

ROSEACRE PRIMARY ACADEMY



Ethos Statement

This policy reflects our academy's ethos, which recognises, celebrates and welcomes diversity. The policy ensures fairness and equality, regardless of age, disability, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, attainment or background.

Rationale

This Policy recognises the difficulties placed on Headteachers in balancing the social welfare of pupils with the management of the academy budget. It is fair and just and sets out a clear procedure for families.

The Academy is responsible for managing payments and arrears for school meals and other services, and these are processed through the main budget. Where debts are incurred, the academy budget has to pay for them; this means that money that should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

Introduction

The Governing Body has a duty to ensure the academy receives all the funds to which it is entitled. This policy has been created to ensure the appropriate procedures are in place to deal with debts and the recovery of assets.

It encompasses all debts owed to the school including, but not limited to, payments for goods, services, educational visits, music tuition and school meal payments.

Parents should be made aware of and given access to this policy and the academy's procedures. It will be included on the academy website and made available to view on request.

School Meals

The academy 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 academy can refuse to continue to provide meals.

Parents and carers may be eligible for a free school meal for their child, if they receive any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance

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- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs) that does not exceed £16,190
- Working Tax Credit "run-on" – the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit

Forms to apply for free school meals can be downloaded from the academy website; alternatively, they can be requested from the school office. All completed forms should be returned for the attention of: Mrs Penn, Business Manager.

It is parents' responsibility to apply for free school meals and to ensure that the academy is kept up to date with any change in circumstances.

School meals should be paid for in advance using the ParentPay online payment system or at any shop displaying the PayPoint logo.

Other Services

The academy provides a number of other services; these include before and after school care, music tuition and educational visits.

All payments for chargeable services should be made in advance using the ParentPay online system or at a PayPoint store.

Debt Recovery

Where payment for school meals or other services is not received in advance and when arrears accumulate, the following procedures apply:

Week 1: Informal Reminder – At the end of the week in which the account has fallen into arrears, the parent will be informally reminded (in person over the telephone, by text or a note home) and immediate payment requested.

Week 2: Formal Letter – If the account remains in arrears one week after the informal reminder, a formal letter will be sent to the parent. The formal letter will request immediate payment and offer the debtor every opportunity to settle their debt via an agreed payment plan. (Appendix 1).

Week 3: Final Letter - If any of the following apply:

- no response is received following the formal letter;
- no payment plan is agreed;

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- the agreed payment plan is not being adhered to, or
- the account falls further into arrears

A final letter will be sent home advising the parent that the academy will no longer provide the service. Parents will be asked to provide a packed lunch or make other arrangements for out of school care. A request will be made to clear the debt within 14 days. Parents will be reminded of the Debt Management Policy and that the academy reserves the right to take legal action to recover debts (Appendix 2).

Possible legal action - Please note that the governing body reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against debtors to recover debt.

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

We hope that by implementing this policy we are able to help families manage regular payments and, at the same time, ensure that our available budget is used to enhance children's learning.

Waiving of debts

Any write-offs will be in line with guidance in the Academies Financial Handbook.

The waiving of debts is at the discretion of the Headteacher and the Governing Body up to the limits detailed in the Academies Financial Handbook. Within these limits a debt may be waived when it is believed the debtor is experiencing serious financial hardship or if all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted and it is believed it would not be cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action.

The Headteacher is authorised to waive debts off up to £100.

Debts over £100 will only be waived with the approval of the Governing Body.

Roles and responsibilities

This policy will be kept in the Policy file in the school office and parents will be informed of the policy in occasional newsletters and on the school website. Hard copies of the policy will be available on request.

The Headteacher and School Business Manager will ensure that:

- Letters requesting money are accurately recorded and those records maintained.
- A full record will be kept of debts owed to the academy for 7 years. This will include all letters requesting money, reminders and invoices.
- Evidence of the steps taken by the academy in pursuance of debt is recorded including dates and times of both letters and phone calls.
- A final reminder is sent by recorded delivery to the debtor.
- Family cases will be judged fairly and according to the circumstances of the family involved.

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- The privacy of the family involved will be respected and only made known to those who need to know.
- Any repayment plan is agreed with parents and report any such agreement to the Governing Body.
- Any debts waived by the Headteacher will be reported to the Governing Body.
- The level of outstanding debt can be determined at any time.
- The level of outstanding debts and any actions taken to recover them will be reported to the Resources Committee.

The Governing Body:

- Monitor outstanding debt levels
- Will prescribe and regularly review the arrangements for debt recovery.
- Approve the write-off of debts over £100 and record approval in the meeting minutes.
- Must approve any legal action taken and record approval in the meeting minutes.
- Will adhere to the privacy arrangements.
- May delegate its responsibilities under this policy to the Resources Committee or Headteacher.

Success Criteria

The evaluation of this policy is based on the level of debt being reduced over time and a robust system being in place to ensure that every attempt is made to recover monies owed to the academy.

This policy will be kept electronically on the 'Shared Drive'. A paper master copy will be held by the Headteacher. Parents will be informed of the policy on occasional newsletters and on the school web site.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Management Team of Roseacre Primary Academy. The next review will be in Spring term 2016

Date adopted: _____

Signed: _____ Headteacher

Signed: _____ Chair of Governors

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Appendix 1

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Reference: FORMAL LETTER (*Pupil Name/Class*)

Following our reminder to you last week, our records show that there are still arrears on your child's (*dinner money/BASCC*) account.

Our records show that your outstanding balance is £0.00

Please make immediate arrangements to bring your account up to date by using ParentPay: our secure online payment system. If you haven't already activated your account, please do so by using your unique codes below.

Username:

Password:

Enter ParentPay via www.ParentPay.com, or through the link on the Roseacre Website. Click on 'Parents' and select 'Activate' from the drop-down menu. After entering your unique username and password, you will be prompted to change these and answer a security question. Once this has been done, you will be able to use ParentPay to make payments. You can check your account balance at any time by logging into your ParentPay account.

If you prefer to pay by cash, you can do so at any Pay Point store, using the barcode at the bottom of this letter.

Failure to bring your account up to date within 7 days will result in your child(ren) (*losing their place in BASCC/not receiving a school meal*).

Please contact us to discuss your arrears and set up a Payment Plan should you be unable to clear the debt, in full, within 7 days.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Carroll

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BARCODE

Appendix 2

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Reference: FINAL LETTER (*Pupil Name/Class*)

Despite previous reminders, our records show that you still have arrears on your child's (*dinner money/BASCC*) account / have failed to keep to the payment plan we agreed.

Our records show that your outstanding balance is £0.00

Please note that we are no longer able to offer your child(ren) (*a place in BASCC/ a school meal*) from Monday xx/xx/xx and you must make other arrangements.

Please arrange clear your debt, in full, within the next 14 days. Once your account is up to date your child(ren) will be able to (*attend BASCC/have a school meal*) on a pay-in-advance basis. You can make payments using ParentPay, our secure online payment system. If you prefer to pay by cash you can do so at any PayPoint store using the barcode at the bottom of this letter.

You can check your account balance at any time by logging into your ParentPay account.

In line with the Debt Management Policy, which is available on the Academy Website, the Governing Body reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against debtors to recover debt.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Carroll

Debt Management Policy 2016-18

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