



Debt Policy and Procedure

Produced by	Freshfield Nursery School
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Freshfield Nursery School operates a **NO DEBT** policy relating to services provided or goods purchased.

The Governing Board of Freshfield Nursery School believes that a consistent approach that does not allow families to build up large debts is appropriate and in line with good financial management as:

- If debts are incurred, they are paid for from the school budget. Therefore, money which should be spent on the children's education is diverted inappropriately
- It is not defensible to allow vulnerable families to incur debts that they cannot repay
- The school has a duty to account for the appropriate use of public funds
- It is very time consuming for office staff to pursue debt

In all cases, the school reserves the right to refuse access to all services including (but not exclusively) the Breakfast Club and After School Clubs.

We will ensure that parents are aware of this policy by:

- Publishing it on the school's website
- Writing to parents when a debt is accruing (Appendix B)
- Reminders in newsletters
- Link to the website on contracts for extended hours

Parents that are experiencing difficulty in paying for chargeable services 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 as soon as possible.

In the event that all avenues of debt collection have been explored and failed, schools can make a claim to the County Courts. Government website <https://www.gov.uk/make-court-claim-for-money> provides guidance as to how to make a claim and which has links to the relevant court forms to complete.

Procedures (Appendix A)

A growing debt is identified

- Parents are sent an email and text reminding them that the payment is overdue on 2 occasions.
- Payment is to be made via cash, cheque, childcare vouchers or tax free childcare or Parentmail within 1 week of the last email or text.

No receipt of payment (1)

- Parents sent a debt letter 1 by post, stating the arrears on their child's Parentmail payments' account and the time scale by which payment must be received.
- Payment is to be made via cash, cheque, childcare vouchers or tax free childcare or Parentmail within 1 week of the letter being sent.

No receipt of payment (2)

- The parents/carers are contacted by phone confirming how much is owed and reminding them of the policy
- If necessary a payment plan is agreed

No receipt of payment (3)

Parents sent debt letter 2 and are informed that:

- they can no longer access these services until the debt is cleared in full.
- the school may begin legal proceedings to recover the debt.
- In some circumstances school can request the LA legal team send parents a letter requesting payment of the debt.

Office Procedural Guide for Bad Debts

Level 1 Indicator: An account goes into debt

Action for Level 1: Email and texts X 2 from School Business Manager

Level 2 indicator: Account still not paid

Action for Level 2: Letter/invoice sent by post to parent

Level 3 Indicator: Services are requested again without the debt being cleared

Action for Level 3: Personal contact (1)

Phone call to the parent/carer to:

- Remind them of the level of debt
- Offer a payment plan if appropriate
- Agree a clear timescale for the debt to be cleared

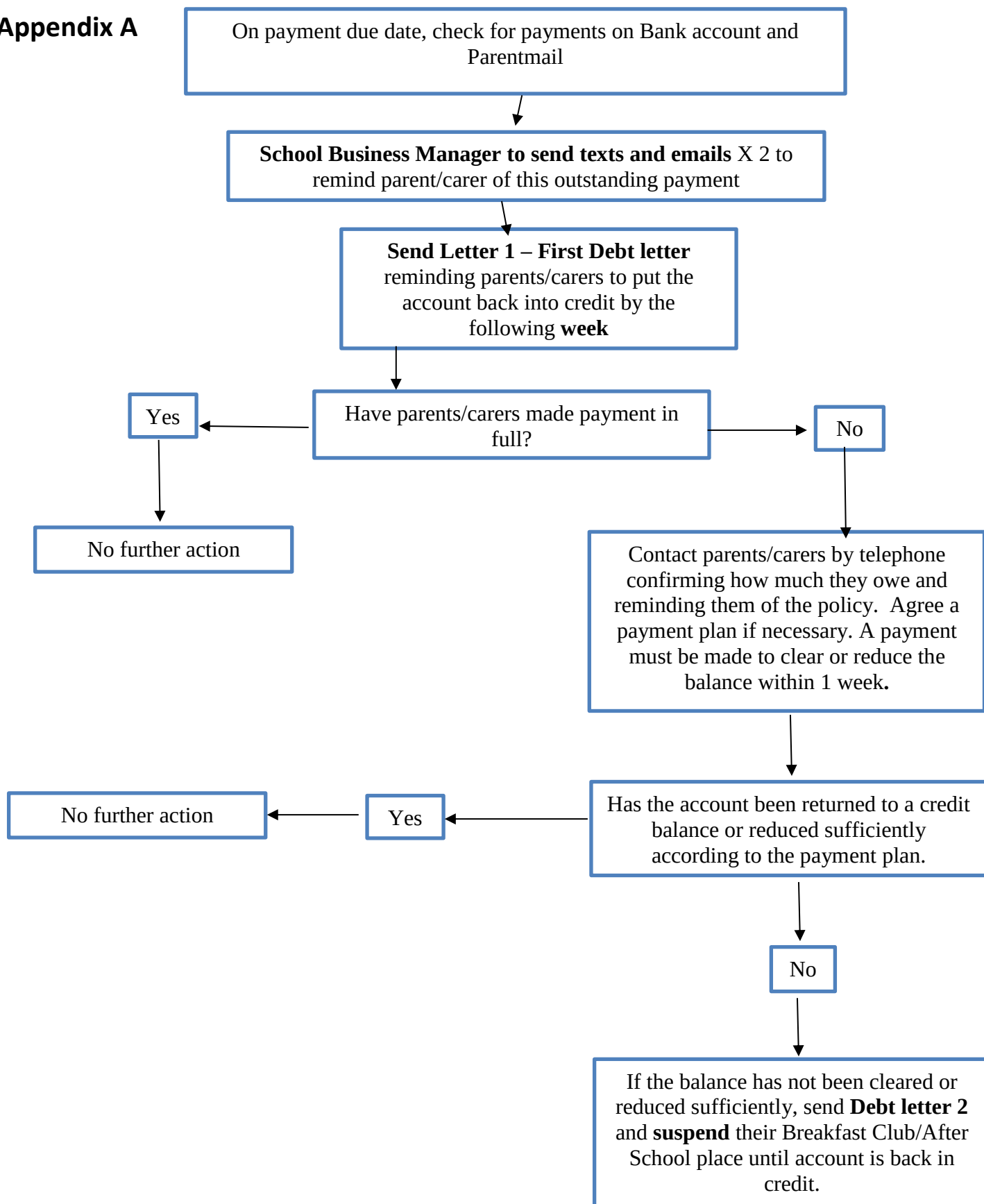
Level 4 Indicator: No action taken to clear or reduce the debt

Action for Level 3: Debt letter 2 (Appendix B)

Phone call to the parent/carer to:

- Remind them of the agreement made
- Advise them that access to **all** services will now be suspended
- Remind them that legal action may result should no payment be made
- School to consider claiming via county court judgement

Appendix A



Appendix B

Debt Letter 1

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: Overdue payment reminder for:

Class:

I am writing to remind you that according to our records, the payment is outstanding for extended services, in the sum of £ .

In order for your child to continue to attending this provision it is important to pay your invoice by the given date. Payments can be made by cash, cheque, childcare vouchers, tax free childcare or via Parentmail.

If, for any reason, you cannot arrange this payment, please contact the office immediately.

You can check your account balance at any time by logging into your Parentmail account.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please let us know.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Debt Letter 2

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: 2nd Overdue Payment Reminder – Suspension of Extended Services

Our records show that despite our earlier reminders, you have still not made the necessary payment for your outstanding invoice.

As a result of this, their Breakfast club/After School place has now been **SUSPENDED**.

As at _____ (date), your account is showing a debt of £_____. Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately or contact the School Business Manager to arrange a payment plan.

School accepts payments of cash, cheque, childcare vouchers or tax free childcare or by card on the Parentmail app. If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the School Business Manager, to discuss.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher