



Riseley Church of England Primary School

Debt Policy

Author/Responsible Officer	Leigh Pointon (Executive Headteacher)
Board to be ratified	Full Governing Body
Approved by	Catherine Veitch & Richard Carter
Date of ratification	23rd September 2024
Date of next review	September 2026

Statement of Intent

The Governing Body has a duty to ensure that Riseley Church of England Primary School receives all the funds to which it is entitled. We hope that parents understand this and will make every effort to avoid owing the school money. 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, clubs, Nursery fees and school meal payments.

Parents should be made aware of, and given access to, this policy and the school's debt recovery procedures. It will be included on the school's website and made available to view at the School on request.

Payments

Payments for school meals should be made in advance, directly to Caterlink via the parent log in. If a debt occurs which is not settled Caterlink will contact the school office who will then contact parents direct. If the debt is not cleared the following day, then we may be unable to provide your child with a school dinner and you must provide a packed lunch. If a child comes to School without clearing the debt and requires a hot meal, then the school Office will telephone the parents to make alternative arrangements for lunchtime.

Nursery and Kids' Club fees should be booked and paid for via School Money wherever possible.

Kids' club should be paid for at the time of booking a place except where this is not possible for example when childcare vouchers are used or if a parent is making a same day booking via the school office.

Nursery invoices will be issued half termly in arrears, and payment is due 14 days from issue of the invoice. This should be paid via School Money wherever possible, or direct to the school bank account.

Lettings invoices will be issued after use, or monthly in arrears for long term lets, and should be paid within 28 days direct to school bank account or by cheque.

If payments are not received by the appropriate time, further places maybe be refused until the invoice is paid and the Debt Recovery procedures followed.

Debt Recovery Procedures

- The school will take all reasonable measures vigorously to collect debts as part of its management of public funds.
- A debt will be written off or passed onto an external debt collection agency only after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it.
- The 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 in order that it 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.

The principles

- The Governing Body will only consider writing off debts below £500.
- The school will not write off any debts owed by the Local Authority (LA).
- A full record will be kept for 6 years of debts owed to the school. This will include all letters requesting money, reminders and invoices.
- The school will not initiate legal action to recover debts. However, we will refer uncollected debts to the Local Authority to consider such action.

Roles and responsibilities

The Executive Headteacher and school administrators will ensure that:

- Letters requesting money are accurately recorded and those records maintained.
- Evidence of the steps taken by the school in pursuance of debt is recorded, including dates and times of both letters and phone calls.
- A final reminder is sent by recorded delivery to the debtor after 3 months.
- Family cases will be judged fairly and according to the circumstances of the family involved.
- The privacy of the family involved will be respected and they will only be made known to those who need to know.
- The level of outstanding debt can be determined at any time.

The Governing Body:

- Will prescribe and regularly review the arrangements for debt recovery.
- Must approve any legal action taken.
- Will record approved actions in the minutes of the relevant meeting.
- Will adhere to the privacy arrangements.
- May delegate its responsibilities under this policy to the School Business Manager.

Where payment from the parent/guardian has not been received in advance, or 'at the point of sale', the following process should be applied:

The process for pursuing debts

Informal reminder: The debtor will be informally reminded by reminders on School Money each week or by e mail if it relates to a lettings invoice.

First Formal Reminder: If the debt has not been settled 4 weeks after becoming due, the school will make a telephone call to the debtor.

Second reminder letter: If the debt is still not be paid two weeks after a first formal reminder, a formal letter will be sent to the debtor. This letter allows the debtor every opportunity to settle their debt and ensure the school can prove all reasonable steps have been taken to recover the debt should the issue proceed further.

Final reminder letter: If no response is received following the second reminder, after 3 months the school will send a letter to the debtor advising them that they will be referring the matter to the Local Authority to consider legal action. This letter will be sent by recorded delivery to ensure the debtor has had every chance to respond. At this point, at the discretion of the Governing Body, the debtor may be advised that they will have to pay in advance for certain services in the future.

Possible legal action: At this juncture, the appropriate body will decide whether to take legal action against the debtor.

Waiving of debts

- The waiving of debts is at the discretion of the Executive Headteacher and the Governing Body. A debt may be waived when it is believed the debtor is experiencing serious financial hardship, or if all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted and it is believed it would not be cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action.
- The Executive Headteacher is authorised to waive debts of up to £100. This will be negotiated with the Executive Headteacher directly.
- Debts between £100 and £500 will only be waived with the approval of the Finance Committee.
- Debts of £500 or more will never be waived.