

Name of Policy: Debt Management Policy	Version/Last Review Date: May 2021 (V2)
Statutory documents linked to policy: Financial Handbook Other Policies linked to this policy: Financial Procedures Charging policy	Previous Review Date: March 2021 (V1)
Governor Committee Responsible: Finance & Property	Next Review Date: March 2024 (V2)

All children will achieve their full potential, with holistic support, whilst enjoying and driving their own learning, gaining self-respect and self belief. Our classroom extends to rich, exiting environments within the forest, the beach, the city and the community as a whole.

DEBT POLICY – SCHOOL MEALS

This policy should also be read as an appendix to the Charging Policy.

Introduction

West Newcastle Academy provides most services free of charge to parents, there is no charge for Outdoor Learning, swimming, visits or end of term celebrations. Funding these activities is a challenge and requires the prompt payment of income, including school meals.

School meals are also provided free of charge for families in receipt of FSM and for other families a charge is made.

If parents/carers believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, please contact Free School Meal eligibility checking service through Newcastle City Council. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. Help is available with your application at the school office.

The procedure below outlines the steps taken to support families experiencing difficulties and reassures parents that no child will go hungry. Parents are encouraged to contact the Family Link Worker if they have any concerns or problems with payment, no matter how short term.

Parents/carers pay in advance for the school lunch using bank transfer to the School's Unity Bank account (preferred method) and a weekly reminder is provided for parents/carers who forget to pay in advance (via Scholar Pack) on a Friday.

Letters are sent out each month with a statement of account for each child and phone calls/meetings are used to support parents/carers in paying an amount they can afford based on circumstances.

The debt policy below is administered fairly to ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available. If there is a shortfall in school meal income then this may have an impact on resources, teaching staff or activities.

The aims of the policy are:

- To ensure a professional, consistent and efficient approach to debt collection
- To ensure that debts are managed in accordance with legislative provisions and best practice
- To treat the individual consistently and fairly regardless of age, sex, gender, disability and sexual orientation and to ensure that the individuals' rights under GDPR are protected.

Reporting of outstanding debt levels

The headteacher 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 owed to the school, in order that

the balance can be determined at any time and reported to the Finance Committee and/or Governing Body.

The Finance Committee and/or 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

Acceptable 'credit period'

Two weeks is considered a 'credit settlement period' before the debt recovery procedures are applied. During this time the school will make every effort to engage in a dialogue with the parent/carers -if Parents ignore or resist engagement with staff to resolve the debt, the school will start the recovery process as follows:

Initial 'overdue payment' reminder – once the debt allowance of 10 meals is reached, the school office will contact the parent and request that the debt is paid within two weeks. This reminder will be made either in person (when a parent/carer comes to collect/drop off the child), or by telephone. The date of the initial reminder should be recorded on Scholar Pack CONFIDENTIAL.



First 'overdue payment' reminder letter – this is a formal reminder letter, issued two 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. The date of the initial reminder letter should be recorded in Scholar Pack.



Second 'overdue payment' reminder letter – this will be issued two weeks after the First Reminder Letter. The date of the second reminder letter will be recorded in Scholar Pack. Failure to respond to this letter and/or failure to attend a proposed meeting could result in the school passing the debt to an external debt collection agency.



Negotiation of repayment plans – WNA will make every effort to work with parents/carers to prevent debts mounting. In certain circumstances the School may agree a repayment plan with a parent/carer. If a mutual agreement cannot be reached or an agreed repayment plan is not complied with, this could result in the school passing the debt to an external debt collection agency as a last resort.