

# Oakthorpe Primary School

Debt Recovery Policy  
Autumn 2025



Reviewed by: J Wheeler

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Approved by: Resources Committee

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1. **Oakthorpe Primary School School will actively pursue the collection of monies owed to it.**

Parents of pupils at Oakthorpe Primary School are jointly and severally liable for the charge.

2. **The School Business Manager is required to ensure that:**

- All invoices outstanding are accurately recorded and maintained.
- There is documentary evidence of all the steps undertaken by the school to recover the debt. This includes recording the dates that invoices and statements were distributed, and/or phone calls, letters and emails that have been sent to debtors.
- For all outstanding debts, a final statement (headed 'final notice') is issued to all persons liable for the charge. This statement must include "*further action will be taken if this account remains outstanding after a period of no less than 5 school days*".

3. **The Governing Body must:**

- Consider the arrangements for debt recovery.
- Recommend the maximum level of debt which any family would be able to incur.
- Approve the school undertaking legal action in conjunction with the local authority's legal department.
- Include in the minutes of the Governing Body their approval to pursue any outstanding debt.
- Ensure the anonymity of the families involved is always preserved.

4. **Pursuance of Debt**

The School should:

- Not pass onto the debtor any costs incurred in pursuing the outstanding debt.
- Give the debtor appropriate notification and time to pay the outstanding charge.
- Send the debtor a minimum final statement, which states that this is the final notice and that further action will be taken.

5. **Waiving of Debt**

The Headteacher can waive or reduce the debt, where it is believed the debtor can produce evidence that they are experiencing financial hardship.

A debt may be written off by resolution of the Governing Body on the recommendation of the Headteacher.

A recommendation to write off a debt can be made only when the Headteacher or School Business Manager has evidence that all avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted, and where it is not cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action.

Any action related to an outstanding debt or the waiving/reducing of a debt should be dealt with confidentially between the debtor and the Headteacher/Office Manager.

### **School Meals Debt Policy for Parents**

As from 2025 Oakthorpe Primary School has adopted a strict **no debt** policy relating to the provision of school meals, breakfast and after school clubs. This in effect will mean all money for school meals, breakfast and after school clubs will need to be paid in advance by parents, carers and staff.

If debts are incurred, then the school will need to consider how the debt can be managed which may mean money which should be spent on your child(ren)'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.

Parent/s must pay in advance for school meals, breakfast and after school clubs and trips using the payment methods outlined below:

- Credit/Debit cards online using Parent Pay
- Pay Point cards (ask in the school office about Pay Point payments)

If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, then please contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals eligibility will generate additional funding for the school in terms of formula and pupil premium funding. The allowance for free school meals is a statutory entitlement and should be claimed if your child qualifies. In order to qualify, you will be required to complete an application form and provide any evidence which may be requested. Free school meal entitlement will only apply from the date the evidence has been received and the application has been approved. It cannot be backdated. The school will support parents with the application. The final decision to grant free school meals will lie with the local authority.

Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for in advance or the child is entitled to a free school meal.

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 immediately using the above payment method together with a sum for future meals otherwise the school will be unable to provide further meals.

If there are insufficient funds on a child's account, then parents will be required to provide a packed lunch for their child. If there is insufficient credit on a child's account and a packed lunch has not been provided, the school will contact the parent to ask them what arrangements they have made to provide their child with food. The expectation is that the parent provides a lunch. However, if every effort is made in asking the parent to provide a lunch and there is still no response the school would provide food for the child.

If payment of the debt is not received within 5 days, the school reserves the right to begin debt management proceedings against parents to recover the debt. The local authority children's services may also be informed that the parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we can help parents manage their child's accounts better and at the same time ensure that all money that is intended for children's learning is available for that purpose.