

CHANCERY EDUCATION TRUST

DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

MARCH 2024

Updated April 2026

Next Review Date: March 2027

Chancery Education Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Executive Summary for the CET Debt Recovery Policy Updated April 2026:

Purpose & Principles

- The Trust must recover all funds owed to protect the school budget.
- Applies to all debts (meals, trips, clubs, services, etc.).
- Operates a zero-tolerance approach to debt to prevent large arrears and reduce admin burden.
- Emphasises fairness, clarity, and supporting families where possible.

Payment Expectations

- All services must be paid in advance (meals, clubs, trips, etc.).
- Payments are made via the online payment system.
- Parents can request a payment plan if struggling, but:
 - Must cover ongoing costs and reduce arrears
 - Missed payments → plan withdrawn

School Meals

- Free meals only for eligible pupils (must be approved by the Local Authority).
- Universal free meals (e.g. London funding) are temporary and not the same as FSM entitlement.
- If arrears build up, the school can stop providing hot meals.

Debt Recovery Process

1. Monitoring
 - CFO regularly tracks outstanding debts.
2. Informal reminders
 - Parents are notified that payment is due.
3. Formal reminders
 - Continued non-payment leads to escalation.
 - Child may be suspended from services (meals, clubs, nursery).
4. Further action
 - Payments for trips may be used to offset existing debts.
 - Unresolved debt or missed agreements → referred to external debt collectors.

Support for Families

- School recognises financial difficulties and encourages early communication.
- May offer support, advice, or referrals if parents engage proactively.

Governance & Review

- Policy is reviewed every 3 years (next review: March 2027).
- Changes require committee approval.
- Available on the school website or on request.

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Chancery Education Trust – Debt Recovery Policy – March 2024. Updated April 2026

CHANCERY EDUCATION TRUST

DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

Introduction

The Chancery Education Trust has a duty to ensure the Academy School receives all the funds which it is due. This policy has been created to ensure the appropriate procedures are in place to deal with debts and the recovery of assets. It encompasses all debts owed to the Academy School including, but not limited to, payments for goods, services, school trips and school meal payments.

Rationale

This policy has been compiled recognising the difficulties placed on Academy Schools in balancing the social welfare of pupils with the management of the Academy School budget. By introducing a zero-tolerance debt policy, we aim to reduce the risk of parents incurring large debts that they will struggle to pay and minimise the amount of staff time taken to chase outstanding payments. Our consistent, fair and clear approach will help parents and carers understand the procedure and what is expected.

As the Academy School is responsible for managing payments and arrears from the school budget, when debts are incurred, the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money that should be spent on the children's education by law is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

Key Information

1. A copy of the Debt Recovery Policy is available on the Academy School website.
2. All services provided including school meals, music tuition, breakfast and after school club places should be paid for in advance.

School Meals

The Academy School has a duty to provide free school meals to those who are eligible, but there is no obligation beyond this. If arrears exist, the Academy School can refuse to continue to provide hot meals.

If you believe your child may be eligible for Free School Meals please refer to www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals which details the eligibility criteria and how to apply for free school meals.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT UNTIL THE ACADEMY SCHOOL RECEIVE CONFIRMATION FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY OF YOUR CHILD'S ENTITLEMENT TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS YOU WILL STILL NEED TO PAY FOR YOUR CHILDS LUNCH.

Parents, please note: it is your responsibility to apply for free school meals and to ensure that the Local Authority is kept up-to-date with your circumstances.

Currently infant children (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils) are entitled to a Universal Infant Free School Meal. There is also UFM Universal Free Meals for 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 as a result of the Mayor of London funding to provide free meals to all primary school aged pupils to address the cost of living crisis. This is NOT the same as a free school meal from the Local Authority. If continued funding is not provided in 2026-27, when your child reaches Year 3, parents will have to pay for hot school lunches unless you meet the free school meal criteria as outlined above.

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Payments of Services

The Academy School provides a number of other services; these include before and after school care, music tuition, school trips and the hiring of premises. A separate payment item is listed for every child. All payments for chargeable services should be made in advance using the Academy School's online payment system.

If you have any difficulty accessing the Academy School's online payment system please contact the Academy School Office immediately.

Parents are able to set up a payment plan to bring the arrears up-to-date by contacting the Academy School Office.

Payment Plan – if payments agreed in the Payment Plan (sufficient enough to cover the ongoing costs and pay off past debts) are made on time, the service provision will continue. If regular payments are not made, the plan will be withdrawn.

Debt Recovery

The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) will ensure that the level of outstanding debt is regularly monitored.

Where payment for services is not received in advance and arrears accumulate, the following procedures apply:

INFORMAL REMINDERS – Debtors will be formally reminded that monies are owed and payment is due. The dates of the reminders are recorded.

FORMAL REMINDERS – If no response is received from Informal Reminders, further action will be taken. If the debt is still outstanding for school meals, nursery fees and breakfast and afterschool clubs, your child will be suspended from these services.

In the event of an outstanding dinner money debt, or other services provided by the school (e.g. before and after school care etc) payment received for residential trips or visits maybe used to offset these debts. Once these debts are cleared and in addition, the residential trip will subsequently need to be paid for to enable the child to attend.

We appreciate that from time to time, financial difficulties do arise. If this is the case please let the school know as soon as possible so that we can see if there are any ways in which we might be able to help, or refer you to somewhere that can.

If a mutual agreement cannot be reached or if any agreed repayment is missed then the debt will be transferred directly to an external debt collector.

School Support

We hope that by implementing this policy, we are able to help you, as parents, manage your payments better and at the same time, ensure that our available budget is used to enhance your children's learning. The chasing of debts is extremely time-consuming for our staff. Time spent checking debts and sending out letters takes our staff away from other duties at school that would benefit all children. We request that all parents and carers work with us by making regular payments, in advance, for all our services.

This policy will be published on the Academy School website and a hard copy of the policy will be available on request.

Monitoring and Implementation Policy

The policy is reviewed every 3 years, although the Trust may vary or amend it periodically to ensure that we fulfil our obligation around the Debt Recovery Policy. All proposed changes to this policy would be made following the approval from the Committee.

	Name	Date
Policy written by	CFO	March 2024
Agreed by Committee	Finance Committee	March 2024
Ratified by Committee	Finance Committee	July 2024
Adopted by Governing Board	CET Board/Finance Committee	July 2024
To be reviewed every 3 years		
Updated	April 2026	
Review by	March 2027	

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