

## **DEBT RECOVERY POLICY**

### **General requirements**

St Cuthbert Mayne 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.

St Cuthbert Mayne School's Debt Recovery policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the Financial Handbook for Schools and any other legal requirements. In particular:

- Up to £500– the Governing Body may authorise a write off where income accrues to the school; otherwise the approval of the Finance Business Partner for Children's Services is required.
- Over £500 – the Governing Body, with agreement of the Finance Business Partner for Children's Services.
- a formal record of any debts written off will be maintained and this will be retained for 7 years.
- the school will NOT write-off any debt belonging to the County Council or another party. If in doubt as to the appropriate action to collect any such debts the school will seek advice promptly from officers of the County Council.

### **School staff are expected to follow the following procedures to secure the collection of all debts.**

#### **Recording of goods or services supplied where payment is not received in advance or 'at the point of sale'.**

A record will be kept of all such supplies that details what was supplied, the value, the date(s) and the identity of the 'debtor', e.g. child, parent, hirer, etc.

Where invoices are raised these should state the date by which payment is due.

In all other cases correspondence with parents, etc. should indicate the maximum period that the school regards as reasonable before payment is overdue, e.g. contributions for a school trip should be received by, payment for items purchased should be sent to the school office by, etc.

The Headteacher should determine what the reasonable 'credit period' is if this is not otherwise specified, e.g. the governors may stipulate the maximum settlement period for school lettings in a separate 'premises hiring policy'.

### **Initial reminders**

Initial reminders may be informal and made either in person (when a parent comes to collect/drop off the child) or by email or telephone. Normally, the Office 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. *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 that the debt first became overdue.*

## **Second reminder letter**

A second reminder letter will be issued 2 weeks after the First 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 at least one, but preferably two, written reminders are sent. Details of all reminders, whether verbal or in writing, should be maintained. Where a letter is issued, a copy must be retained on file.*

## **Failure to respond to reminders / settle a debt**

If no response is received from the reminders issued, a letter will be sent to the debtor advising them that the matter will be referred to the County Secretary's Department, Legal and Administration.

At the discretion of a representative of the Finance & Pay Committee and Headteacher the debtor may be advised that they will be required to pay in advance for all future supplies or the supply will no longer be available to them. This decision and its basis will be recorded.

## **Negotiation of repayment terms**

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 Headteacher. A record of all such agreements will be kept. A letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms (unless this not judged necessary). The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

The Headteacher will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further 'credit' and will be required to pay in advance in future.

## **Costs of debt recovery**

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Governing Body / Finance Committee 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.

## **Reporting of outstanding debt levels**

The Office Administrator will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is known / can be determined at any time.

The Finance Committee / Governing Body will be advised of any outstanding debts each term to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective.

*(Monitoring of outstanding debts may be differentiated by type, e.g. if school meal debts prove more of a problem than those for lettings of premises then the frequency and degree of monitoring should reflect this).*

## **Bad debts**

*Those with the authority to write off a debt accruing to the school, are identified in the Schedule of Financial Delegation.*

The Headteacher has the authority to write off bad debts up to the value of £200, Finance & Pay Committee can write off up to a maximum of £500. A record of the write-off, the reason for it, and the approval for it, will be retained for 7 years.

Any debt belonging to the school will be referred to the Governing Body without delay once the school has taken reasonable measures to collect the debt (i.e. has followed the reminder notification procedures set out above).

In the case of school meal debts the school has to cover the cost of the meals. If a pupil's meal account is in debt, the Office Administrator will make immediate written contact with the parent after carrying out appropriate checks. Parents are requested to keep their child's school meal account in credit at all times. If a debt remains, the parent will be asked to provide a packed lunch for their child until the debt is recovered.

**Last Reviewed: March 2022**  
**Next Review: March 2025**