

POLICY FOR CHARGING FOR SCHOOL ACTIVITIES **(including the Policy for Debt collection)**

Date of policy: February 2014

Policy developed by: Head Teacher and Governors

Review date: February 2017

The school wishes to provide for all pupils the best possible educational opportunities available within the funds allocated by the Education Authority. The law states very clearly that education during normal school hours is to be free of any compulsory charge to parents and the school warmly endorses that principle and is committed to uphold the legal requirements.

It is recognised, however, that many educationally valuable activities have been and will continue to be dependent on financial contributions in whole or in part from parents. Without that financial support, the school would find it quite impossible to maintain the quality and breadth of the educational programme provided for pupils. The school's concern is to keep financial contributions to a reasonable minimum and to ensure, as far as possible that all children are able to take part, irrespective of their circumstances.

The law recognises that charges may be made to parents in certain defined circumstances - provided that each school has identified the activities for which charges will be made and has explained the basis on which charges may be reduced or waived for certain pupils. The Governing Body of North Nibley School has decided that until further notice its policy will be as follows:

1. Day Visits

For visits occurring during school time the school will invite a voluntary subscription from parents to meet costs. For visits outside school time parents will be charged for all allowable costs.* Charges may be waived or reduced for children whose parents make application to the Head and communications to parents will emphasise the voluntary nature of these charges.

Children in receipt of Pupil Premium will have extra curriculum costs met.

2. Residential visits during school time

The school will invite voluntary contributions from parents to meet costs other than children's board and lodgings. Parents will be charged for the full cost of children's board and lodgings. Charges may be waived or reduced for children whose parents make application to the Head.

Children in receipt of Pupil Premium will have these costs met.

3. Residential visits outside school time

Parents will be charged for the full cost of the visit, including all allowable costs* and board and lodging. Charges may be waived or reduced for children whose parents make application to the Head.

*Allowable costs include:

- (a) The pupil's travel and subsistence costs;
- (b) Materials, books, instruments and other equipment;
- (c) Non-teaching staff;
- (d) Costs of teaching staff where separately engaged under a contract for services for the visit or activity.
- (e) Entrance fees to museums, castles, theatres, etc.,
- (f) Insurance costs.

Children in receipt of pupil premium will have all costs met.

4. Any visit required because of recognised public examinations, the National Curriculum or the law on Religious Education
The school will invite voluntary contributions from parents to meet costs other than children's board and lodgings. Parents will be charged for the full cost of children's board and lodgings. Charges may be waived or reduced for children whose parents make application to the Head.
Children in receipt of pupil premium will have all costs met.
5. Swimming
The Governors of the School consider annually the provision on swimming and the costs involved. The School currently subsidises the cost of swimming to keep it affordable, this subsidy is subject to annual review. The balance of costs are charged to parents. Pupil premium children have costs met.
6. Instrumental Music on an individual basis
Any tuition provided during school hours is currently charged to parents. This charge covers the cost of tuition and is dependent on sufficient children opting for Violin or Guitar lessons to make it financially viable. Music costs are calculated termly based on pupil numbers. An additional charge is made for the hire of the musical instruments if parents hire these from Gloucester Music centre.
7. Classroom Materials
No charge will be made for materials or equipment. However for certain practical activities (Technology, Cookery etc.,) parents may be invited to provide materials or ingredients on a voluntary basis. Where parents would like to possess the finished product, the school reserves the right to charge the cost or require the supply of the necessary materials.
8. Out of School Clubs - e.g. Art, DT
Where parents would like to possess a finished product, the school reserves the right to charge the cost of the materials.
9. Debt Collection
The school has a debt policy that relates specifically to school meals and we apply the general principles of that policy to all charges which are being made to parents or carers. We are sensitive to the ability of parents and carers to pay for trips and activities and always provide a facility to pay in instalments or to discuss inability to pay in confidence. If a parent has not made a payment and not communicated that there is a difficulty, the following procedure will occur:

Action 1: send a debt reminder letter

Action 2: personal meeting with the parent/carer.

The Governors of the school are committed to keeping this policy under review.

School Meals Debt Policy

This policy has been written enable us to adopt a consistent approach to debt. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

The school meals service is no different than any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone.

The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals, there should be no excuses.

The system that has been proven to work best is a 'zero tolerance' approach, so that parents realise our school can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for.

As a school we are invoiced for meals taken, and if there are insufficient funds then we have to cover the shortfall from the school budget that should be used to provide books and teachers for the children. .

In order to inform parents of our debt policy we will use the following methods of communication

- A letter to parents
- The school's newsletter
- The school prospectus
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This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. Parents will be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school as part of their "Parent Pack"

The letter to parents explaining the policy is attached as Appendix 1.

The Governors have agreed on the following implementation procedures:

Key Information

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
3. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take them home for lunch

Procedures :

Level 1 Indicator: A child's account goes into debt -

- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: The parent / carer receives a 'Gentle debt reminder', often verbally.

Level 2 Indicator: A child ordering a lunch when the debt is over £4.00

- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: A letter (Appendix 2) is sent.

Level 3 Indicator: A child ordering a lunch when the debt is over £10.00

- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to either bring money or pay online or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home at lunchtime. If the Debt is now over £10 the school cannot order a hot meal.

Action 3: The letter (Appendix 2) is resent.

Level 4 Indicator: The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options.

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

The head teacher will arrange a meeting with the parent. As a result of this meeting, or in the failure to hold a meeting, the school considers bringing in outside agencies. The LA will advise on small claims courts or social services.

As the Debt is now over £10 the school cannot order a hot meal.

School Meals Debt Policy for Parents – INFORMATION SHEET

As from June 1st 2009 North Nibley CE Primary School has adopted a strict NO DEBT policy relating to the school meal service.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which 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.

No parent would take their child out for a meal and expect to be given food for free; the same applies at school. If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.

Parent/s must pay in advance for the school lunch using any of the methods of payment outlined below:

- Send cash or cheque in a marked envelope
- Online using ParentPay

Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However this debt must be paid next day and future meals must be paid in advanced before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the administrator will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money or ask them to pay online immediately. Otherwise they must provide sandwiches before lunch time or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

If payment of the debt is not received by the next day, the Head Teacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Social services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out their responsibility of care by failing to provide food for their children at lunchtime.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are able to help parents manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available.

If you have any concerns please don't hesitate in contacting me.

Yours sincerely

Paul Batchelor,
Head Teacher

APPENDIX 2 – Action 2

The Street,
NORTH NIBLEY,
Nr Dursley
Gloucestershire
GL11 6DL



Head Teacher: Mr Paul Batchelor N.P.Q.H.
Telephone: (01453) 542600

Email: admin@northnibley.gloucs.sch.uk
Website: www.northnibley.gloucs.sch.uk

03/03/2016

Dear

This is a 'standard' letter template, agreed by our Governors in advance and sent in accordance with our debt management policy, as published on our website.

According to our records you are currently £ in arrears for school lunches. We calculate all dinner money owing on a weekly basis, and issue this letter as standard practise. If you feel we have made a mistake, please contact the school to help resolve these different views.

Sadly, under the terms of the Edward and Ward contract, we will not be accepting new orders for school meals unless this debt is cleared. If this debt is an oversight, please send sufficient payment on Monday, or top up your ParentPay account over the weekend. If you wish to pay by cheque, this should be made payable to North Nibley C of E School and be for a minimum of £10.00. Meals cost £ 2.20 Alternatively you can send your child to school with a packed lunch. If you are unable to send money to clear the debt, we will have to ring you to request you bring lunch or we will buy lunch for your child at the village shop and send you the receipts.

We have been asked by Parents to make clearer the rationale behind our debt management procedures. The Local Authority has negotiated a contract on behalf of school with the company Edwards and Ward. Under the terms of this contract

- each school collects the dinner money owed to Edwards and Ward on their behalf
- our school does not earn interest on any positive balances held on your accounts
- as a school we are invoiced for meals taken. We have to cover any shortfall from our own budget which should be used to provide education for all the children, including staffing and resources, such as books.

Therefore we require that all lunches ordered should be paid for in advance, with full payment paid in by 9.30 am on Monday morning (or with ParentPay accounts in sufficient credit).

Thank you for your understanding,
Best wishes,

Paul Batchelor,
Head Teacher