

# ST NICHOLAS C OF E (VC) FIRST SCHOOL

## DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

### Introduction

The school's governing Body has a responsibility to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school to receive all income to which it is entitled. St Nicholas CE (VC) First School will therefore take all reasonable measures to collect any monies owing to it as part of the management of public funds. Collecting money from parents and carers is a sensitive area; we deal with issues of debt collection with sensitivity and confidentiality at all times.

### Aims and Objectives

At St Nicholas CE (VC) First School we comply with all Staffordshire requirements for Financial Regulations for Schools with regard for the following aims:

- To ensure that there are sound and proper financial procedures in school for dealing with the school's finances;
- To ensure that proper controls are in place;
- To provide a clear framework for managing school finances;
- To apply this policy consistently to ensure debt is dealt with in a timely manner,
- To protect the school governors, Headteacher and school employees.

### Procedures

St Nicholas uses the SAP Finance system for invoices and payment, therefore the County Council income team carries out standard debt recovery procedures on behalf of the school. The following procedure will be employed for all outstanding debts (of 14 days or longer):

- A gentle reminder (telephone, text or one to one);
- A formal letter (by Parent Pay, email or post);
- A second formal letter
- A third letter informing the debtor that if no attempt is made to clear the debt it will be passed to the County Council income recovery team.

When all practical and cost effective procedures have been exhausted by the County Council Income team, the Director of Finance and Resources will notify the school of the amount of the debt that is considered to be irrecoverable and should be written off. Writing off a debt will lead to a charge being made on the school budget as the income was credited to the school budget when the invoice was raised. The Governing Body must:

- Approve the writing off of any debt in relation to the school budget;
- Take into account their review of the age and size of the debt together with the advice from the Director of Finance and Resources, i.e. for debts under £10.00.

## **Dinner Money**

Payment for school meals should be paid in advance, and parents or carers are notified well in advance of the costs. At St Nicholas First School, from 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014, Parent Pay (cashless online system) is being used for the collection of dinner money. This will apply to Key Stage 2 pupils only, as Key Stage 1 pupils are receiving Universal Free School Meals from 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2014. Payments can be made online by parents using credit/debit cards or by cash using a requested paypoint card. The payments are recorded and banked by the ParentPay system. Parents/carers will be reminded by letter, text or email if payment is not received. After stage 3 of the procedure (see list above) has been implemented then a further letter will be sent advising parents that their child should bring in a packed lunch. Every effort will be made by school to make personal contact to ascertain whether financial difficulties are present and then to give advice accordingly. All reminders (copies of letters, record of verbal reminders, texts, emails, etc) will be kept on file.

If payment is still not received then the parent/carer will be informed that the matter will be referred to the County Council and recovery action will be pursued (see Procedures).

## **Photographs**

School photographs are a source of funding for the school. Any profit is paid into the School Fund account and contributes towards the cost of some school based activities. Parents can buy the photographs or return them to school. Money for photographs of individual pupils/siblings/family and whole class groups are paid directly to and collected by the photographic company. Any commission payments made are sent to the school by cheque and paid into the School Fund account. All unwanted photographs are collected by the photographic company. The school will not be liable for any outstanding debt.

## **Lettings**

Contracts for lettings of the school premises will be drawn up as necessary between the school and the applicant. Charges will reflect the school's costs for energy, water, lighting and opening up and closing of the school by the school's caretakers. Please see the school remission and charging policy. If a debt is incurred for lettings then the 'Procedures' process, as above will be implemented.

## **Music tuition**

This is no longer provided by the school.

## **Implementation, Monitoring and Review:**

Day to day implementation of the procedures is carried out by the Headteacher, Bursar, Office Co-ordinator and Admin Officer. The Bursar will present a termly report to the Governors of any material amounts (over £10).

Review of the policy will take place every year or sooner as necessary.

**Adopted: 23.10.2014**

**Reviewed: 09.03.2016**

**Next review: Spring Term 2017**

Finance Committee 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014-adopted

Reviewed 09.03.2016