



## **Introduction**

The Governing Body has a responsibility for ensuring that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school to receive all income to which it is entitled. For this reason it is important that the school has a policy for dealing with debts which is approved by the Governing Body.

In addition, the introduction of the cashless payment system Parentpay by the London Borough of Sutton makes it more transparent when parents/carers have not paid their accounts promptly for school meals and extended day services. The school's policy and procedure for dealing with debts should therefore encompass this.

Parents should be made aware of this policy and the school's procedures by being sent a letter as shown in the Appendix as part of their child's induction pack, and this policy and information will also be published on the school website.

## **Principles**

1. The School will actively pursue debtors, including parents/carers for the collection of monies owed to it.
2. School meals are booked at the time of morning registration. Booked meals can be cancelled by the school office up until 10.30am each day. If children are sent home after that time, a meal cost will still be incurred by the parent
3. A-Z Club fees are to be paid in advance. Half termly fees are to be paid before the first day of every half term. Payment is due for all contracted sessions even if your child is unable to attend their booked session
4. The Headteacher and School Business Manager will ensure that:
  - all letters requesting monies outstanding are accurately recorded and maintained;
  - there is documentary evidence of all the steps undertaken by the school to recover the debt and this includes recording the dates that letters and statements were sent, and/or phone calls that have been made to debtors;
  - for all outstanding debts, a final statement is issued by recorded delivery to the person(s) liable for the charge;
  - each case involving a family will be judged on the family's individual circumstances and the amount outstanding as to the length of time before legal action is started;
  - the identity of a family involved is only disclosed to those who need to know under this policy.
5. **The Governing Body:**
  - must consider the arrangements for debt recovery;
  - must approve the school undertaking legal action in any particular case;
  - must include in the minutes of its meeting or record of its decision, its approval to pursue any outstanding debt;
  - will ensure that the identity of a family involved is only disclosed to those who need to know under this policy;

- may delegate its responsibilities under this policy to the chair of the Finance committee

## **6. Pursuance of Debt**

The school should:

- give the debtor appropriate notification and time to pay the outstanding charge;
- send the debtor as a minimum a final statement by recorded delivery, which states that this is the final notice and that further action will be taken.

## **7. Waiving of Debt**

A debt may be written off or waived by resolution of the Governing Body on the recommendation of the Headteacher.

A recommendation to write off or waive a debt can be made by the Headteacher when either

- a. all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted, and where it is not cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action; or
- b. it is believed the debtor is experiencing financial hardship.

## Appendix

### Letter to Parents

Dear Parents

#### School Meals and A-Z Club Fees - Debt Policy for Parents

The Governing Body of Devonshire Primary School has adopted a **NO DEBT** policy relating to the provision of school meals and A-Z club fees (full policy is available on the school website). This means that all money for these provisions must be **PAID IN ADVANCE**.

Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to a free school meal at lunchtime. Children in families who are in receipt of specific benefits and/or allowances may be entitled to free school meals. This policy does not apply to these meals which are provided free of charge.

If parents/carers believe that their children may be entitled to free school meals please contact the school office for further information and help. The allowance for free school meal is a statutory entitlement and should be claimed if your child qualifies. In order to qualify, you will be required to provide evidence of entitlement. Free school meal entitlement will only apply from the date the evidence has been received; it cannot be backdated. Information as to entitlement and evidence required to support a claim is also available on [www.sutton.gov.uk](http://www.sutton.gov.uk) (search for 'free school meals').

Parents/carers must pay in advance for school meals and A-Z Club fees using the following payment methods:

- credit/debit cards online using ParentPay
- by cash at a PayPoint store (please ask in the school office about PayPoint payments if you prefer to pay by cash).

Please see the school website [www.devonshireprimary.org](http://www.devonshireprimary.org) for links to ParentPay and further information and feel free to ask at the school office if you need any additional assistance.

To check the balance on your child's ParentPay account online, go to [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com). Children will only be entitled to a school lunch or to attend the A-Z Club if they have been paid for in advance unless the school has been informed of exceptional circumstances and has agreed that this requirement may be waived.

If there are insufficient funds on a child's ParentPay account to pay for a school meal, then parents/carers are required to provide a packed lunch for their child. If a packed lunch has not been provided, the school will contact the parent to ask them what arrangements they have made to provide their child with lunch.

If debts are incurred, then the school will need to consider how the debt can be managed which may mean money which should be spent on children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers. I hope that you will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

If payment of the debt is not received by 10th day after a final statement has been sent by recorded delivery to the person(s) in whose name the ParentPay account has been registered, the school reserves the right to begin debt management proceedings against parents/carers to recover the debt.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are ensuring that all money available for children's learning is spent on precisely that.

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kearsley - Head Teacher