

BOTLEY C of E (Controlled) PRIMARY SCHOOL
DEBT MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY POLICY



1.0 RATIONALE:

- 1.1 The effective management and recovery of debt is important to the success of any school. The Governors and Senior Leadership team of Botley C of E Primary School have a duty to ensure effective use of the school budget to raise standards and a responsibility in the management of public funds.
- 1.2 The School Governors always encourage Parents/Carers to contact the Headteacher if they are experiencing any difficulty in meeting their financial commitments to school. In most cases a mutually acceptable agreement can be reached, thus avoiding the need to implement the debt management and recovery process. Whenever possible this would be the preferred course of action. However, where this is not the case, the school's Debt Management and Recovery Policy will be applied.

2.0 AIMS:

- 2.1 To ensure that the school has a consistent approach to debt with a view to eliminating bad debts completely.
- 2.2 To provide clarity and consistency in managing debt for parents and carers and enable them to clearly understand what is expected of them when they make a financial commitment.
- 2.3 To effectively pursue all debts owed to the school ensuring that those with the means to pay do so.
- 2.4 To reduce the risk of parents incurring large debts that they will struggle to pay off.
- 2.5 To ensure that the entire school budget is used to provide educational services to all of our children and not be impacted negatively by bad debts.
- 2.6 To reduce the considerable amount of work of the school office and school management team in chasing up all debts, which has a direct impact on the school budget and resources and ultimately the teaching of our pupils.

3.0 PRINCIPLES:

- 3.1 Botley C of E Primary School's Debt Recovery Policy will observe the relevant regulations and guidance set out in the Scheme for Financial Management of Schools and any other legal requirements. In particular:
 - A debt will be written off only after reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it.
 - The Headteacher will not write-off any debts exceeding £100 without referring the matter to the Financial Working Group of the school's Whole Governing Body. Debts between £100 and £500 may only be written-off with the approval of this group.

- The Governing Body will not write-off any debt exceeding £500 without advice from the County Treasurer's Debtors group that the debt is unrecoverable.
- Botley C of E Primary School will not initiate any legal action to recover debt, but will refer such cases to County Treasurer's Debtors group where appropriate action can be taken.
- A formal record of any debts written-off will be maintained and retained for 7 years.

4.0 SCHOOL PROCEDURES:

4.1 Recording of goods or services supplied where payment is not received in advance:

- 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. 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 etc.
- The Headteacher should determine what the reasonable 'credit period' is if this is not otherwise specified.

4.2 Dinner Money:

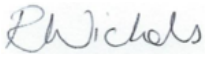
- To order a paid for school dinner there should be credit on the account. This can be paid in cash to the office or online through SCOPAY.
- If a child orders a dinner where there is no credit in place, then a phone call is made home requesting a packed lunch is brought in. However, the school will not allow a child to be without a meal at lunchtime and will provide one if necessary.
- We will support any parent to apply for free school meals if they believe they have an entitlement.

4.3 Initial Reminders:

- Initial reminders of school debt may be informal and made either in person (when a parent comes to the school) or by telephone.
- It must be remembered that contributions to school trips which take place during the school day are voluntary and cannot be enforced.
- In the event that parents decide not to contribute towards school events these may be cancelled if there is not enough funding to cover the event costs.

- 4.4 First Reminder:
- A formal reminder letter should be issued in a timely manner after any informal reminder/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 were made at the time that the debt first became overdue.
- 4.5 Second Reminder:
- A second formal letter should be issue two weeks after the first letter.
- 4.6 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 Hampshire County Council Treasurer’s Debtors group and/or Legal Department.
 - At the discretion of the Headteacher, the debtor may be advised that the service/supply will no longer be available to them or that payment in advance will be required for all future supplies or supply. This decision will be recorded.
- 4.7 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 or Financial Working Group. A record of all such agreements will be kept. A letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms.
 - The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.
- 4.8 Reporting of Outstanding Debt Levels:
- The School Admin Manager will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is known/can be determined at any time.
 - The Headteacher will be kept informed of all debts that are cause for concern and an outstanding debt report will be shared at each meeting of the school’s Financial Working Group.

The content of this Policy has been fully reviewed and agreed by the School’s Governing Body.

Signed  Date 11.09.24

(Chair of the Whole Governing Body)

Review Date: September 2026