

# Winston Way Academy

## School Debt Policy

Date of last review	June 2023	Review period	2 year
Date of next review	June 2025	Owner	SBM
Type of policy	Local Policy	Approval	LGB

## **1 - Introduction**

Winston Way Academy will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debts as part of its management of public funds. This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

The school's debt recovery policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the Scheme for Financing Schools and any other legal requirements.

## **2 - School Meals**

School meals **must** be paid for in advance of meals being taken, using the online system, Parentpay. School meals are charged in line with pre agreed prices with our contract caterers. Parents will be informed of any price increase to school meals in reasonable time. We recommend that payment is made a minimum of **one week** in advance and a credit balance is always maintained.

When a child has a school lunch they are registered by the catering company within the school dining hall, this is then uploaded onto your ParentPay account. Should the parent/carer fall into arrears an initial call will be made asking for the arrears to be paid within 72 hours.

If the parent/carer then fails to pay the outstanding balance within the time frame set, a reminder letter will be sent. Within this letter the school will advise the parent/carer that they must now provide their child with a packed lunch.

Failure for the parent/carer to provide their child with a packed lunch may result in involving the school's child protection officer.

## **3 - Reporting of outstanding debt levels**

The Principal/School Business Manager 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.

## **5 - Debt Recovery Procedures (over £3)**

Where payment from the parent/carer has **not** been received within 72 hours, after the call, the following process should be applied.

- A reminder letter requesting the account be credited within 5 school days. This letter will also advise the Parent/Carer to provide their child with a packed lunch.

- A Final warning letter will be sent to Parent/Carer advising them again to pay the debt. The letter will also warn parents that if the payment is not received within a timeframe set, then the Legal Services will be notified.

## **6 - Negotiation of repayment terms**

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the initial 'overdue payment' reminder.

However, if people are unable to pay;

The school may reduce or cancel a debt in exceptional circumstances. This will be reviewed on case by case basis.

If a debtor requests for 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Principal/School Business Manager. A record of all such agreements entered will be retained. In all cases, a letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms for repayment. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable. The Principal /School Business Manager will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further 'credit' and in future will be required to pay in advance.

## **7 - Costs of debt recovery**

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

Appendices:

## **Debt Recovery Process**

### Stage 1

#### **Monday - Check all accounts**

Call home made to all parents with arrears (for debts over £3).

### Stage 2

#### **After 72 hours - check debt account**

Letter goes out to all parents still in arrears stating that their child is no longer allowed to have a school meal and they must provide a school lunch

### Stage 3

A final reminder will be sent home.

#### **Process to cease at payment stage**

If a payment plan to recover a debt is required - please use the sample below. Ensure the parent signs one copy in agreement and returns to the School Office and it is kept on file.

Payment Plan

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Following our recent letters and further conversation regarding the outstanding debt School lunch payments, please find below repayment schedule in order to clear your account.

Balance outstanding    £ xxx    Repayment week commencing XXXXXXXXX

Repayment week commencing XXXXXXXXX

Repayment week commencing XXXXXXXXX

Repayment week commencing XXXXXXXXX

Can you please sign and return one copy of this letter showing agreement to the proposed repayment schedule.

Repayments need to be made via Parent Pay.

Until the outstanding debt is cleared, your child will not be able to have a school lunch., so please ensure they are sent to school with a packed lunch.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you need to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely

Mrs N Bhangu

Executive Business Manager

Letter One – first reminder

Dear

**Re: NAME OF CHILD AND CLASS – ParentPay account**

Following on from our recent phone call, I am writing to remind you again that according to our records, you have arrears of £        on your child's school lunch account. For your child to continue to have a school lunch it is important to keep your account in credit.

Please arrange for this to be paid by **DATE (5 school days from date of this letter)**. You can make a payment using ParentPay, our secure online payment system, using the login previously provided. Please visit [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com)

You can check your account balance at any time by logging into your ParentPay account.

Non-payment affects the quality of service we are able to offer to the children, therefore we need to ensure that all payments are up-to-date. Once the debt is cleared please ensure the account is always in credit.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, or if you have difficulty making payment, please contact the School Office to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Letter Three – **FINAL REMINDER**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

**Re: NAME OF CHILD AND CLASS – ParentPay account**

It has been brought to my attention that despite numerous reminders there is still an outstanding balance on your school lunch Parentpay account of £ .

Please arrange for this money to be paid by (FRIDAY and date) the latest. Your account will be checked on Monday morning and should the account be showing an outstanding balance or you have not contacted the school to arrange a payment plan; the Legal services will be contacted.

Once the debt is cleared and should you wish your child to resume receiving a school lunch, can you please contact the administration team, school reception to discuss regular payments.

Please use our online payment system, ParentPay; using the login already provided please visit [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com)

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely