

CHARGING & DEBT POLICY

RATIONALE

At Coppetts Wood Primary School and Children's Centre, we recognise that children learn most effectively from first-hand experience. Enriching and extending the curriculum is therefore a priority. Providing opportunities for discovery, enjoyment and inspiration leads to greater understanding and deeper learning.

The school is committed to providing a high-quality service. The fee structure for childcare is competitive and fair for all families. Every effort will be made to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for parents/carers to pay and where appropriate to pursue recovery.

However, where debts are allowed to build up, it often becomes harder for the person owing the money to pay. If a debt is not repaid then money which should be utilised to pay for children's education is used to subsidise these debts, which is an unacceptable use of public funds. We therefore hope that parents will understand why we expect them to pay for services in a timely manner.

AIMS

- To clarify which services are charged for.
- To provide a system which provides a variety of different methods of payment in order to facilitate ease of paying.
- To provide a clear system which allows parents/carers to know what they owe and how they can pay it off.
- To take prompt action to ensure that school debts will not be allowed to increase.
- To ensure a fair and consistent approach to dealing with late payments.
- To provide clear communication to allow the debtor every opportunity to settle their debt and ensure the school can prove all reasonable steps have been taken to recover the debt should the issue proceed further.
- To ensure that the entire school budget is used to provide educational services to all of our children.
- To recover debts quickly.

SERVICES WHICH ARE PAID FOR

- **School Meals:** Meals are charged at £2.34 per meal unless the pupil is eligible for Free School Meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals.
- **Breakfast Club:** Breakfast Club is charged at £3 per day unless the child is eligible for benefits related Free School Meals. This is drop-in childcare available from 07:45 to 08:45 on school days for children in Reception to Year 6.

- **Nursery Extended Hours:** The school offers some full-time nursery places from 08:45 to 15:15 on school days. Priority is given to pupils who have a 30-hour code. Pupils who do not have a 30-hour code can pay for the extended nursery hours at £21 per day. The hourly rate is £6 per hour. £21 covers 3 hours of childcare and 0.5 hours for lunchtime. Pupils will be provided a school meal which is not charged for. Refunds will not be considered in instances of short-term sickness or absence. Concessions for long-term sickness are at the sole discretion of management of Coppetts Wood Primary School.
- **Enrichment Clubs:** Parents/carers are asked to make a contribution for clubs run by the school to cover the cost of materials, resources and staffing at a charge of £39 per term, covering 13 sessions. Concessions may be offered for pupils who are eligible for benefits related Free School Meals. Outside organisations may charge for clubs and activities they run after school which may be higher than those run by school staff. Parents will be informed of their costs and booking arrangements. All clubs must be paid for by parents/carers before the new terms' club start date. If a parent decides to withdraw their child from a club, no refunds will be given other than in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of management of Coppetts Wood Primary School.
- **Children's Centre Community Sessions:** Activity sessions run within the Children's Centre by commissioned services or by Children's Centre staff will invite a suggested donation of £1-£2 per session. Commissioned services sometimes charge a higher amount to cover costs of delivery, prices are published on the termly timetable and can be waived in agreement with Children's Centre staff.
- **Music Tuition:** Private music lessons are offered at £9 per session. Parents/carers may take up the option of their children being taught on the school premises by the school's music teacher. The full cost of the lessons must be paid to the school.
- **Educational Visits:** A sum will be identified, and parents/carers will be asked for this amount as a voluntary contribution to enable the trip to go ahead. Classes may raise funds to cover the shortfall for activities as agreed with the Head Teacher. If there is a major shortfall in contributions, it will be at the discretion of the Head Teacher whether or not the trip will take place.
- **Residential Trips:** Parents/carers are asked to contribute the full cost per child for boarding and lodging. Parents of children entitled to benefits related Free School Meals may make an appointment to meet the Head Teacher to discuss a reduction in the cost.
- **Equipment:** Depending on the circumstances, the school will ask for payment for loss of damaged books, or wilful damage to school property.
- **Swimming:** Please note that the cost of swimming lessons is met fully by the school.
- **After School Club:** Ladybird London run an after-school club from 15:20 to 17:45 on school days. The booking arrangements and charging is handled directly through them.

PAYMENT & DEBT RECOVERY

Receiving Payments

Payments for School Meals, Breakfast Club, Nursery Extended Hours, Enrichment Clubs, Music Tuition, Educational Visits, Residential Trips and Equipment are all handled through the School Money application. The preferred payment method is via bank card using the online School Money portal. However, cash, cheque and bank transfer are also acceptable and can be paid directly at the school front desk and recorded by the administration team on School Money.

Donations for the Children's Centre Community Sessions are received in cash into a donation box.

Due Dates

Payments for School Meals and Breakfast Club become due on the Monday following the week the charges have been added to the pupil's account.

Payments for Nursery Extended Hours become due two weeks after the charge has been added to the pupil's account.

Payments for Enrichment Clubs and Music Tuition are due on the day before the term starts.

Payments for Educational Visits are due the day before the visit is scheduled to occur.

Payments for Residential Trips are due one month in advance of the trip unless agreed otherwise by the management of Coppetts Wood Primary School.

Payments for Equipment are due immediately.

Debt Recovery

Once a debt becomes due the recovery process below will be followed.

WEEK 1: The debtor will be sent a text reminding them of the outstanding amount via the School Money application.

WEEK 2: The debtor will be sent an informal reminder via the text function of the Teachers2Parents application.

WEEK 3: The debtor will be sent a formal reminder via the email function of the Teachers2Parents application.

WEEK 4: The debtor will be sent a final reminder via registered post. The letter will advise the debtor that the matter will be referred to the governors to consider legal action. The letter will include the words “further action will be taken if this account remains outstanding after a period of 5 days” plus a clear statement of the monies owed.

WEEK 5: The debt is referred to the Head Teacher who will review the case and discuss the situation with the debtor. The Head Teacher is authorised to waive debts up to £150. A debt may be waived when it is believed the debtor is experiencing serious financial hardship, or if all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted and it is believed it would not be cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action. Alternatively, they can agree a payment plan or refer the debt to the Governing Body.

The Governing Body will review the case and make a decision about how to proceed. They may choose to waive the debt or pursue legal action. If legal action is taken, the debt will be registered with the County Court. The registration of the debt will enable enforcement action through the County Court. This can include instruction of the County Court Bailiff or the High Court Sheriff to seize goods; attachment of earnings (instructing employers to make deductions from wages); charging orders and third-party debt orders.

Non-financial Consequences

Pupils who take School Meals and Breakfast Club will not be able to continue if there is still a debt on their account at week 4 of the debt recovery process. The parent/carer will have to send the pupil to school with a packed lunch and will have to remain with their child in the mornings until school starts at 08:45. If the parent does not send a packed lunch for the child or leaves the child unattended in the mornings, this will be recorded in My Concern and could be submitted to Social Services by the Head Teacher.

Pupils who make use of the Nursery Extended Hours will be removed from the extended placement if there is still a debt on their account at week 4 of the debt recovery process. They will not have the opportunity to request extended hours again.

Pupils will not be allowed to join enrichment clubs, music tuition or residential trips without payment in advance or agreeing special arrangements with the Head Teacher on the basis of benefits related Free School Meals eligibility.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Staff will treat debtors with due courtesy and respect and taking full account of the Coppetts Wood Primary School and Children’s Centre Equal Opportunities Policy.
- The Administrator, Senior Administrator and School Business Manager will:
 - Ensure that all invoices outstanding are accurately recorded and maintained.
 - Ensure there is documentary evidence of all the steps undertaken by the school to recover the debt including recording the dates that invoices and statements were distributed, and/or phone calls and letters that have been sent to debtors.
 - For all outstanding debts, ensure a final statement is issued to all persons liable for the charge. This statement must state “further action will be taken if this account remains outstanding after a period of 5 days”.



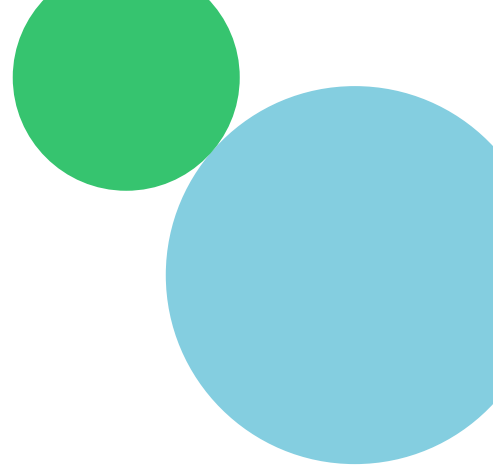
Create Coppetts

Work Hard Wood

Persevere Primary

Succeed School

Coppetts Wood
A Sure Start Children's Centre



- The Governing Body will:
 - Consider the arrangements for debt recovery.
 - Recommend the maximum level of debt which any family would be able to incur.
 - Approve any legal action taken by the school and include in the minutes of the Governing Body meeting their approval to pursue any outstanding debt.
 - Ensure the anonymity of the families involved is preserved at all times.
 - Write off a debt on the recommendation of the Head Teacher or delegate.
 - Regularly review this policy to take into account the cost of recovery and the income from debt reclaimed as well as the deterrent effectiveness of the policy.

Revision History

Version	Revision Date	Revised By	Revision
1.0	October 2021	Raquel Vieira	Charging and Debt policies reviewed and combined into one policy.

Date for next review

October 2022

Distribution

Shared with

- Staff via briefing and on shared network
- Governors via committee meetings/email