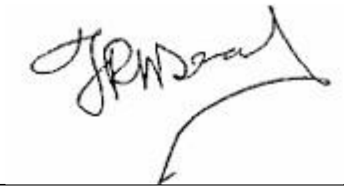
ANSTEY FIRST SCHOOL

Debt Recovery Policy

Approved by: Full Governing Board **Date: April 2026**
Last reviewed on: April 2026
Next review due by: April 2027

Approval

Approved by: Full Governing Body	
Chair of Governors Name	Tom Sealy
Signature	
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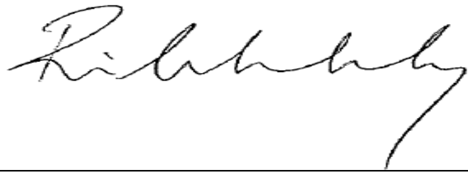
Signature	

Version

Version	Author	Notes
V1.0	M Taylor	Changes to Formatting

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Anstey First School will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debts as part of its management of public funds. A debt will be written off only after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it.

1.2 Anstey First School's debt recovery policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the Financial Handbook for Schools and any other legal requirements. In particular:

- The Governing Body will not write-off any debt belonging to the school which exceeds £500. Such debts will be referred to the County Council's Finance Director and formal agreement obtained before writing off. (If any debtor has a number of debts which together exceed the write-off limit, then these will be treated as a single total amount).
- A formal record of any debts written off will be maintained and this will be retained for seven years.
- Anstey First School will not initiate any legal action to recover debts but will refer any debts which it has not been able to collect to the County Secretary to consider taking legal or other action to recover the debt (unless a decision to write-off the debt is demonstrably a reasonable course of action).

1.3 The school will not write-off any debt belonging to the County Council or another party. If in doubt as to the appropriate action to collect any such debts, the school will seek advice promptly from officers of the County Council.

1.4 Sections 449-462 of the Education Act 1996 set out the law on charging for school activities in schools maintained by local authorities in England.

1.5 Neither the school nor the local authority is permitted to charge for admission or for the provision of education, subject to the limited exceptions referred to in the DfE's guidance on Charging for school activities and the supporting legislation. The school may invite voluntary contributions for some activities, if it is made clear that the contributions are voluntary and that children's participation in the activity is not dependent on whether or not the parent contributes.

1.6 No charge can be made unless the governing body has drawn up a charging and remissions policy, which must be made available to parents.

2. Debt Collection Procedures

2.1 School staff are expected to apply the following procedures to secure the collection of all debts.

Recording of Debtors

2.2 Invoices will normally be raised in respect of amounts due to the school. A schedule of invoices raised will be kept, showing the date of invoice, the invoice number, the name of the debtor, the reason for the invoice and the amount payable, with any VAT shown separately. As payment is received, this is recorded against the schedule.

2.3 In the event of the supply of any goods or services where payment is not received in advance or ‘at the point of sale’ but no invoice is raised, a separate record will show what was supplied, the value, the date(s) and the identity of the ‘debtor’, *e.g.* parent, hirer, etc. As payment is received, this is recorded against the schedule. Note in most cases, this schedule will be held on the school’s payment portal, School Gateway.

Due Date for Payment

2.4 Where invoices are raised these should state the date by which payment is due. In all other cases correspondence with parents, etc. should indicate the maximum period that the school regards as reasonable before payment is overdue. The Headteacher should determine what the reasonable ‘credit period’ is if this is not otherwise specified.

Reminder Letters

2.5 **Informal reminders**
Where the debtor is a parent, initial reminders may be informal and made either in person (*e.g.* when a parent comes to collect/drop off the child) or by telephone – normally, the school administrator will undertake this duty, having built up a good relationship with the parents.

2.6 **First reminder letter**
If action is to proceed further, it is necessary to prove that all reasonable attempts have been made to recover the debt, and that these attempts have been made in a timely manner, i.e. at the time that the debt first became overdue. Therefore, a first formal reminder letter should be issued two weeks from any informal reminder / the date of supply.

2.7 **Second reminder letter**
A second reminder letter will be issued two weeks after the first reminder letter.

2.8 Note that should a debt need to be taken beyond two reminder letters, formal written evidence may have to be produced. It is therefore important that at least one, but preferably two, written reminders are sent. Details of all reminders, whether verbal or in writing, should be maintained. Where a letter is issued, a copy must be retained on file.

Failure to Respond to Reminders/Settle a Debt

2.9 If no response is received from the reminders issued, a letter will be sent to the debtor advising them that the matter will be referred to the County Secretary’s Department,

2.10 Legal and Administration. At the discretion of the Headteacher, the debtor may be advised that they will be required to pay in advance for all future supplies or the supply will no longer be available to them. This decision and its basis will be recorded.

Negotiation of Repayment Terms

2.11 Debtors are expected to settle the amount owed by a single payment as soon as possible after receiving the first reminder letter. If a debtor asks for ‘repayment terms’ these may be negotiated at the discretion of the Headteacher. A record of all such agreements will be kept. A letter will be issued to the debtor confirming the agreed terms. The settlement period should be the shortest that is judged reasonable. The Headteacher will decide whether any debtor who has been granted extended settlement terms will not be offered any further credit and will be required to pay in advance in future.

Costs of Debt Recovery

2.12 Where the school incurs material additional costs in recovering a debt then the Headteacher will decide whether to seek to recover such costs from the debtor. This decision and its basis will be recorded. The debtor will be formally advised that they will be required to pay the additional costs incurred by the school in recovering the debt.

2.13 **No charge is permitted for:**

- an admission application to the school -
- education provided during school hours (including the supply of any materials, books, instruments, or other equipment).
- education provided outside school hours if it is part of the national curriculum or part of religious education.
- instrumental or vocal tuition, for pupils learning individually or in groups, unless the tuition is provided at the request of the pupil's parent.

2.14 The school may make a charge for

- any materials, books, instruments, or equipment, where the child's parent wishes him/her to own them.
- optional extras (see 2.1 below).
- music and vocal tuition, in limited circumstances (see page 6).

3. Reporting of Outstanding Debt Levels

3.1 The Headteacher will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is known / can be determined at any time.

3.2 The Finance Governor will monitor the level of outstanding debts on an annual basis to determine whether action to recover debts is effective.

4. Bad Debts

4.1 Write-off of any debt, up to a maximum of £500, requires the written approval of the Governing Body. A record of the write-off, the reason for it, and the approval for it, will be retained for seven years.

4.2 Debts in excess of £500 must be referred to the County Council's Finance Director.

4.3 Any debt belonging to the County Council will be referred to the appropriate officer for consideration/action without delay once the school has taken reasonable measures to collect the debt (*i.e.* has followed the reminder notification procedures set out above).

5. Herts Catering Ltd

5.1 Payments for school meals are made direct to Herts Catering Ltd (HCL) via School Gateway. The school is however responsible for monitoring levels of debt and ensuring that payment for meals is made promptly. A reconciliation of meals taken, and payments received should be made monthly when the trading statement is received from HCL. The procedure for pursuit of debts is the same as for amounts owed to the school. Debts in excess of £30 remaining at the end of a term should be reported to HCL, who will then attempt to recover the monies. Debts can only be removed with the authority of HCL.