



DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

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Date to be reviewed	March 2026
Changes:	
No changes	

Ropley CofE Primary School will take all reasonable measures to collect debts as part of its management of public funds. We are committed to ensuring that monies due to the school are collected efficiently, effectively and consistently. Any money owed to our school has an impact on the budget and may affect the resources we can provide to all our children. We trust that parents understand this and will make every effort to avoid owing the school any money.

A debt will only be written off or passed onto Hampshire County Council legal team after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it.

This policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the Scheme for Financing Schools and any other legal requirements. In particular:

- The Headteacher will not write off any debt belonging to the school which exceeds £200
- The Governing Body will not write off any debt belonging to the school which exceeds £1000
- Any sum above this will be referred to Hampshire County Council's Finance Director before writing off.
- A formal record of any debts written off will be maintained and this will be retained for 7 years.
- The school will not initiate any legal action to recover debts, but will refer any debt which it has not been able to collect (unless a decision to write-off the debt is a demonstrably reasonable course of action) to Hampshire County Council's Legal Department to take legal or other action to recover the debt.

All invoices are raised within the HCC SAP system. This policy covers all external customers as well as internal HCC customers and other schools within HCC. All payments due for goods and services provided for pupils are raised through Tucasi.

Credit, collecting income and payment terms are addressed using the Corporate Credit Policy and payment terms are 30 days unless stated otherwise.

School dinners and educational trips should be encouraged to be paid for in advance.

Recording of goods or services supplied where a payment is not received in advance or 'at point of sale'

A record will be kept of all such supplies that details what was supplied, the value, the date(s) and the identity of the debtor eg; parent, hirer etc

When invoices are raised these should state the date by which payment is due. In all other cases, correspondence with parents etc should indicate the maximum period the school regards as reasonable before payment is overdue, eg; contributions for a school trip should be received by, payment for items purchased should be received by etc.

The Headteacher and or Resources Governors should determine what the reasonable 'credit period' is if this is not otherwise specified.

Procedures for Collecting Debt

Initial Reminders may be informal and made either in person (when the parent comes into school) email or by telephone. Normally this will be undertaken by the school office staff.

Trip Payments reminders should be sent weekly up to the trip taking place. Whilst payment of trips is detailed in our ***Charging and Remissions Policy*** all efforts should be taken to encourage parents to pay for trips and events so as to minimise the burden on the school budget.

Lunch Money should be paid for in advance of meals being taken. Parents are reminded regularly via the weekly newsletter what the cost per half term is and that payments should be made in advance. The Governors of our school have agreed that a debt of no more than £20 should be allowed to accrue for school meals taken. If and when an account reaches this amount the parent will be informed via email that their child must bring a home packed lunch until the debt is cleared. If the child does not bring in a home packed lunch then the office staff will contact the parent by telephone to advise this is the case going forward. Invoices for accounts in debt are sent weekly by the school office by email.

Extended Day – no sessions can be booked without credit. The exceptions to this are those parents who received Childcare Vouchers. Those parents who receive childcare vouchers and have debt should be encouraged to make payments regularly so that their account does not accrue debt over £50.

Hirers – Payments for Hirers of the school premises are detailed in the ***Lettings Policy***. The letting invoice must be paid within 30 days of the letting period. Non payment of the invoice within any agreed time limit will result in any further lettings being refused. The Governing Body is required to protect the School from bad debt and will refer debtors to Hampshire County Council Legal team should the invoice remain unpaid.

Failure to respond to reminders / settle a debt

If no response is received from the reminders issued, the debtor will be contacted by the Headteacher to discuss how the debt will be settled. The debtor will be advised that the debt may be passed to Hampshire County Council Legal Department or the debtor may be

advised that they will be required to pay in advance of future supplies or the supply will no longer be available to them. This decision and its basis will be recorded and the Governors Resources committee will be notified.

If people are unable to pay

The school may reduce or cancel a debt in certain circumstances. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be carried out, taking the following factors into account:

- Hardship - where paying the debt would cause financial hardship
- Ill Health – where our recovery action might cause further ill health
- Time – where the debt is so large compared to the person's income that it would take an unreasonable length of time to pay it all off
- Cost – where the value of the debt is less than the cost of recovering it
- Multiple Debts – where someone owes more than one debt to the school. In this situation an attempt to agree one repayment plan to include all debts will be established

Debtors are expected to settle the debt by a single payment as soon as possible after being notified of the amount. If a debtor requests payment terms these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Headteacher. A record of all such agreements will be retained and the settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable.

Reporting of outstanding debt levels

The Office Manager will include current debt levels regularly in the newsletter and will also report to the Governors Resources Committee as a standing agenda item for discussion and, if necessary, any actions which will be minuted.

Cost of debt recovery

Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering debt then the Governors Resources Committee will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor. This decision and its basis will be recorded and the debtor will be advised that they will be required to pay the additional costs incurred by the school in recovering the debt.

Bad debts

The Headteacher is authorised to write off debts up to £200. Debts up to £1000 may only be written off with the minuted approval of the Governor Resources Committee detailing the amount, the reason for the write off and the approval by the committee.