

# Woodside Academy



## Debt Management Policy

Agreed by the Governing Body: December 2024

### Introduction

The school will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debts as part of its management of public funds. 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 school's debt recovery policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the Scheme for Financing Schools and any other legal requirements. In particular:

- The Governing Body will approve the write-off of all debts, stocks, stores and surplus assets
- All such write-offs will be recorded in the minutes of the Governing Body
- A formal record of any debts written off will be maintained and these will be maintained until the parent's connection with the school has ended (form on page 6)
- The school will seek the advice of the Council's Legal Services Section should they consider taking legal or other action to recover the debt
- All supporting documentation relating to debts owed to the school shall be kept and stored in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy

In general payment for all goods and services supplied by the school should be collected in advance or 'at the point of sale'.

The procedures to secure the collection of debts are outlined below and should be followed by all school staff.

## Invoicing procedures

The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for ensuring that all invoices and credit notes include the following:

- Debtor's correct address
- Customer reference
- Payment terms
- Clear description of the goods or services provided, together with supporting documentation where possible
- Relevant date or period of the charge(s)
- Amount in £ sterling (GBP)
- VAT amount (if applicable)
- Key contact at the school (normally this would be the Chief Financial Officer)

Credit notes are issued to cancel a debt raised in error or adjust an outstanding debt. Credit notes above £10.00 must be authorised by the Principal or Vice Principal. Credit notes must not be raised to reduce or write off a debt due to financial hardship.

## Credit control procedures

### Provision of childcare services (out of hours – see Appendix 8 for pricing structure)

- The finance assistant is responsible for ensure that all details of attendance are correct on the ParentMail system relating to all out of hours clubs by the end of the week (term time)
- In the event of attendance without booking and payment, a phone call should be made to any debtors and payment requested immediately
- If the amount is still outstanding after 7 days a reminder letter/email will be sent home (Appendix 1) by the finance assistant
- The parent/carer will be informed in writing/email after two weeks if the debt has not been settled and that the club can no longer be used and asked to arrange a meeting to discuss (Appendix 2) by the Chief Financial Officer. If a child is still left in a club, then the school will follow it's Safeguarding Procedures and contact Social Care
- A final letter/email to the parent/carer informing them that if the debt is not settled in 5 days then this will be referred to the Governing Body (Appendix 3), by the Vice Principal
- If payment has not been made within 5 days then this will be referred to the Governing Body to consider legal proceedings

All clubs will not be available to pupils when arrears are still outstanding after two weeks.

### Provision of school dinners (KS2 children only)

- The office assistants are responsible for ensuring that all details of school dinners are correct on the ParentMail system by the end of the week (term time)
- In the event of a child receiving a dinner without booking and payment, a phone call should be made to any debtors and payment requested immediately
- If the amount is still outstanding after 7 days a reminder letter/email will be sent home (Appendix 4) by the office assistants
- The parent/carer will be informed by letter/email where there are accumulated arrears equating to the value of 2 weeks dinners and advised to make immediate payment (Appendix 5) by the Chief Financial Officer
- A final letter/email to the parent/carer informing them that a school dinner will not be provided for their child/children if payment has not been received by a specified date, in accordance with the policy, the date when four weeks of arrears have been accumulated (Appendix 6) by the Vice Principal
- If payment has not been made within 5 days then this will be referred to the Governing Body to consider legal proceedings

Any parent/carer experiencing difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Principal and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

The school is not obliged to provide a school dinner to KS2 pupils when arrears exceed the value of 2 weeks dinners.

Once the final letter/email deadline has expired the Governing Body will decide whether legal proceedings should begin.

### All other charges

- The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for ensuring that invoices for all charges are raised on the agreement date or the first day the service is rendered
- In the case of recurring letting agreements, the invoice shall be raised on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the previous month
- Invoices must be paid within 30 days
- If an outstanding invoice is still outstanding after 30 days, the Chief Financial Officer will telephone the customer to discuss payment options and will advise them that if the invoice is not paid within 30 days then use of the school premises will be withdrawn, this will also be followed up by an email
- If after the 30 days the invoice remains outstanding, the Chief Financial Officer will escalate this to the Principal

### Staff debtors

- Staff debts arising from overpayments to existing employees (or any other employment related matter) shall be reported separately
- The individual shall be notified as soon as the overpayment (or other debt) is discovered
- Overpayments should be recovered in the same time period that it occurred (i.e. an overpayment that occurred over a 3-month period should be recovered in 3 months)
- Any staff with debts relating to their children or lettings shall be treated in accordance with the sections above
- The school may require that they agreed repayment amounts are recovered from salary, as a means of reducing the need for legal action

### **Reporting of outstanding debt levels**

The Principal will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is monitored on a monthly basis.

Suitable records will be maintained 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 Governing Body. An aged debtors report (with appropriate comments) shall be sent to the Governing Body by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the following month.

All debts over 60 days shall be escalated to the Governing Body for further action to be agreed.

### **Disputed debts**

In the event that a dispute arises, the Chief Financial Officer must be informed in writing, including the amount in dispute and the reason for the dispute.

The Chief Financial Officer shall be responsible for mediating with the debtor in order to seek a resolution.

Where non-payment by a debtor is due to a dispute, a local resolution may include a compromise agreement of less than the original amount, although any such offer must have prior authorisation of the Principal.

If mediation does not lead to an agreement within 30 days, the matter should be escalated to the Principal.

If after a further 30 days an agreement is still not achieved, and there is no likelihood of doing so, the Governing Body will decide on whether independent legal advice should be sought.

## 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 payment' reminder. However, if people are unable to pay, the school may reduce or cancel a debt in certain circumstances. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be carried out, taking the following factors 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 debt	Where someone owes more than one debt to the school. In this situation an attempt to agree one repayment plan to include all debts will be established

If a debtor requests 'repayment terms' these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Chief Financial Officer or Vice Principal. 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 of repayment.

The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

The Principal will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further 'credit' and will, in future, be required to pay in advance. This decision and its basis will be recorded and reported to the Governing Body.

## Bad debts

This debt recovery policy should be cross-referenced to the Scheme for Financing Schools.

Where the prospect of future recovery is considered doubtful, a financial provision for bad debt should be recorded.

Write-off of any debt requires the written approval of the Governing Body.

A record of the write-off, the reason for it, and the approval for it will be retained until the parent's connection to the school has ended.

## RECORDS OF DEBTS WRITTEN OFF

[illegible]

## **APPENDIX 1**

Date

Reminder Letter

Child's Name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

According to our records there are outstanding monies for your child/children attending out of hours.

The arrears are for the week commencing ..... please make payment of £..... tomorrow.

If no payment is received the school may look to withdraw the use of all out of hour's clubs and you will need to make other arrangements for your child/children.

If you have any queries regarding the above, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

## **APPENDIX 2**

Date

Accumulated Out of Hours Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Following our letter dated ..... regarding outstanding money owing for out of hours, our records show that this has not been paid.

To date, the amount of arrears is £..... We now request that you attend a meeting to discuss the situation with the Chief Financial Officer or Vice Principal. Please telephone the school office to arrange an appointment.

Until the debt is cleared, all out of hours clubs will not be available for you to use for your child/children and you will need to arrange other care for your child/children.

These arrears need to be cleared as soon as possible, payment can be made via ParentMail.

Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Chief Financial Officer or Vice Principal and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

If you have any queries and/or wish to discuss this matter, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely



### APPENDIX 3

Date

Non-payment of Out of Hours Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Our records show that you have not cleared the out of hours arrears for you child/children despite previous letters sent home on ..... and .....

Arrears to date total £.....

Following the academy's Debt Management Policy, I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days, the Governing Body will be asked to consider starting legal proceedings for debt recovery. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to court.

As stated in our previous communication, until the debt is cleared no further use of all out of hour's clubs will be permitted and you will need to arrange other care for your child/children.

Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Vice Principal and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

## **APPENDIX 4**

Date

Reminder Letter

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

According to our records there are outstanding dinner monies for your child/children.

The arrears are for the week commencing ..... please make payment of £..... tomorrow.

If no payment is received the school may not be able to provide a meal in school for your child/children.

If you have any queries regarding the above, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

## **APPENDIX 5**

Date

Accumulated School Meals Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Following our letter dated ..... regarding outstanding dinner money, our records show that this has not been paid.

To date, the amount of arrears is £..... We now request that you attend a meeting to discuss the situation with the Chief Financial Officer or Vice Principal. Please telephone the school office to arrange an appointment.

Until the debt is cleared, you must provide a packed lunch for you child/children. In a case when payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to make payment by card.

The arrears need to be cleared as soon as possible. Payment can be made via ParentMail or by card to the school office.

Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges, which should be addressed to the Chief Financial Officer or Vice Principal and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

If you have any queries and/or wish to discuss this matter, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

## APPENDIX 6

Date

Non-payment of School Dinner Money Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your child/children despite previous letters sent home on ..... and .....

Arrears to date total £.....

Following the academy's policy on dinner money debt recovery, a copy of which was sent to you when your child started school/started in KS2, I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days, the Governing Body will be asked to consider starting legal proceedings for debt recovery. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to court.

Until the debt is cleared no meals will be provided in school and you need to provide a packed lunch for you child/children.

Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulties may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Vice Principal and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

**APPENDIX 7****Debt Repayment Agreement**

Following on from our recent conversation concerning outstanding debts with ourselves for £....., this is to confirm the debts currently stand at:

Debts	Amount
<b>Total amount</b>	

As agreed the following payment plan has been agreed between both parties to clear these debts:

Payment of £..... to be made on the ..... monthly/weekly via direct bank transfer/ParentMail. The first payment will be made .....

Debt repayment plan

Debt name	Starting balance	Payment date	Payment amount	Ending balance

If a payment is not made then this will be passed to the Governing Body for them to consider legal proceedings.

Signed ..... Name .....  
Parent/Guardian

Signed on behalf of Woodside Academy

..... Name .....

Position .....

Date .....

## APPENDIX 8

### Out of Hours pricing structure

The costs are £2.50 per half hour:

Breakfast Club sessions:

7:15am to 8:45am	£7.50
7:45am to 8:45am	£5.00
8:15am to 8:45am	£2.50

Breakfast Club session before an extra-curricular activity or club:

7:15am to 7:45am	£2.50
------------------	-------

After School Club sessions:

3:00pm to 3:15pm	£2.50 (Nursery children only)
3:15pm to 3:45pm	£2.50
3:15pm to 4:15pm	£5.00
3:15pm to 4:45pm	£7.50
3:15pm to 5:15pm	£10.00
3:15pm to 5:45pm	£12.50
3:15pm to 6:15pm	£15.00

After School Club sessions following an extra-curricular activity or club (depending on club finishing at either 4:15pm or 4:45pm):

4:15pm to 4:45pm	£2.50		
4:15pm to 5:15pm	£5.00 /	4:45pm to 5:15pm	£2.50
4:15pm to 5:45pm	£7.50 /	4:45pm to 5:45pm	£5.00
4:15pm to 6:15pm	£10.00 /	4:45pm to 6:15pm	£7.50