



Debt Recovery Policy

DOCUMENT ORIGINS			
Organisation	Old Basford School	Version date	Autumn Term 2023
Owner	Laura Duffin	Approved by (If applicable)	Governing Body
Next review date	Autumn Term 2024	Approval date	17 th October 2023

DOCUMENT VERSION HISTORY		
Revision date	Author of changes	Summary of changes
Autumn Term 2023	Laura Duffin	Change made to notice period for Breakfast and Afterschool Club Change made to MIS Updates made to reflect 2023 fees payable
Autumn Term 2023	Vicky Shaw	Update made to reflect 2022 fees payable

Policy Statement

Old Basford School is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils, regardless of financial circumstances, and has established policies and procedures to ensure that no child is discriminated against by our offering of school trips, activities, and educational extras.

While this is the case, the school must have a policy in place to ensure the repayment and recuperation of any outstanding debts incurred by the school on behalf of a pupil.

Any money owed to Old Basford School has an impact on the school budget and may affect the resources we can provide to all children. We hope that parents understand this and will make every effort to avoid owing Old Basford School money.

We will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debts as part of our management of public funds and will make all parents aware of this policy. 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.

Each case is to be treated individually and the circumstances that have led to the outstanding debt will be considered to determine the best course of action and whether it is fair and reasonable to pursue the debt in its entirety if at all. The school is committed to adhering to legal requirements regarding charging for school food, activities, and materials, and meeting all statutory guidance provided by the DfE.

1. Breakfast and After-School Clubs

As per the agreement/offer letter signed by the parent/carer, we insist that payment must be made a minimum of one week in advance and a credit balance maintained at all times. Payment is required for all days booked even if your child does not attend, the exceptions being when school is closed or if your child is attending Breakfast Club and isn't in school due to illness. Should the child no longer require a place the parent/carer is to advise the school office at least one week in advance for Breakfast Club or three weeks notice for After School Club otherwise the parent/carer is still liable for charges. Should the parent/carer fall into arrears and fail to make an immediate payment, the club place will be suspended until the arrears are paid. If the balance is not cleared within one week, then this place may be withdrawn.

Current fees as of September 2022

Breakfast club - £3.00 per day (£15.00 per week)

After-School club - £12.00 per day

Fees are to be paid online using the Arbor App. All bookings are set up half termly so initially will look like a large amount owing but this will reduce with each payment. Please contact the school office if you would like more information regarding the Arbor App and being able to make online payments.

2. School Lunch

We insist that payment is made a minimum of one week in advance and a credit balance is maintained at all times. When a child has a school lunch, they go through the school till which registers on the Arbor App. Should a parent/carer fall into arrears of more than one week and fail to make a payment within one week of receiving a reminder letter, a further letter will be sent advising the parent/carer that their child will no longer be entitled to a school lunch and that they should send their child to school with a packed lunch. Failure for the parent/carer to provide their child with a packed lunch may result in the parent/carer being contacted by telephone and requesting they take their child home for lunch.

Current fees as of September 2023

School meals cost £2.55 a day (£12.75 a week).

Fees are to be paid online using the Arbor App. There is a minimum payment requirement of £12.75 but no upper limit, if your child only has one meal a week any monies are carried forward to the following weeks. Please contact the school office if you would like more information regarding the Arbor App and being able to make online payments.

Free School Meals - If you think you may be eligible for your child to receive free school meals, please complete a form, available from the school office or download from our school website <https://old-basford-school.secure-primariesite.net/school-lunches/>. Once completed return to the school office who will forward it onto Nottingham City Council Pupil Benefits Service. If you are not sure or have any questions or would like support in completing the form then, please contact the school office who are happy to help.

Further information and guidance can be found at

<https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/information-for-residents/education-and-schools/benefits-for-school-aged-children/free-school-meals-and-free-milk/>

Or by telephoning Nottingham City Council Pupil Benefits Service on 0115 9154084

3. Nursery Lunch Supervision

As per the 30 hour agreement/offer letter signed by the parent/carer, we insist that payment is made a minimum of one week in advance and a credit balance is maintained at all times. Payment is required for all days booked even if the child does not attend, the exceptions being when school is closed. Should the parent/carer fall into arrears and fail to make an immediate payment, the 30 hour place will be suspended until the arrears are paid. If the balance is not cleared within one week, then this place may be withdrawn.

Current fees as of October 2023

Nursery Lunch Supervision fees cost £3.75 a day (£18.75 a week).

Fees are to be paid online using the Arbor App. There is a minimum payment requirement of £18.75 but no upper limit. All bookings are set up half termly so initially will look like a large amount owing but this will reduce with each payment. Please contact the school office if you would like more information regarding the Arbor App and being able to make online payments.

4. Reporting of outstanding debt levels

The Headteacher/School Business Manager will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is regularly monitored. Suitable records/debt control file will be maintained by the Administration Assistant 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, Audit and Risk Committee and/or Governing Body. The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and/or Governing Body will review the level of outstanding debts at each meeting to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective.

Details of all debt reminders, dates and times of letters, phone calls, emails, text messages, conversations or any other correspondence will be maintained in school for a period of six years.

5. Debt Recovery Procedures

Initial informal reminders are sent via text message notifying the parent/carer of the debt. Text messages for school lunches are sent daily and once a week for clubs and nursery lunch supervision.

Where payment from the parent/carer has not been received the following process should be applied.

The time lapse between the stages will normally be five school days. However, this may vary depending on factors such as level of debt and the time period within a term. The next step will be implemented if the debt has not been repaid or any contact made with school.

Each Friday debts will be reviewed by the Administration Assistant and reports provided to the club leaders.

Week 1 - First 'overdue payment' reminder letter

If no payment has been made the first formal reminder letter will be sent home via email advising that the outstanding balance must be cleared, and an advance payment made for the forthcoming week otherwise their child's breakfast club/after-school club/school lunch/nursery lunch supervision place WILL be suspended.

Week 2 – Second 'overdue payment' reminder letter

If full payment is not received and a credit balance provided the second formal reminder letter will be sent home via email advising their child's breakfast club/after-school club/nursery lunch supervision place HAS been suspended. A follow up phone call will be made to the parents/carer as they will need to make alternative arrangements.

If the debt is due to school lunches the second formal reminder letter will request their child is provided with a packed lunch until full payment and a credit balance provided. The school office will ensure this is adhered to and if your child arrives at school without a packed lunch the parent/carer will be telephoned asking them to bring a packed lunch into school immediately.

Week 3 – Third 'FINAL overdue payment' reminder letter

If by the following Friday no payment or response is made, the third formal reminder letter will be sent home via email advising this is a final reminder and payment must be received by Monday or school must be contacted by the parent/carer to discuss repayment terms otherwise this will result in the school taking possible legal action to recover the outstanding debt.

6. Staff Debt Recovery

Staff debts can accumulate from staff school lunches they have taken. A standard text message will be sent advising of the debt. If the debt remains outstanding a letter will be handed to them in person in the strictest confidence and a school lunch will not be provided until the debt is paid in full.

7. Year 6 Pupils/School Leavers

When a child leaves Old Basford School it is imperative the Administration Assistant checks the child's breakfast club/after-school club/school lunch/nursery lunch supervision accounts and refunds any credit balances or obtains any outstanding debt prior to the child's last day.

Any year 6 pupils leaving to attend secondary school will have letters/notifications sent to parents at the start of the second half of the summer term informing them that all debts must be cleared before the last week of the summer term. Outstanding debts will be transferred onto a sibling's account where applicable.

8. Negotiation of repayment terms

We acknowledge that on occasions families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances we will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child.

Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first 'overdue payment' reminder letter. Failure to meet any repayment terms will result in the school taking possible legal action.

However, if people are unable to pay:

Old Basford School may reduce or cancel a debt in certain circumstances. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be carried out, taking the following into account.

- Hardship – where paying the debt would cause financial hardship
- Ill health – where our recovery action might cause further ill health
- Time – where the debt is so large compared to the person's income it would take an unreasonable length of time to pay it all off
- Cost – where the value of the debt is less than the cost of recovering it
- Multiple debts – where someone owes more than one debt to the school. In this situation an attempt to agree one repayment plan to include debts will be established.

If a debtor requests for 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Headteacher. A record of all such agreements entered into will be retained. In all cases, a letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms for repayment. 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 in future will be required to pay in advance.

9. Costs of debt recovery

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Finance, Audit and Risk committee and/or Governing Body will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor. The debtor will be formally advised in writing that they will be required to pay the additional costs incurred by the school in recovering the debt. This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Finance, Audit and Risk committee and/or Governing Body.

10. Bad Debts

Write-off of any debt requires the written approval of the Finance, Audit and Risk committee. A record of the write-off, the reason for it, and the approval for it, will be retained in the committee minutes.