



St Oswald's CE Primary School, York

Learning for all, caring for each other, preparing for the future

Let us encourage one another – Hebrews 10.25



Debt Management Policy

Date of last Review: May 2025

Date of Next Review: May 2026

Suggested frequency of review: Annually

Context

1. The aim of this Policy is to maximise the receipt of income due to St Oswald's CE Primary School and uphold transparent and consistent practices in the way income is collected. It should be read in conjunction with the School's [Charging and Remissions Policy](#) and the Local Authority's [Corporate Debt policy](#) and Financial Regulations accessible through York Education / Finance / statutory finance.
2. St Oswald's CE Primary School 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.

Payment Terms

3. All school related bookings and payments are managed through ParentPay, our secure communication and payment platform. Parents/carers are provided with a personal ParentPay account, which is used to manage and pay for a range of items including school meals, trips, events, extracurricular activities, and wraparound childcare (Early Birds and Night Owls).
4. Childcare places, school meals, and extra-curricular clubs may be booked through termly booking windows and paid for at the time of booking through ParentPay. Once booked and paid for, a child's place is confirmed. Where pre-booking was not possible but a chargeable item has been used (e.g. an un booked childcare session, late collection charge, school meal), the school will add a payment item to the parents ParentPay account, which must be settled promptly.
5. For our registered childcare provision (Early Birds and Night Owls), we accept government childcare vouchers as a method of payment. These may be used to cover the cost of sessions where applicable.
6. If a booking needs to be cancelled, the following applies:
 - For childcare sessions, a refund will be processed if cancelled with at least 24 hours' notice.
 - For school meals, there will be no charge if the child is sent home due to illness or if the booking is cancelled before 9am on the same day.
7. For larger cost items such as school trips or residential visits, the school may set up an instalment plan within ParentPay to support families in spreading the cost over time.
8. All payments should be made promptly. Where a payment remains outstanding for more than 30 days, a debtor's report will be provided to the Headteacher for review.
9. The School Business Manager will issue invoices for lettings and services provided by the school in accordance with the Local Authority's Financial Regulations.

Records and Reporting

10. All records will be kept according to the advice and procedures set out in the Local Authority's Income Collection Policy and Financial Regulations. At a minimum we will:

- Up-hold the separation of duties to safeguard public funds and protect the interests of the school, employees, parents and customers
- Maintain a Lettings Register and Sales log and retain records for 6 years.
- Raise Debtor Invoices for large amounts and set in place arrangements to receive these payments electronically.
- Respect the privacy of the debtor (Parents, Pupils & Customers) and keep records in accordance with the schools Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy. Information relating to debts will be kept confidential by employees and school governors at all times.
- Prepare an aged debt report for consideration by the School Business Manager every half Term and present it to the Governors at least once every school Term. The minutes from the FSR Committee will record the agreed action.
- Judge each instance of debt over 30 days on an individual basis taking into consideration the nature of the debt and circumstances of the family / customer involved prior to agreeing the recovery route.
- Seek guidance from the Governors where there are outstanding unpaid debts or if new debts should be allowed to accrue, for what purpose and value or cap to apply. A record of the decision will be minuted.

Recovery Procedure

11. All recovery action will take account of any relevant legislation and guidance, [including guidance from the Pre-Action Protocol for debts with Parents, individuals, clubs and sole traders] whilst ensuring the school operates within this recovery framework and ethos. We will be sensitive to family circumstances, for example by sign posting to the free school meals process.

12. Unpaid invoices will be subject to the following recovery procedure:

a. after 15 days an email/verbal reminder will be issued to the debtor by the Administrator.

b. after a total of 30 days a letter (see Annex 1) signed by the Administrator, immediate payment will be issued to the debtor,

c. after a total of 45 days a Letter of Claim (see Annex 2) signed by the Head Teacher requesting immediate payment will be issued to the debtor. A statement, and information sheet must be enclosed with the Letter of Claim.

d. The Debtor has 30 days to reply to the Letter of Claim

e. after a combined total of 75 days the whole debt owed by a debtor will be referred to the Governors at the earliest opportunity who, on the advice of the Business Manager and Head Teacher, will decide whether to:

- (i) pursue payment via the County Court Money Claims Centre
or
- (ii) discontinue recovery and write the debt off.
or
- (iii) Consider the use of a mediation to resolve any dispute

13. If the debt is pursued through the County Court Money Claims Centre, Interest and administration costs incurred may be recovered in addition to the debt. Details of these amounts will be clearly set out in the Letter of Claim

14. When deciding what action to take the Governing body will take into consideration:
- a. any information provided in the Reply Form attached to the Information sheet as part of the Pre-Action protocol.
 - b. The size of the debt and likelihood of recovery
 - c. continuing access to school resources if relevant

Writing off an Unpaid Debts

15. If Governors have agreed not to pursue payment via the County Court or through mediation, or where these have proved unsuccessful, the debt must be written off. Authorisation to write off debts is subject to the following limits:

Under £500	Head Teacher
£501 to £4,999	Governing Body
Over £5,000	CYC Chief Finance Officer

NB: schools may wish to vary the limits set and in the table /or the authorisation required for amounts below £5000.

16. Should it be necessary to refer a debt to the CYC Chief Finance Officer (S151 officer) a report should be prepared that outlines the reason for the proposed write off and the actions already taken to try to recover the debt. In the first instance this should be sent for the attention of the ACE Finance Manager, by email to schools.business@york.gov.uk.

Complaints

16. All complaints will be dealt with promptly through the school's complaint procedure.

Review

17. We will review this policy from time to time to ensure it is relevant, complies with LA Finance Regulations, legislation and supports best practice.

Annex 1 – first reminder letter

Insert date

Insert name and full postal address, must include post code

Dear **insert name**

Re: outstanding balance of **[insert amount]** and invoice number/s **[insert numbers]**

Recently we reminded you that the above amount is owing to the School for **[insert details e.g. name of child and activity or details of lettings booking]**. According to our records we have not yet received payment nor have you queried the charge. For your reference we enclose a statement of Account. Please, therefore, make payment of the full amount to arrive with us no later than **[insert day and date]**.

Payment may be made by either:

- Using parent pay
- making a payment directly into our Bank account (please ask for details at the School office).

Should you have any queries about this letter, please do not hesitate to contact myself or the School Office.

Yours sincerely,

For and on behalf of the Governors of **[insert name]** School
[Insert name]
[Insert Job Title e.g. Administrator/office manager/Bursar]

nb these letters can be sent by post or by email, using the Parents, Customers, or Business's preferred contact. If sent by post it must be sent on the date provided on the letter, or no more than 1 day after.

Annex 2 – second letter. It is recommended that this is a Letter of Claim

Insert date

Insert name and full postal address, must include post code

Dear insert name

Re: outstanding balance of [insert amount] and invoice number/s[insert numbers]

In our letter dated [insert date] we reminded you that the above amount is owing to the School for [insert details eg places/sessions]. We do not have any record of you contacting us to query the invoice amount. For reference we enclose a Statement of Account and a copy of the signed booking form. Please, therefore, make payment of the full amount to arrive with us no later than [insert day and date]

Payment may be made by either:

-
- Using Parentpay
- making a payment directly into our Bank account (please ask for details at the School office).

[insert We include with this letter an Information Sheet which provides details of where you can receive advice and support, together with a Reply form for you to complete]

If we do not receive your full payment [insert date which is 31 days from the date of this letter] we will pursue payment through the County Court Money Claims Centre. [Therefore if you have difficulty paying, it is essential you complete the Reply form and return it to us by [insert date which is 31days from the date of this letter]].

Should you have any queries about this letter, [or require support completing the Reply Form] please do not hesitate to contact myself or the School Office.

Yours sincerely,

For and on behalf of the Governors of [insert name] School
[Insert name of Head Teacher]
Head Teacher