



## THE FOREST FEDERATION

### Debt Recovery Policy

#### Introduction

The school's Governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable our schools to receive all income to which they are entitled. The Forest Federation will therefore take all reasonable measures to collect any monies owing to it as part of the management of public funds. Collecting payment from parents or carers is a sensitive area; we deal with issues of debt collection with sensitivity and confidentiality at all times.

#### Aims and Objectives

- To ensure that the Governing Body complies with the Staffordshire Scheme for Financing Schools and Financial Regulations;
- To protect the delegated school budget;
- To apply this policy consistently to ensure debt is dealt with in a timely manner;
- To ensure further goods or services are not supplied to parents/carers or customers who have not paid for items already received or used.

#### The debt recovery process

The Forest Federation have their own procedures in place which are used to collect income. However, in the event that payment is not forthcoming then an official invoice will be raised on the County Council's finance system which will lead to the Council's debt recovery procedures as follows:

- Invoice raised with payment terms of 28 days
- A reminder is sent 3 days after the 28 days has expired
- A final notice is issued before the school can request the debt recovery officer to contact the parent/carer/customer at their home/ business address (minimum value £150) or the matter referred onto the courts (minimum value £250).

#### Procedures:

The following procedure will be employed for all outstanding debts:

1. Informal. A gentle reminder (telephone, text (All Saints) e-mail or in person);
2. A formal letter (by pupil mail, e-mail or post);
3. A second formal letter (Recorded post);
4. A third letter informing the debtor that the debt has been passed to the County Council Income Team.

#### Dinner money

Payment for schools meals should be paid in advance and clearly marked in a sealed envelope with the child's name, class and amount and given in at the school office.

The monies will be reconciled each day with the meals taken any discrepancy will, in the first instance, result in informal communication with the parent/carer to request payment. Any parent/carer that has not made payment the next day will receive a formal letter requesting immediate payment. If payment is still not received within 5 days then the parent/carer will be sent a second formal letter (recorded post) advising the matter will be sent to Staffordshire County Council and action will be pursued.

#### Governors have decided on the following policy regarding unpaid meals:

After two days of non-payments only a basic meal of a sandwich will be provided to pupils where the parent has not paid. After a week of non-payments, no meal will be provided and the parent will be contacted to provide a packed lunch.

#### Extended school activities

Payment for extended school activities should be made in advance and clearly marked in a sealed envelope with the name of the child, amount and day/s that the care is required.

#### Board and lodging on residential visits

The board and lodging element of a residential visit can be charged to parents/carers and they are notified of the cost in advance and are given to opportunity to pay in instalments should they wish. Payment must be made in full before the departure date or the child will not be allowed to attend.

#### Remissions

In some cases governors have agreed that certain categories of pupils are not liable for the fee or are eligible for a reduced fee for some or all of; extended school activities, music tuition or residential visits. This is included within the Charging and Remissions Policy (reviewed annually).

### **Lettings**

Contracts for lettings of the school premises will be drawn up as necessary between the school and the client in line with the Lettings Policy. Failure to pay on time will result in the debt being referred to the County Council for recovery. The letting agreement will be void and the client will be refused future hires.

### **Writing off debts**

When all practical and cost effective methods of debt recovery have been exhausted by the County Council the school will be notified of the amount of debt that is considered to be irrecoverable. The governing body will take into account the age and size of each debt and any advice from the County Council before making a decision to write off debt.

Any money owed to school has an impact on the budget and may affect the resources we can provide to all children. We hope that parents understand this and will make every effort to avoid owing the school money.