



Payment and Arrears Policy

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 payments and debts which is approved by the governing body.

Parents should be made aware of this policy and the schools procedures by being sent a copy of this policy. Information will also be included in the schools prospectus and website.

Payments to the School

Parents are required to pay for all services provided by the school in advance by making an online payment to their child's account on the ParentPay system. Parents can choose how frequently they make payments, this could be weekly, monthly or termly. Please be aware that there is a processing cost associated with every payment which is met by the school. The fewer payments our parents make, the lower the charge paid by the school for the ParentPay service.

No Debt Policy

The governors of Beaford Primary School have adopted a no debt policy relating to the provision of school meals and any other services provided by the school. This means that all meals and additional services must be paid for in advance.

School Meals

The school is under a duty to provide free school meals to those who are eligible, but there is no obligation beyond this. If arrears exist the school can refuse to continue to provide meals.

If you think your child is entitled to free school meals further information is available from the school office or http://www.devon.gov.uk/free_school_meals.htm

Please note it is the parent's responsibility to apply for free school meals and ensure the Local Authority is kept up to date with your circumstances. Currently children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to free school meals. This is not the same as a free meal from the Local Authority.

All school meals need to be paid in advance using ParentPay. The ParentPay system has a low balance warning which automatically emails parents when dinner money is low.

Trips, Residential and Non School Based Activities

Voluntary contributions may be sought for activities during the school day which entail additional costs. In these circumstances no child will be prevented from participating because a contribution is not received. However, if insufficient total funds are received the activity may be cancelled.

For residential charges will be made for board and lodging, except for pupils whose parents are in receipt of eligible benefits.

Nursery Fees

Children receive funding for 15 hours as part of their Early Years Entitlement (30 hpw for eligible children from Sept 2017). Additional sessions/hours in the nursery are charged at the cost of £3.60 per hour.

Any hours over the Early Years 15 hours entitlement will be invoiced half termly. Payment is due in the first week of the half term and the payment date is specified on the invoice. No refund will be given in the event of the child's absence due to illness or for any other reason. This is because the nursery has to reserve a place for the child with appropriate staffing in advance.

Before and After School Club

Bookings are to be made a week in advance. Payment is due in advance when making a booking. If, due to exceptional circumstances, a booking is made on the day of attendance payment must be made on the same day.

Debt Recovery

Where payment for services is not received in advance and arrears accumulate longer than one week, the following procedures apply:

- 1. Informal Reminders** – Parents will be informally reminded in person, by email or note home that monies are owed and that their ParentPay account needs updating within 5 days
- 2. First formal reminder letter** – If payment is not received within 5 days a formal letter will be sent reminding the parent of the previous communication and requesting immediate payment. Parents are able to set up a payment plan to bring arrears up to date by contacting the school office.
- 3. Payment Plan** – If payments agreed in the payment plan (sufficient to cover the ongoing weekly costs and pay off past debts) are made on time, the service provision can continue. If regular payments are not made the service will be withdrawn.
- 4. Second reminder letter** – If no payment plan has been set up and the debt is still outstanding one week after the first formal reminder, a letter will be sent from the Chair of the Finance Committee to the parent advising them that the school will no longer provide the service if the debt has not been paid within 5 school days. Parents will be asked to provide a packed lunch or make alternative arrangements for nursery or before and after school club care.

Services will be reinstated once the arrears have been paid in full.

Possible Legal Action – Please note that the school reserves the right to take legal action to recover debts if payment is not made, or a payment plan arranged 5 school days after the second reminder letter. Where the school incurs additional costs in recovering a debt then the Finance Committee will decide whether to seek to recover these costs from the debtor. The debtor will be formally advised in writing that they will be required to pay the additional costs.

The headteacher and administrator will ensure that:

- All letters requesting monies outstanding are accurately recorded and maintained
- There is documentary evidence of all the steps taken by the school to recover arrears and this includes recording the dates that letters and statements were sent, and/or phone calls and conversations
- 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
- Details of debts are provided to the finance committee termly
- The identity of the family involved is only disclosed to those who need to know under this policy

The governing body:

- Must consider the arrangement 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 finance committee

Waiving of Debt

A debt may be written off or waived by resolution of the finance committee on the recommendation of the headteacher. A recommendation to write off or waive a debt can be made by the headteacher when either:

- 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
- It is believed the debtor is experiencing financial hardship

A record of the write-off, the reason for it, and the approval for it, will be retained for 7 years.

Date agreed at Governors – June 2019

Review Date – June 2021