

School Debt Policy

Adopted by: Lime Trust Board

Date: July 2020

Review date: July 2023

Introduction

This policy has been written to help our Academy make a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners access other extended services. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

It is very time consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for money - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

The school reserves the right to terminate services with outstanding debts with individuals, within an agreed notice period or to terminate the whole offering if it is adversely affecting the curriculum budget.

Management of School Debts

To ensure that the school's budget is not adversely affected by the cost debt the Academy will pursue a 'Zero Debt' approach. Although, this may seem harsh to some parents it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not a small number.

When the debt exceeds £30 for a *child or family* a formal letter must be sent to the parent/carer informing them to provide their child/children that the service is at risk of being withdrawn to prevent further arrears.

If the debt exceeds £50 for a family and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing money arrears, the school should inform the local Safeguarding Team and formally write to the parent/carer, explaining that the school is not obliged to provide a school dinner or extended services where advance payment is not forthcoming and the services will be withdrawn from the following week. If there is a waiting list for the extended services provision, then your child's place will be offered to someone else after this period. You will be entitled to re-apply and join the waiting list once the debt has been cleared.

The school will be sympathetic to individual circumstances in a confidential meeting where a payment plan can be arranged.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Debts

At each meeting of the Academy Council /Finance and Audit Committee, the Headteacher will provide Academy Council members with details of any outstanding dinner money debt which is causing concern. The aim of the School's Debt Policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to the school's solicitors. The school does however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.