



Sand Hutton and Warthill Federated

admin@sandhutton.n-yorks.sch.uk / admin@warthill.n-yorks.sch.uk

www.sandhutton.n-yorks.sch.uk / www.warthill.n-yorks.sch.uk

DEBT RECOVERY POLICY FOR PARENTS

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Introduction

The Governing Body has a duty to ensure the school receives all the funds to which it is entitled. This policy has been created to ensure the appropriate procedures are in place to deal with debts and the recovery of assets.

It encompasses all debts owed to the school including, but not limited to, payments for goods, services, school trips and school meal payments.

Rationale

This Policy has been compiled recognising the difficulties placed on Headteachers in balancing the social welfare of pupils with the management of the school budget. This policy is fair and just and sets out a clear procedure for families. By introducing a zero tolerance debt policy, we aim to reduce the risk of parents incurring large debts that they will struggle to pay and minimise the amount of staff time taken chasing up outstanding payments.

As the Schools are responsible for managing payments and arrears for school meals and other services, these are processed through the main school budget. Where debts are incurred, the school budget has to pay for them; this means that money that should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

School Meals

The Schools are under a duty to provide free school meals to those who are eligible, but there is no obligation beyond this. If arrears exist, the Schools can refuse to continue to provide meals.

You do not have to pay for school lunch if you receive any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs) that does not exceed £16,190
- Working Tax Credit 'run-on' – the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

Further information about applying for a free school meal is available at the Local Authority website:

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/Residents/Education-and-schools/School-meals/Free-school-meals.aspx>

Parents, please note: it is your responsibility to apply for free school meals and to ensure that the Local Authority is kept up-to-date with your circumstances.

Currently infant children (Reception, year 1 and year 2 pupils) are entitled to a Universal Infant Free School Meal. This is not the same as a free school meal from the Local Authority.

Other Services

The Schools provide a number of other services; these include visits, extra-curricular activities and residential school trips.

All payments for chargeable services should be made **in advance** using the online payment system if at all possible or direct to school.

On the Online payment system, separate payment items are listed for every child, for example, lunches, visits etc.

Parents can choose how frequently they make payments to their accounts. This could be weekly, monthly or termly. Please be aware that there is a processing cost associated with every payment. This cost is met by Sand Hutton & Warthill Primary School. The fewer payments parents make, the lower the charge paid by the school for the online service and the more funds available for our children's education.

If you have any difficulty accessing the system please contact the school office immediately.

Debt Recovery

Where payment for services is not received in advance and arrears accumulate longer than one week, the following procedures apply:

Informal reminders – Parents will be informally reminded in person, by text, email or telephone call that monies are owed.

First formal reminder letter – If the debt remains unpaid despite informal reminders, a formal letter will be sent reminding the parent of previous communication and requesting immediate payment.

Parents are able to set up a payment plan to bring the arrears up-to-date by contacting the school office

Payment Plan – if payments agreed in the Payment Plan (sufficient enough to cover the ongoing weekly costs and pay off past debts) are made on time, the service

provision will continue. If regular payments are not made, the service will be withdrawn

Second reminder letter – If no payment plan has been set up and debt is still outstanding one week after a first formal reminder, a letter to the parent advising them that the school will no longer provide the service if the debt has not been paid within 5 school days. Parents will be asked to provide a packed lunch. A request will be made, once again, to clear the debt.

Services will be reinstated once the arrears have been paid in full.

Possible legal action – Please note that the Headteacher reserves the right to take legal action to recover debts.

Waiving of Debts

The waiving of debts is at the discretion of the Headteacher and the Governing Body. A debt may be waived when it is believed the debtor is experiencing serious financial hardship.

Please contact the school if you feel this applies to you.

School Support

We hope that by implementing this policy, we are able to help you, as parents, manage your payments better and, at the same time, ensure that our available budget is used to enhance your children's learning.

The chasing of debts is also extremely time-consuming for our staff. Time spent checking debts and sending out letters takes our staff away from other duties at school that would benefit all children.

We request that all parents and carers work with us to avoid unnecessary time spent chasing debts by making regular payments, in advance, for our services.

This policy will be kept in the Policy file in the school office and parents will be informed of the policy in occasional newsletters and on the school website. Hard copies of the policy will be available on request.

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Governing Body