



Extended Services (Childcare) Debt Policy

Background

This Extended Services Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children attend Extended Services provision. The Local Authority is not accountable for the administration of Extended Services, therefore the responsibility falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

Provision of Extended Services

The Extended Services provision is no different to any other business in that it has to be paid for by someone. This provision is available to children, but at a cost to the parent / carer.

Cost of Extended Services

Childcare provision is available to children at a cost of £4 per hour. These costs **must** be paid for one month in advance. Any revision to the Childcare prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

Payment for Childcare Services

The childcare fees are payable one month in advance, on the first Monday of every month or the first day nursery is open if it has been a school holiday, Bank holiday or Inset day.

Payment cheques are made payable to Derbyshire County Council, payment by cash is placed in a sealed coloured and named envelope provided by nursery and posted in the locked silver box; we also accept childcare vouchers paid into the school fund account and later transferred into the school budget.

The School must ensure that all Childcare money collected is banked in a timely manner in accordance with the School's Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by audit.

Management of Extended Services

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of providing Extended Services, the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Although, this may seem harsh to some parents it is important that the Childcare provision does not run at a loss, otherwise the school budget will be affected, and to the detriment of all our pupils.

When payment has failed to be produced for the forthcoming month's provision, the school may allow provision to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation, e.g. Lost or forgotten money, temporary hardship etc. however, details should be recorded in writing and a record maintained and monitored. Should a family be late in paying for childcare in advance on two occasions, the school will issue a letter reminding parents/carers of the terms of the childcare contract (Letter 1). The school will advise the parent/carer that we are not obliged to provide Childcare provision where advance payment is not forthcoming

If a child has childcare provision which has not been paid for, (that is childcare has not been paid one month in advance and childcare has been taken with still no payment) a letter detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school within 7 days. The same process will be used if a cheque is not honoured by the bank. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require this provision, the school must establish if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to speak confidentially to the Head Teacher, when stepped payments may be agreed.

On the first day that childcare is taken without advanced payment a formal letter will be sent to the parent/carer informing them of their required actions (letter 2). Payment will be requested within 7 days and if this is not paid, then childcare provision will be suspended.

If the debt is not paid and the parent/carer has not made representation to the Headteacher, then the school will write to the parent/carer (Letter 3), suspending Childcare.

Monitoring and Recovery of Childcare Debts

At each meeting of the Governing Body/Finance Committee, the Head Teacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding Childcare debt. The aim of this policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to the School's solicitors. The School does, however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding Childcare debts and inform the Local Authority, Legal Services.

All Write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Governing Body/Finance Committee following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Should a family be in debt or experiencing difficulty with payments, they may not be required to give the contracted 4 week's notice to terminate childcare. The headteacher has the authority to terminate the contract immediately without the notice period after considering the information given by the family.

Letter 1

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)
(Address Line 1)
(Address Line 2)
(Address Line 3)
(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

Childcare provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the School's financial records you have not paid Childcare money for your child (pupil name). As agreed on your contract, payments must be made one month in advance. As at xx/xx/xx you owe £xx on your account.

In order that there is no detriment to the school's budget, please clear your child's account by making arrangements for the outstanding Childcare amount to be paid immediately. Once you have cleared the current amount I should be grateful if you could take steps to ensure your account is paid in advance, as you have agreed on your contract. The current cost of this provision is xx per week.

I would like to remind you that the school is not obliged to provide Childcare provision where advance payment is not forthcoming

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

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Letter 2

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

Childcare provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the School's financial records you have not paid Childcare money for your child (pupil name). As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt and you have taken childcare which has not been paid for.

In order that there is no detriment to the school's budget, please clear your childcare debt by making arrangements for the outstanding Childcare debt to be paid by xx/xx/xx (7 days). Failure to pay within 7 days will result in childcare being suspended on this day.

Once you have cleared the current debt I should be grateful if you could take steps to ensure your account is paid one month in advance, as you have agreed on your contract. The current cost of this provision is xx per week.

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

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Letter 3

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

Childcare provided to (Pupil Name)

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding Childcare debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of Childcare provision is £x per week.

As the School's budget will have to fund any overall debt incurred through Childcare provision, it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all children is maintained. Unfortunately, as your debt has not been cleared, the Childcare provision is now suspended for your child. The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and to inform the Local Authority.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher