

Forest Edge Learning Federation



Debt Policy

Name of School:	Breamore CE Primary, Hale Primary, and Hyde CE Primary
Name of Responsible Manager/Headteacher:	Tracy Allen – Executive Headteacher
Date Policy approved and adopted:	September 2024
Date Due for review:	September 2025

STATEMENT OF INTENT:

The Executive Headteacher and Governors of Forest Edge learning Federation have a duty to ensure effective use of the school budget to raise standards and maximise the achievement of pupils. We are committed to taking all reasonable measures to 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.

We do, however, believe that we have a wider social responsibility. We need to ensure that there is a balance between the competing needs to maximise income collection and ensuring that parents/carers who are historically shown to be our debtors are treated in a fair and equitable manner.

AIMS:

- To ensure a professional, consistent and efficient approach to debt collection.
- To effectively pursue all debts owed to the school ensuring that those with the means to pay do so.
- To consider fully the debtors circumstances and ability to pay and so distinguish between the debtor who won't pay and the debtor who genuinely can't pay.
- To ensure that debts are managed in accordance with legislative provisions and best practice.
- To treat individuals consistently and fairly regardless of age, sex, gender, disability and sexual orientation and to ensure that individuals' right under Data Protection and Human Rights legislation are protected.
- To safeguard the School's funds and specifically to ensure that no individual or group of individuals take advantage of the school causing it to be unable to recover funds that are owed to it.
- To ensure that the funds available to the School are used to the fullest advantage of all pupils.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

It is the responsibility of the Business Manager and where appropriate the Executive Head Teacher, to ensure the following procedures are in place for the prompt payment of all charges raised by the school.

- All income (sales and trips) to the School to be recorded on Arbor and banked using HCC bank paying in books and recorded on SAP through REM banking.
- The Finance Officer will provide the Head Teacher and governors with details of debtors when all other attempts to obtain payment have failed so that write-off decisions can be made.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES:

It is important that the school is not seen to be colluding with parents or individuals in the non-payment of monies owed. Therefore prompt action should be taken. These should include:

School Meals and Wraparound Care:

Reminding parents/carers that school dinners and wraparound care should be paid for in advance.

- Not allowing parents/carers to owe debts of more than 1 week.
- Sending emails for recovery of money owing at the end of 1 week.
- Helping parents/carers make alternative school meal arrangements until their debt is cleared e.g. collecting pupils for home dinners or sending in a packed lunch.

Residential School Trip:

The payment for school trips can place a severe burden on some families. On most occasions, the trip is subsidised by the school. Parents/carers should be given the opportunity to pay in instalments. Pupils should not be prevented from participation because of parents' inability to pay or make a contribution (see Charging Policy). Parents/carers must however be reminded that on some occasions, the trip could be cancelled if we do not receive enough contributions.

Debt Recovery:

- We will actively pursue the collection of monies that are owed.
- As part of our debt recovery strategy, we will try to negotiate mutually satisfactory arrangements to make full settlement.
- Further debt cannot be incurred until settlement has been made especially in the case of dinner money ~ except in severe hardship cases and at the sole discretion of the Executive Headteacher.
- Our schools will take account of the health, well-being and educational needs of our pupils and take steps to ensure that the inability of parents/carers, who on occasions are unable to meet their financial responsibilities due to reasons beyond their control, are not excluded from school activities. Notwithstanding this, the school cannot prejudice its own financial viability in order to provide relief to its debtors.
- The school will employ external debt collection agents as necessary in pursuit of debts.

Equal Opportunities Implications:

The way in which the school treats people must be fair and equitable. Adherence to the policy should ensure equality in the school's approach to debt recovery.

REVIEW

This is a non-statutory policy

Agreed by governors date: September 2024

To be reviewed by governors date: September 2025