



SCHOOL DEBT POLICY

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Policy Number: | NSP16 | Created by: | CW/HS |
| Reviewed by: | Governing Body | Responsibility: | Governing Body |
| Last Review: | Summer 2024 | Next Review: | Summer 2026 |
| Review Cycle: | 2 Years | Ratified by GB: | 15/07/2024 |

This policy is available in large print. Please contact the school office who will be happy to arrange this for you.

1. Statement of Intent

This policy has been written to help our school to adopt a consistent approach to debt with a view to complete elimination. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents and carers clearly understand what is expected of them.

Purbrook Junior School aims to work with parents and would ask that if a family is having financial difficulties, please do make an appointment to discuss this with either Mrs Ginn, our Home School Link Worker or Mr Williams, our Headteacher. The school may be able to direct you to additional services and organisations who may be able to help you. Early intervention can help avoid debts at school building up. Please be assured that any information will be treated in confidence.

The services provided by Purbrook Junior School are no different to those provided by any other business in that services must be paid for in advance and on demand. Most parents and carers understand that they cannot take their child to a restaurant and expect the provision of food or services without paying, or expect a football coach or music teacher to teach their child(ren) free of charge.

However a minority of parents or carers do not pay on time for services provided by the school, putting the school in the position of subsidising these few families with funding that is intended by law for all children, as well as causing considerable extra work for office staff and embarrassment for all concerned by chasing outstanding money owed to the school.

The Governors at Purbrook Junior School take the stance that the best system of approach is a 'NO DEBT' policy. We understand that it may seem a very hard stand as there has been a culture of debt tolerance, and that this will be tough to implement.

Parents and carers should be aware that when there is an outstanding debt at school, access to other services, e.g. music tuition, breakfast club and after school activities, will not be permitted until the debt is cleared.

2. Music tuition

The school has to pay Hampshire Music Service in advance for the provision of music teachers so it is essential that sufficient funds are available. If there are insufficient funds from those parents and carers who use these services, the school has to cover the shortfall from the schools' main budget allocated for all children. That would be unfair, illegal and unsustainable. Children will not be able to receive music tuition unless parents have paid in advance of attendance.

Payments for music tuition can be made via ParentMail or at the school office and balances are available on your ParentMail account.

Music Tuition Debt Policy Implementation

Level 1: The charge for music tuition is not paid by the agreed dates

Action:

- Office staff send reminders for payment (maximum of three)

Level 2a: A child continues to attend music lessons and the debt remains outstanding

Action:

- The Headteacher issues a final outstanding debt letter and the child is withdrawn from further music lessons until such time as the debt has been cleared.
- The Headteacher may begin legal proceedings to recover the debt.

Level 2b: The debt for music tuition remains outstanding by child no longer attending music lessons

Action:

- The Headteacher issues a final outstanding debt letter.
- The Headteacher may begin legal proceedings to recover the debt.

3. Other services, e.g. breakfast club and after school activities

The school purchases supplies and resources in advance and has to pay staff to run our breakfast club and after school activities, so it is essential that sufficient funds are available. If there are insufficient funds from those parents and carers who use these services, the school has to cover the shortfall from the schools' main budget allocated for all children. That would be unfair, illegal and unsustainable. Children will not be able to attend breakfast club or after school activities unless parents have paid in advance of attendance.

Payments for breakfast club and after school clubs can be made via ParentMail or at the school office and balances (for breakfast club and after school care club) are available on your ParentMail account.

If a parent or carer genuinely forgets to pay, the school may grant a debt allowance of one attendance.

Other services, breakfast club and after school activities Debt Policy Implementation

Level 1: A child's account goes into arrears

Action:

- Office staff generate reminders to parents and carers that account is in arrears and attendance at clubs may be restricted (maximum of 3 reminders)

Level 2: A child continues to be sent to attend breakfast or after school clubs whilst outstanding debts remain on their account and/or amount of debt increases

Action:

- Parents or carers will be informed that their child(ren) can no longer attend clubs whilst the debt is outstanding.
- The Headteacher may begin legal proceedings to recover the debt.

4. Key Information

- A copy of this debt policy is available to view on the school website www.purbrook-jun.hants.sch.uk and available as a hard copy from the school office.
- All services provided by the school including before and after school clubs must be paid for in advance.
- Parents and carers should not send their child(ren) to school without funding and expect the school to provide them with before and after school care.

- Parents and carers who don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch or make arrangements for them to go home at lunch time.
- All parents and carers will be provided with a copy of this policy when their child(ren) are admitted to this school.
- Parents and carers who are experiencing difficulty paying for a chargeable service offered by the school should inform the school office immediately. In most circumstances a payment plan can be agreed to help parents clear their debt to the school as soon as possible.
- Debts left unpaid may be passed to a professional debt collection agency to legally recover on behalf of the school.
- County Court proceedings may also be considered in exceptional cases.
- Parents and carers will be reminded of this policy annually at the beginning of the academic year and periodically throughout via ParentMail and the school website.

5. Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body will review and monitor outstanding debts from information contained in a termly debt report provided by the School Business Manager, to make a decision about pursuing outstanding debts through legal proceedings.

This policy is monitored and reviewed by the Governing Body every two years or earlier if deemed necessary.