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| Whitchurch Church of England Primary School | Effective Date: | June 2016 |
| Policy and Procedure Statement | | |
|  <p>Debt Management</p> | Revision Date: | June 2019 |
| | Approval: | |
| | Mrs Kate Steven | |
| Head Teacher | | Mrs Kate Steven |
| Chair of Governors | | Mrs Clare Datta |
| School Business Manager | | Mrs Johanne Scotland |

DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The effective management of debt is important to the success of any school. The Head Teacher and Governors of Whitchurch C of E Primary School have a duty to ensure effective use of the school budget to raise standards and maximise the achievement of pupils.

As part of our community cohesion strategy, we do however believe that we have a wider social responsibility. We need to ensure that there is a balance between the competing needs to maximise income collection and ensuring that parents/carers who are historically shown to be our debtors are treated in a fair and equitable manner.

In order to ensure that the required balance is applied in the recovery of debts, the Governing Body has developed a Debt Management Policy.

The aims of the policy are:

- To ensure a professional, consistent and efficient approach to debt collection.
- To effectively pursue all debts owed to the school ensuring that those with the means to pay do.
- To consider fully the debtors circumstances and ability to pay and so distinguish between the debtor who won't pay and the debtor who genuinely can't pay.
- To ensure that debts are managed in accordance with legislative provisions and best practice.
- To treat the individual consistently and fairly regardless of age, sex, gender, disability and sexual orientation and to ensure that the individuals' right under
- Data Protection and Human Rights legislation are protected.

PAYMENT

The school wishes to work with parents to may payment as easy as possible. Our preferred payment method is via online payments for which there is no charge to parents. Cash and cheques are also accepted via the school office. Where payment of significant sums is required, staged payments are offered to parents e.g. residential trips and music lessons.

DEBT RECOVERY

The school Finance Officer collects and recovers the key sources of income. The most likely cause of debt at Whitchurch CofE Primary School is likely to be from pupil SchoolMeals.

No payment of debt could leave the school vulnerable. Procedures for the management of debt are documented in Hampshire's Scheme for Financing Schools and Schools' Manual of Financial Practice and Procedure.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

It is important that the school is not seen to be colluding with parents or individuals in the non payment of monies owed. Therefore prompt action should be taken. These should include:

School Meals

- Reminding parents/carers that school dinners must be paid for in advance via regular communications.
- Not allowing parents/carers to owe debts of more than £20.00
- Sending formal invoices for recovery of money owing once the debt increases beyond £20.00
- If the debt remains outstanding at £30.00 then to cease provision of school dinners until such time as the debt is cleared unless agreement to continue provision is specifically given by the Head Teacher.
- Helping parents/carers make alternative school meal arrangements until their debt is cleared e.g. collecting pupils for home dinners or sending in a packed lunch.
- To support parents in making applications for Free School Meals where appropriate although it must be noted that these cannot be post-dated and any debts incurred will still need to be cleared.

Residential School Trip

The payment for school trips can place a severe burden on some families. On some occasions, the trip is subsidised by the school at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Parents/carers are given the opportunity to pay in instalments over a considerable time period to ease any financial difficulty. Pupils should not be prevented from participation because of parents' inability to pay or make a contribution (see Charging Policy).

Other School Trips

Contributions to other trips remain voluntary. However parents/carers must however be reminded that on some occasions, the trips could be cancelled if we do not receive sufficient contributions.

Debt Recovery

- 1.** We will actively pursue the collection of monies that are owed.
- 2.** As part of our debt recovery strategy, we will try to negotiate mutually satisfactory arrangements to make full settlement.
- 3.** Further debt cannot be incurred until settlement has been made especially in the case of dinner money except in severe hardship cases and at the sole discretion of the Head Teacher.
- 4.** As a school, we will take account of the health, well-being and educational needs of our pupils and take steps to ensure that the inability of parents/carers, who on occasions are unable to meet their financial responsibilities due to reasons beyond their control, are not excluded from school activities. Notwithstanding this, the school cannot prejudice its own financial viability in order to provide relief to its debtors.
- 5.** The school will employ external debt collection agents as necessary in pursuit of debts.

Equal Opportunities Implications

The way in which the school treats people must be fair and equitable. Adherence to the policy should ensure equality in the school's approach to debt recovery.

Community Cohesion and Human Rights Implications

Debt recovery could have human rights implications especially for vulnerable members of the school population such as refugees or asylum seekers and will need to be carefully managed to ensure that the action is appropriate, transparent and proportionate.