



**St George's Catholic Voluntary
Academy**

School Charging and Debt Policy

May 2021

Approved by Finance Committee May 2021

Next Review Due Spring 2021

Objective

This policy aims to help our school to adopt a consistent approach to debt with a view to eliminating it completely. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents and carers clearly understand what is expected.

Key Principles

- To take prompt action to ensure that the school debts do not build up
- To have a clear threshold beyond which debts will not be allowed to increase
- To ensure that parents are aware of the policy
- To ensure a fair and consistent approach to dealing with late payments

The school has no facility to carry debts. If debts are incurred then the school has to use its budget to pay for them. This means that money, which is intended by law for all children, is spent subsidising a few families as well as causing considerable extra work for office staff and therefore a cost to the school budget.

Most parents understand that they cannot take their child to a café and expect them to be given food without paying or to a music teacher who will teach them free of charge. Like this, the school does not accept debt.

The Charges with effect from May 2021

School Meals	£2.30 per day
Nursery	Rates (depending on age and duration) from £19.60
Breakfast Club	£3.60 per day
Breakfast Club Sibling	£3.35 per day
After School Club	£7.20 per day
After School Club Sibling	£6.70 per day
Music Tuition	£210 per year
School Trips and Workshops	Each trip or workshop is priced individually and advised to parents by letter via ParentPay
Homework Books	Individually priced and advised by letter and ParentPay
Other activities	Individually priced and advised by letter and ParentPay

These fees are to be reviewed annually.

The Procedure

Clubs/Music Lessons/Trips/Workshops/Homework Books/School Meals

To pay for these items, please activate your ParentPay account by logging on to:

www.parentpay.com

All services provided including school lunches, music tuition and instrument hire, breakfast and after school clubs, trips and workshops must be paid for in advance. No child should be sent to school having not paid and expect to be given a meal, music lessons or access to Breakfast and After School Club Care. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch. Children will not be given a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those who are entitled to free school meals. We appreciate that sometimes it can be easy to forget to pay for lunches and for that reason we will allow parents a maximum of £10.00 leeway. If parents

do not pay once the debt reaches £10.00, parents will be responsible for providing their child(ren) with a packed lunch. This will prevent parents or carers incurring large debts.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a healthy packed lunch. In the instance of a debt payment not being received and a packed lunch not being provided, a member of the Admin Team will phone the parent or carer to ask them to pay for the lunch via ParentPay or come to the school with a packed lunch. If payment of the debt is still not received after what the school deem to be a reasonable amount of time, then the Headteacher will ask the parent to come to school to discuss the matter.

For Music Tuition; if the fees are not paid in full by the half-term break in any term then the child cannot attend lessons again until the debt is cleared.

For the Breakfast and After School Clubs; a debit limit of £49.00 has been set which equates to 7 sessions of the ASC and 14 sessions of the BC. Until the debt is cleared we will not be able to accept the child(ren) in the clubs.

Parents who are experiencing difficulty in 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. Open communication is the way in which we prefer to resolve financial matters.

This policy intends to provide clear guidelines to assist parents and carers by providing greater clarity regarding the payment of monies to school. It is hoped that this will help the school to maximise the amount available to spend on children's learning.

Free School Meals

If a parent or carer believes that their child may be entitled to free school meals, then additional information on this statutory right can be obtained by visiting:

<https://pps.lgfl.org.uk/>

Only eligible pupils will qualify and the school will be happy to assist parents and carers with completing the necessary online application form if required. If a parent or carer is notified by their local authority that their child is no longer eligible for Free School Meals, then they are required to notify the school immediately to prevent incurring a school meal debt.

Establishing a Debt Policy

St George's Catholic Primary School will notify parents of this policy in the following ways:

-  Via E-mail
-  The School website

Notification will occur at least once each academic year. All parents will be provided with information in the Home-School Agreement about the school's 'no debt' policy when their child first joins the school

Level 1

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

Check 1 – is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 – is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Be aware that payments made at a PayPoint may take up to 48 hours to appear on the school's account.

Check 3 – does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Check 4 – is the register correct? Check with the teacher and SMSA

Action 1: Send a gentle debt reminder by text

Level 2

Indicator: A child comes to school on a consecutive day without the debt being paid or a packed lunch.

Check – has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact. A member of the admin team will phone the parent to ask them to pay the money owed online or bring a packed lunch to school before lunchtime.

Level 3

Indicator: The parent does not comply with the above

Check – has this parent made contact?

Action 3: Headteacher to invite parent to a meeting. If appointment is not kept, a debt letter will be sent by 'signed for' post from Headteacher and ask child to bring in packed lunch

Level 4

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options

Check – has this parent made contact?

Action 4: Start proceedings to recover the debt from a small claims court