

# Thomas More Catholic School



## SCHOOL DEBT POLICY

### Mission Statement

**To Care** for, respect and value all people and our environment.

**To Learn** that justice and love are the foundations of our Faith.

To make these the guiding principles of our community in its commitment to academic excellence and personal integrity.

**To Achieve** beyond our highest expectations, creating challenging opportunities, which take us all confidently through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This policy was adopted by the Governing Body of Thomas More Catholic School in March 2012 following a complete rewrite (formerly called 'School Meals Debt Policy'). It is subject to an annual review.

<b>Date Reviewed</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> April 2016</b>
<b>Review Confirmed by</b>	<b>Chair, Finance Committee</b>
<b>Next Review Due</b>	<b>Spring Term 2017</b>

The Governors of **Thomas More Catholic School** have drawn up this policy in order to adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parent / guardians to the school.

Its aim is to:

- Provide clarity and consistency in managing debt
- Make clear the expectations we have of parents / guardians in respect of debt
- Provide flexibility where this is required
- Ensure justice and equality for all students.

This policy deals with two categories of school debt:

- School Meals
- Other (eg. School trips, books, exam fees)

***The Head teacher has the discretion to waive the child's debt if there is genuine hardship.***

At times parents may have financial problems; in these cases, parents should approach the Head teacher to discuss the matters which will be dealt with sensitively and with compassion.

In extreme cases, if payment of the debt is not received, the Head teacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt.

### **School Meals Debt**

1. The debt policy is available on the school website.
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance.
3. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal.
4. Parents who do not want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch.

As a Catholic school, based on Gospel values, **Thomas More Catholic School** (TMCS) believes in justice and equality for **all** students in the school; therefore, non-recoverable debts which are incurred through the school meals service have to be paid for from the TMCS delegated budget. This leaves less funding to resource teaching and learning for **all** our students.

If a parent/guardian genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the Headteacher, or either of the Deputy Head Teachers, in liaison with the Catering Manager, will use their discretion to grant a debt allowance amounting to the cost of a sandwich and a drink; this is to deter children from constantly being in debt and encourage them to be in credit. ***The aim is that this debt should be paid off before another meal is provided.***

Students cannot be provided with food every day until the debt is paid; it is parents'/guardians' responsibility to clear the debt and ensure there are sufficient funds on the child's account to enable him / her to have a meal.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch until this time. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the school cannot provide a meal.

In certain cases the child may be referred to Social Services because parents are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

This policy makes it clear that this is unacceptable and parents / guardians are asked to keep their child's account in credit.

## **Other School Debt**

### **School Trips**

All staff should submit an Income and Expenditure schedule in advance for each school trip to the Finance Office, in order to determine how each trip is to be financed. Where a parental contribution is required, all monies should be collected in advance of the trip.

Heads of department can authorise a contribution from their delegated departmental budget, either for all students, or for those families suffering genuine hardship.

### **Subscriptions**

There are occasions where students purchase online subscriptions through the school. These must be paid for in advance.

### **Exam Fees**

In cases where a student wishes to retake a public exam (for instance to improve a GCSE grade) it is the responsibility of the student (parent / guardian) to pay for the full exam fee. Students will not normally be entered for an exam retake until the fee has been paid. In exceptional circumstances, a student will be entered for an exam before the fee is paid.

If a parent cannot pay in advance, with the Headteachers agreement, TMCS will use its discretion to grant a debt allowance of the amount of parental contribution. ***The aim is that this debt should not be outstanding for longer than 30 days.***

If the debt is not cleared, TMCS will escalate the matter using one of the example letters in the Debt Recovery Practice and Procedures document.

All school debts should be paid before the end of Summer Term and not carried forward to the new academic year unless authorised by the Head Teacher.