers may take their child home, with prior arrangement, to discharge this obligation but if they elect to leave the child on the school site during the lunch period, they must either provide a packed lunch for the child or request that the school provide a lunch. Parents/carers whose child is not entitled to Free School Meals are expected to pay for these in advance. The School reserves the right not to provide a school meal in circumstances where payment has not been made.

If parents/carers believe their child may be eligible for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that parents/carers use it if they qualify. We will help parents/carers with their application as required to find out if they are eligible.

2.1 If a parent/carer genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 5 meals. However, this accrued debt must be paid within one week and future meals must be paid for in advance before any meal is provided. If the debt is not cleared, parents should either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case where a debt payment is neither received within the allowed time nor a packed lunch provided, the school office will telephone the parents/carers requesting that they come to the school to make an immediate payment and/or provide their child with a packed lunch.

2.2 The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against the parents/carers to recover the debt. Children's Social Services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their child at lunchtime. See below for the recovery timetable.

Debt recovery

3.0 Evergreen School will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debt as part of its management of public funds. The school's debt recovery policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and any other legal requirements.

Reporting of outstanding debt levels

4.0 The Head Teacher will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is regularly monitored. Suitable records will be maintained to detail individual debts and the total value of debt to the school in order that it can be determined at any time and reported to the School's Governing

Body. The Governing Body will review the level of outstanding debts every term to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective.

Debt Recovery Procedures

5.0 Where payment from the parents/carers has not been received in advance, or at the end of the first week, the following process will be applied:

- An initial reminder will be sent to parents/carers by letter and a text will be sent to the parents/carers informing them of the letter. A reminder is sent a maximum of 14 days after the original debt became due.
- If the debt remains unpaid after a further 7 days, the school will contact the parents/carers by telephone.
- A formal reminder letter will be issued 2 weeks after the initial reminder. If action is to proceed further, it is necessary to prove that all reasonable attempts have been made to recover the debt, and that these attempts have been made in a timely manner, i.e. at the time the debt first became overdue.
- If there is no response to the second formal reminder letter the parents/carers will be invited to meet the Head Teacher to discuss how the debt will be settled. An official invoice may be issued for the full amount at the discretion of the School Business Manager. This will trigger the School's recovery process and may be referred to the legal department. The decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Governing Body and the parents/carers.
- Within 10 days of the second formal reminder letter a decision should be made regarding further activity, which may include legal action.

Negotiation or Repayment Terms

6.0 Parents/carers in debt to the school are expected to settle the amount by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the initial reminder. If they are unable to pay the school will take into account all of the circumstances. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be taken.

6.1 Repayment terms may be negotiated at the discretion of the Head Teacher. A record of all such agreements entered will be retained.

6.2 In all cases a letter will be issued to the parents/carers confirming the agreed terms for repayment. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

Bad Debts

The write-off any debt over £250 requires the written approval of the Governing Body. A record of the write-off, the reason for it, and the approval will be recorded in the minutes of the Governing Body. If the debt exceeds £500, and as Evergreen School is a state funded school, the write-off will require referral to the Local Authority.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Governing Body will assess the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. Adherence to this policy will be monitored by the school's Governing Body. This Policy will be reviewed by the Head Teacher on a three-yearly cycle.