



Kingsway Junior School

'Developing Confident, Enthusiastic and Happy Learners!'

Debt Recovery Policy (including dinner debt)

Responsible committee	Full Governing Body
Date Reviewed	Autumn 2025
Next Review	Autumn 2027
Signed on behalf of the Governing Body	<i>Caroline Loison</i>
Print Name	Caroline Loison

Dignity Statement

Kingsway Junior School is committed to providing a learning environment where all children are treated with dignity and respect. As stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children are born with dignity, which cannot be taken away, regardless of behaviour, ability, disability, race, economic background, gender, sexuality or beliefs. Duty Bearers' protection of children's rights affords them this dignity and allows them to access education free from barriers.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kingsway Junior will take all reasonable measures to collect any monies owed, as part of its management of public funds. A debt will only be written off after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it.
- 1.2 In order to minimise the risk of debts being incurred, payments will be required to be made in advance, or 'by return', as appropriate.

2. Debt recovery process

2.1 *First Reminder Letter:*

The school will send a first reminder letter within one week after the payment income was due. A written record will be kept in the office.

2.2 *Second Reminder Letter*

A second reminder letter will be issued within one week after the first reminder deadline has expired. Records should clearly state when first and second reminder letters have been sent out.

- 2.3 The Headteacher has delegated this responsibility to the Office Manager who will ensure the records are maintained and updated.

2.4 *Headteacher Reminder*

If the account is not settled after the deadline of the second reminder letter, the Headteacher will write a formal letter to the parents/carers, requesting payment immediately. The parents/carers will be informed that the matter will be referred to the Governing Body, with regard for further action, should payment not be immediately forthcoming.

3. Governing Body's monitoring of bad debts

- 3.1 The Governing Body has the authority to consider and write off bad debts up to a value of £500. Items above £500 must be referred to the Chief Financial Officer for approval. The Governing Body has adopted the paragraph in the Handbook of Financial Regulations (HCC) which states the following:

'A debt may only be written off with prior approval of the relevant officer or body which depends on the amount of the debt as shown below:-

- Up to £500 - the Governing Body may authorize a write off, where income accrues to the school. Otherwise the approval of the Director of Education is required, who will consult with the Chief Financial Officer.

- Over £500 -, the Governing Body may authorise a write off with the agreement of the Chief Financial Officer.'

3.2 When the Governing Body writes off a debt this shall be formally recorded and the record retained for six years.

3.3 Consideration given to write off a debt will be based on the value of debt outstanding and the individual financial situation of the family concerned.

4. Legal action

4.1 Legal action in respect of outstanding debts may be initiated by the Local Authority who will advise on the correct course of action.

5. Dinner money - bad debts

5.1 To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of School Meal debt, the Staff and Governors believe that the fairest approach is to have a 'zero tolerance' approach. Although this may seem harsh, it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all pupils and not a small number.

5.2 The process is as follows:

- A daily text message is sent to all parents / carers requesting a payment if a pupil had a dinner.
- If a child arrives at school without a school lunch and there is an outstanding debt on the account of up a week's worth of meals, a letter (example 1) will be sent to the parent / carer informing them to provide their child with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears and requesting the outstanding bill be paid. If the child is not provided with a packed lunch and the parent / carer cannot be contacted, the school will provide a basic lunch of a sandwich and drink only.
- If the debt exceeds the cost of two week's meals for a family, and / or action proves unsuccessful in securing the outstanding money, the school should inform the safeguarding team and a formal letter (example 2) will be sent to the parent / carer explaining that the school is not obliged to provide a school dinner where the debt has not been cleared.

6. Monitoring and review of dinner debts

6.1 The outstanding debts will be reported to Governors. The school does reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school dinner debts and inform the local authority that the child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunchtimes.

7. Monitoring and Review of Debt Recovery Policy

7.1 The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the Governing Body

7.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years

Examples of letters sent regarding dinner debts.

Example 1

Dear xxxx

According to our records, you have not paid dinner money for your child xxxx in class xxxx .
As at xx/xx/xxxx your account is showing a debt of £xx.

In order that the school's budget is not used, to clear this debt please make arrangements for the outstanding money debt to be paid immediately. Once you have cleared this current debt, I would be grateful if you could keep the account in credit. The current cost of a school meal is £xxx per day.

If you think you qualify for free school meals, please contact the school office for further information.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Example 2

Dear xxxx

I am writing to you regarding the current level of outstanding dinner money debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondence and messages, the debt for your child xxxx in class xxxx is still outstanding. The school's records show that as of xx/xx/xxxx your account is £xx in debt.

If you think you qualify for free school meals, please contact the school office for further information.

Since the school has to fund all the school meal debts from its budget it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of service provided to all pupils is maintained.

Unfortunately, if the debt is not cleared by xx/xx/xxxx a school meal will no longer be provided and you must make your own arrangements.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and the local authority and / or the safeguarding team will be informed that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunchtime.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further, please contact the school so the matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher