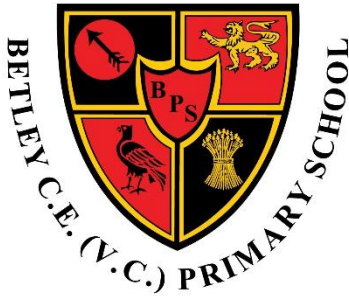


# Debt Recovery Policy

## Great Oak CE Learning Federation



Approved by:

Governing Board

Date: September 2025

Next review due by:

September 2027

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## **Statement of intent**

Great Oak CE Learning Federation 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. 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 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 taken into account 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. Legal framework**

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2018) 'Charging for school activities'
- DfE (2018) 'Schemes for financing schools'

## **2. Roles and responsibilities**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Reviewing this policy on an annual basis.
- Regularly reviewing details of its debts and what recovery action is needed.
- Consultations if legal services are required for debt recovery.
- Adhering to the privacy rights of pupils and their guardians in all cases.
- Deciding to leave a case of debt recovery to the decision of the headteacher.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy and ensuring that all staff, parents and pupils are aware of their responsibilities.
- Recording debt reminders, and ensuring those records are maintained for a period of seven years – this includes dates and times of letters, phone calls, emails, conversations or any other correspondence.
- Ensuring instances of debt are judged on an individual basis, with consideration of the nature of the debt and the circumstances of the family involved.
- Ensuring the privacy of the pupil and their family will be protected by all staff.
- Ensuring the level of outstanding debt owed to the school can be determined at short notice.

## **3. Acceptable credit period**

In the case of a debt, the governing board should agree upon a 'credit period' within which the debtor can pay the outstanding sum before debt recovery procedures are exercised. This period of time may vary, at the discretion of the governing board, dependent on the nature and size of the debt.

## **4. Debt recovery procedures**

Where there is an outstanding payment yet to be received and the acceptable credit period has surpassed, an official invoice will be created outlining the value and reason for the debt, as well as the debtor's identity.

Upon creating the invoice and stipulating a date on which it must be paid by, there will be acknowledgement from the school that the debt has been set up.

## 5. Verbal and written overdue payment reminders

Overdue payment reminders are outlined below:

- **Weekly text/e-mail reminders**
- **First formal written reminder - £30.00 or over** – personal e-mail sent directly from Executive Bursar detailing amount currently outstanding and requesting payment whether in full or instalments.
- **Second formal written reminder** – personal e-mail sent directly from Executive Bursar detailing amount currently outstanding and requesting payment whether in full or instalments. This e-mail will also inform parents that no further meals/snack can be provided unless payment is sent in, if the debt is over £100.00. If parents wish to continue to order items, they will need to send in more than the items ordered to help to start the repayment of the debt. Parents are advised that any monies received will be fully allocated to their account and therefore no change will be issued.
- **Third formal written reminder** – personal e-mail sent directly from Executive Bursar detailing amount currently outstanding and requesting minimum payment of 10% of debt or £5.00 per week (whichever is felt to be the most appropriate) the amount will be stipulated in the e-mail. This e-mail will also state that if the debt does not reduce then an official invoice will be raised through Staffordshire County Council.
- **Invoice raised** – an official will be raised following the cycle if no payment has been made. At this point any third-party debt for St. Luke's School Fund or PTFA will be removed and notified to either the Executive Headteacher or the Chair of the PTFA. Third party debts for Smylers will be invoiced directly at the end of each term.

The agreement between the third parties and the school to use the School Money system is to encourage and familiarise future parents with the systems used by the school. Any third party is made aware that under no circumstances is the school liable for any outstanding debts owed to them.

## 6. Failure to respond

If overdue payment reminders are not responded to, another letter will be sent to the debtor advising them that the case has been to the school's legal advisors and governing board.

It is then for these parties to agree on a timeframe for a repayment or, if necessary, a payment plan for separate instalments.

The school expects that the debt should be repaid as soon as possible, particularly after repeated reminders; however, this can be negotiated at the discretion of the governing board.

If there is a case where the debtor is deemed to be refusing to pay without sufficient reason, the school may consider involving the LA's legal services to resolve the issue and recuperate owed funds.

## 7. Negotiation of debt payment

It is expected that the debt will be repaid as soon as possible, particularly after repeated reminders; however, this will be negotiated at the discretion of the governing board, particularly if the circumstances in section nine of this policy apply.

If there is a case where the debtor is deemed to be refusing to pay without sufficient reason, the school may consider involving LAs and the council's legal services to resolve the issue and recuperate owed funds.

## **8. Exceptional circumstances and remissions**

The school will ensure that parents of pupils are aware of the help the school can extend to those in financial difficulty. Parents who may be eligible for remissions are those in receipt of any of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided that they are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit – if they apply on or after 1 April 2018, their household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits that they receive)

In a case where there is, or it is suspected that there is, an overdue debt from a family who may qualify for remissions, details of the different types of bursary available will be sent to the debtor in question.

In a case where there is, or it is suspected that there is, an overdue debt from a family who may qualify for remissions, details of the different types of bursaries available will be sent to the debtor in question.

The governing board is not guaranteed, but may decide, to waive or reduce the outstanding debt in these circumstances.

## **9. Debt recovery costs**

In addition to the remission allowances outlined in the [Exceptional circumstances and remissions](#) section of this policy, it may be advisable to waive or partially waive debts where it is deemed that it does not make financial sense to continue allocating time and resources to pursuing.

The governing board will review any case a debt may be waived, and come to a final decision based on the value of costs versus value of the debt.

## **10. Monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the headteacher and governing board.