


<p>Princess Frederica CE College Road, London, NW10 5TP Phone: 0208 969 7756</p>		<p>VA Primary School Head of School – Ms N Christopher Executive Head Teacher – Ms S Bouette Email: admin@princessfrederica.brent.sch.uk</p>
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<h2>Debt Recovery Policy</h2>		
Governing Board with Responsibility	Full Governing Board	
Reviewed/Revised	Autumn 2023	
Date of Next Review	Autumn 2025	
Agreed by Governors	13.03.24	
Additional Notes	The policy should be reviewed every 2 years or sooner if requested by either the Executive Headteacher or the governing board or if there has been a change in legislation.	

Vision statement

‘Belonging, learning and growth for life in all its fullness’

Mission Statement

At Princess Frederica we:

Promote social, emotional, spiritual and educational growth in all our children
(This is how we develop character)


Impart the gifts of self-confidence, determination and curiosity with a rich and creative curriculum
(This is the way we educate)

Create a positive impact on our local and global community and environment
(This is our footprint on the world and community)

Nurture friendship, kindness and respect
(This is how we treat each other)

Introduction

This policy concerns the collection of money from parents and the approach to be taken in the cases of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay amounts that are owed to the school.

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Princess Frederica recognises that the physical and emotional well being of the children in the school is of paramount importance. However, the school has a legal and moral obligation to apply the resources it receives fairly for the support and benefit of all pupils. It is not in a position to subsidise, on a regular basis any one child or group of children,

This debt recovery policy is aimed at supporting parents, carers and families in avoiding accumulation of debts in relation to services provided such as school dinners, nursery fees, residential trips, before and after school clubs, workshops or educational visits.

General Principles


Parents/carers are expected to pay in advance for services provided by the school and this can be paid using the online parent system: SCHOOL GATEWAY. 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 they will make every effort to avoid owing the school money.

1. Debt Recovery

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.

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. In particular:

- The Head of school is able to authorise the writing off of bad debts up to a value of £500
- the Governing Body will approve the write-off of all debts which have a value of more than £500
- The Local Authority's senior finance manager will be notified when bad debts are over £5,000
- all such write-offs will be recorded in the minutes of the governing body
- a formal record of any debts written off with a value of more than £500 will be maintained and this will be retained for 7 years (the form of this record is specified below in Appendix A).
- the school will seek the advice of the Council's Legal Services Section should they consider taking legal or other action to recover the debt.

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In general payment for all goods and services supplied by the School should be collected in advance or 'at the point of sale'.

The procedures to secure the collection of all debts are outlined below and should be followed by all School staff.

2. School Meals Debt

2.1 For children in Key Stage 2 and for those families not receiving the Pupil Premium Grant for Free School Meals, it is the duty of parents/carer, not the school, to provide a midday meal for their child. They must 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 (except during 2023-25 when the Mayor's fund is paying for meals) . The governors of Princess Frederica reserve the right not to provide a school meal in circumstances where payment has not been made.

2.2 If a parent/carer forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 5 meals. This accrued debt must be paid within 1 week and future meals must be paid in advance before any meal is provided. If the debt is not cleared, parents should provide a packed lunch.

2.3 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.

2.4 It is very important that if a parent or a carer believes their child may be eligible for Free School Meals, they should contact the school office for help with this or go to the Brent website and complete an online application form to apply for Free School Meals. This allowance is a statutory right and it is vital that parents/carers use it if they qualify.

3. Acceptable "Credit Period" for any other debt - (ie not school meals)

The Governors of Princess Frederica have determined that one half term is an acceptable "credit settlement period" before debt recovery procedures are applied.

4. Reporting of Outstanding Debt levels

The Head of School will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is regularly monitored.

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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 Governing Board.

The Head of School will review the level of outstanding debts monthly to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective.

5. Debt Recovery Procedures

Where payment from the parents/carers has not been received in advance, within 30 days in the case of an invoice or according to the payment terms on the School Gateway, the following process will be applied:

Initial reminder

Initial reminders may be informal and either made in person (when a parent comes to collect/drop off the child) or by email. Normally, the financial administrator will undertake this having built up a good relationship with the parents.

First reminder letter

A formal reminder letter should be issued after 2 weeks from any informal reminder/the date of supply. (Appendix B).

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.

Second Reminder Letter

A second reminder letter will be issued 2 weeks after the first reminder letter. (Appendix C)

Debt Recovery Letter

The debt recovery letter will be issued 2 weeks after the second reminder letter.

Using reminder letters

Should a debt need to be taken beyond two reminder letters, formal written evidence may have to be produced. It is therefore important that two written reminders are sent. Details of all reminders, whether verbal; or in writing, and any responses received – should be maintained. Where a letter is issued, a copy must be retained on file.

6. Negotiation of Repayment Terms

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


If a debtor asks for “repayment terms” these may be negotiated at the discretion of the School Business Manager in discussion with the Head of School. A record of all such agreements will be kept.

A letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms (unless this is judged unnecessary). The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

7. Costs of Debt Recovery

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt the Governing Board will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor. This decision and its basis will be recorded.

The debtor will be formally advised that they will be required to pay the additional costs incurred by the school in recovering the debt.

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APPENDIX A

RECORDS OF DEBTS WRITTEN OFF

Debtor	Details of debt	Amount (£)	Invoice reference and date (<i>where applicable</i>).	Reason for write-off (<i>including brief details of measures taken to secure payment - as appropriate</i>).	Authorisation of write off – <i>name and signature of the authorising individual and date.</i>

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APPENDIX B

First reminder letter

[Insert date]

Dear [name of parent],

Following our conversation on [insert date of conversation], I am writing to remind you of the outstanding [insert amount of money] owed to the school for [insert source of debt, such as school meal costs]. [Insert details of why this letter has been sent, such as:

- We have not yet received payment from you towards reducing this debt.
- We have noticed that you haven't kept up with the payment plan as agreed in our conversation.]

These arrears need to be cleared as soon as possible. Payment can be made via the Parent Gateway.

[If the debt results in any sanctions, such as pupils having to be given packed lunches until meal costs are settled or being unable to attend a school trip, insert details of this here.]

If by [insert deadline- 2 weeks later] you haven't either paid off the debt or contacted us to set up a payment plan, we will invite you to a meeting to explore options to help you pay the amount above. If you don't attend or if we don't reach a satisfactory result together, we may seek legal advice on recovering the debt.

Our school budget is intended to support children's learning, and we cannot use it to cover debt owed to the school.

Any parent/carer experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Head of school and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

Thank you for your help and understanding. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or difficulties complying with this letter.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert name and contact details]

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APPENDIX C

Second reminder letter

[Insert date]

Dear [name of parent],

Following our letter dated regarding outstanding [insert source of debt]

To date, the amount of arrears is £..... We now request that you attend a meeting to discuss the situation with the Head of School. Please telephone the school office to arrange an appointment.

Any parent/carer experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Head of school and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

Thank you for your help and understanding. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or difficulties complying with this letter.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert name and contact details]

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APPENDIX D

Debt Recovery Letter

[Insert date]

Dear [name of parent],

Our records show that you have not cleared the arrears for [insert child's name and source of debt] despite previous letters sent home on and

Arrears to date total £

Following the school policy on debt recovery, a copy of which is on the school's website, I must inform you that if payment is not received in 5 working days, the Governing Board will be asked to consider starting legal proceedings for debt recovery. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to court

Any parent/carer experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Head of school and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school office

Yours sincerely,

Ms N Christopher
Head of School