

Ambler

Primary School and Children's Centre

Policy

Arrears Policy – Children's Centre and Extended School

February 2016



Next review with the Finance and Personnel Committee February 2016

This policy is subject to ongoing change and will be updated as and when required.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to detail the procedures for Arrears in both the Children's Centre and School. Within the Children's Centre, in line with Ambler's SLA with Islington Council, the LBI procedures will be followed.

2. Children's Centre Arrears Procedure

2.1. Council Policy

The Council operates a 'no arrears' policy.

- The purpose of this policy is to protect the centre budgets and prevent parents building up arrears which they then have difficulty meeting.
- The policy must be followed by all Local Authority managed children's centres and Early Years centres. School providers are strongly advised to use the policy as a model, as the Council may not equalise shortfall of income where a robust procedure has not been in place.
- Council employees are reminded that the code of conduct makes clear that employees of this, or any other council, must make proper arrangements to keep payments up to date, and that the council may attach earnings if necessary.
- The Council will take legal action if necessary to pursue any outstanding arrears, following the withdrawal of the place.
- If there are contraindications, the Head of Centre (HOC) will negotiate an appropriate period for payment of the arrears.

2.2. The Admin Officers Role

The Children's Centre Admin Officer should:

- Provide statements with reminder the first week a parent does not pay.
- 1st Arrears letter issued if parent does not respond to statement (with reminder) Annex 2.
- 2nd Letter issued as soon as the deadline on the 1st letter expires (HOC must be informed at this stage if not already)
- Discharge of place with outstanding arrears must be passed to Early Years Finance (or to appropriate section/person for legal action in non-council centres), with supporting documentation in order to raise official invoice (or take legal action) and start debt collection proceedings

2.3. Further details

In all cases of 1st and 2nd arrears letters the HOC must be informed.

Heads of Centre's should make every attempt to reach their income target in order to ensure adequate financial resources are raised to run the services at full capacity.

Day-care places in Islington schools/centres are prioritised for families of working or studying parents. Students must bring proof of acceptance on a meaningful qualification course in order to meet the admission criteria.

Charges assessment and agreement forms must be completed and signed by parents before the child starts.

Parents/carers should be given a one week settling in period free of charge

In the event of there being anomalies in what has been and should be charged to parents, notice of ½ a term should be given on an individual basis and new charges applied at the end of that notice period.

All families are assessed for payment of charges, including children placed by the “Children in Need” panel.

The only exception for a nil charge would be parents in receipt of income support.

2.4. Discharged arrears/credit policy

All parent/s/carers Day-care charges accounts should be monitored in accordance with the arrears policy.

Should a parent/carer leave with outstanding arrears or be discharged (due to arrears) you must continue to make every effort to recover the debt by following below:

- Discharged Arrears Notice 1

If the parent/carer responds to this letter you will need to set up a meeting with them, it is important to ensure you put in place a realistic agreement of how they are going to repay the debt. This must be supported in writing and signed:

- Agreement for Payment of Outstanding Arrears

If this agreement is not adhered to issue the final letter:

- Final Notice of Outstanding Arrears

3. Extended School Arrears (includes Clubs)

3.1. After School Clubs

- All fees for After School Clubs must be paid for a minimum of half a term in advance
- Clubs are booked for the whole course and not on a weekly basis. Children will not be able to join a club halfway through the term unless there are spaces available.

3.2. Breakfast Club

- Breakfast Club can be attended on a ‘pay as you go’ basis. (see payment terms)
- Fees for breakfast club, after school club, play centre or childcare sessions can be paid by cash, cheque, standing order or childcare vouchers to the School at the start or end of the day when the Child is being collected.

3.3. Play Centre (Extended day)

- Fees should be paid for a minimum of half a term in advance for After School Clubs. Club monies are due by e.g. 11 April this half term and by 6 June for the following half term.
- If a child is not collected promptly from Club at 4.45pm, an additional £5 is payable to the after school care team.
- If there are persistent arrears, Ambler may not be able to provide an extended day provision for a child. (See terms and conditions).

- Ambler has a formal debt collection procedure in place. If a parent or carer has more than two weeks in arrears, the child will be stopped from attending the provision.
- A debt invoice will be sent to the parent/carer, which must be paid within 7 days.
- If the debt invoice is not paid within 7 days of receipt, the child will be stopped from attending provision.
- The School is happy to discuss reasons for late or non-payment of fees and can look at ways of coming to an arrangement to bring your account up to date. This can be discussed with the business manager with final confirmation from the Headteacher.

4. Reception age children attending Children's Centres

- 4.1 All reception age children who have a contract to attend extended day provision will be charged in accordance with the Children's Centre Charging policy and schedules. This applies whether the reception class is part of the children's centre organisation or separately managed by the school.

Appendix 1- Children's Centre Arrears information for Mums, Dads and Carers

Arrears Policy

Date of last review: October 2015

Conducted by: M. Jarrett (HoC), M. Haddon (SAO)

Date of next review: October 2016



Introduction

Day-care charges are crucial to each setting's budget. The Council operates a 'no arrears' policy to prevent parents/carers building up arrears which they may have difficulty meeting.

The arrears policy must be followed by all Local Authority managed children's centres. Other external organisations are strongly advised to use the policy as a model.

The Council will take legal action to pursue any outstanding arrears, following the withdrawal of the place.

Procedures

In ALL cases of arrears the Head of Centre must be kept informed and consulted from week two in the following procedures.

The centre/school admin officer will:

- Week 1: provide statement with reminder the first week a parent does not pay and on request
- Week 2: issue the first arrears letter if parent has not responded to the statement
- Week 3: issue the second letter as soon as the deadline on the first letter expires

The Head of Centre will negotiate an appropriate period for payment of the arrears

Discharges

Discharge of place with outstanding arrears must be passed to Early Years Finance or to an appropriate section/person (In the case of non-council centres) for further follow up and legal action. Supporting documentation should be forwarded in order to raise official invoice (or take legal action).

Writing off arrears

Writing off arrears should only be considered where all other administrative and legal options to collect the debt have been exhausted. Centres should be aware that any amounts written off are repayable back to the council as part of the claw back policy.

Related policies: Early Years Policies and Procedures for Admissions, Day-Care Charges and Arrears

Appendix 2: 1st Arrears Notice Non-subsidised under 3

.....Children's Centre

<ADDRESS>

<0207.....>

This matter is being dealt with by:

<NAME>

RE: 1st ARREARS NOTICE

<DATE>

Dear .

According to our records, by the end of this week <DATE> you will be <£.....> in arrears, for <NAME OF CHILD> 's place at the Centre. (See statement attached).

The account must be kept £100.00 in credit at all times this is your deposit, which will be returned when <NAME OF CHILD> leaves. Therefore the total owing is <£.....>

As you know, the Council operates a "**No Arrears**" policy, and parents are required to pay in advance, on a weekly or monthly basis.

I would be grateful if you could either:

- pay the arrears on receipt of this letter, or
- contact me by the <DATE> to arrange a meeting to agree how the outstanding sum will be cleared.

Yours sincerely

Head of Centre

Appendix 3: 1st Arrears Notice Non-subsidised over 3

.....Children's Centre

<ADDRESS>

<0207.....>

This matter is being dealt with by:

<NAME>

RE: 1st ARREARS NOTICE

<DATE>

Dear .

According to our records, by the end of this week <DATE> you will be <£.....> in arrears, for **NAME OF CHILD**'s place at the Centre. (See statement attached).

The account must be kept £100.00 in credit at all times this is your deposit, which will be returned when <NAME OF CHILD> leaves. Therefore the total owing is £.....

The lunch is also in arrears of <£.....> as of the same date. (Please note lunch is payable separately to charges).

As you know, the Council operates a "**No Arrears**" policy, and parents are required to pay in advance, on a weekly or monthly basis.

I would be grateful if you could either:

- pay the arrears on receipt of this letter, or
- contact me by the <DATE> to arrange a meeting to agree how the outstanding sum will be cleared.

Yours sincerely

Head of Centre

Appendix 4: 1st Arrears Notice Community over 3

.....Children's Centre

ADDRESS

<0207.....>

This matter is being dealt with by:

<NAME>

RE: 1st ARREARS NOTICE

<DATE>

Dear

According to our records, by the end of this week **<DATE>** you will be **<£.....>** in arrears, for **<NAME OF CHILD>**'s place at the Centre. (See statement attached).

The lunch is also in arrears of **<£.....>** as of the same date. (Please note lunch is payable separately to charges).

As you know, the Council operates a "**No Arrears**" policy, and parents are required to pay in advance, on a weekly or monthly basis.

I would be grateful if you could either:

- pay the arrears on receipt of this letter, or
- contact me by the **<DATE>** to arrange a meeting to agree how the outstanding sum will be cleared.

Yours sincerely

Head of Centre

Appendix 5: 1st Arrears Notice Community under 3

.....Children's Centre

ADDRESS

<0207.....>

This matter is being dealt with by:

<NAME>

RE: 1st ARREARS NOTICE

<DATE>

Dear .

According to our records, by the end of this week **<DATE>** you will be **<£.....>** in arrears, for **<NAME OF CHILD>**'s place at the Centre. (See statements attached).

As you know, the Council operates a "**No Arrears**" policy, and parents are required to pay in advance, on a weekly or monthly basis.

I would be grateful if you could either:

- pay the arrears on receipt of this letter, or
- contact me by the **<DATE>** to arrange a meeting to agree how the outstanding sum will be cleared.

Yours sincerely

Head of Centre

Appendix 6: 2nd Arrears Notice Non-subsidised over 3

.....Children's Centre

ADDRESS

<0207.....>.

This Matter is being dealt with by:

<NAME>

RE: 2nd ARREARS NOTICE

<DATE>

Dear

You did not respond to my letter **<DATE>** notifying you that you were in arrears.

According to our records, by the end of this week **<DATE>**, you will be **£.....** in arrears for **NAME OF CHILD**'s place at the Centre. Please find enclosed a copy of your statement of account, for your information.

The account must be kept £100.00 in credit at all times this is your deposit, which will be returned when **NAME OF CHILD** leaves. Therefore the total owing is **£.....**

The lunch is also in arrears of **£.....** as of the same date. (Please note lunch is payable separately to charges).

I regret to inform you that, unless all the arrears and all charges due are cleared by Monday **<DATE>** your child's place will be withdrawn from Monday **<DATE>** inclusive.

I would like to invite you to a further meeting at the Centre to discuss arrangements for clearing these arrears by the deadline. Please feel free to contact me on 020 7**<.....>**

Yours sincerely

Head of Centre

Appendix 7: 2nd Arrears Notice Non-subsidised under 3

.....Children's Centre

ADDRESS

<0207.....>.

This Matter is being dealt with by:

<NAME>

RE: 2nd ARREARS NOTICE

<DATE>

Dear .

You did not respond to my letter, **<DATE>** notifying you that you were in arrears.

According to our records, by the end of this week **<DATE>**, you will be **<£.....>** in arrears for **<NAME OF CHILD>**'s place at the Centre. Please find enclosed a copy of your statement of account, for your information.

The account must be kept £100.00 in credit at all times this is your deposit, which will be returned when **<NAME OF CHILD>** leaves. Therefore the total owing is **<£.....>**

I regret to inform you that, unless all the arrears and all charges due are cleared by Monday **<DATE>** your child's place will be withdrawn from Monday **<DATE>** inclusive.

I would like to invite you to a further meeting at the Centre to discuss arrangements for clearing these arrears by the deadline. Please feel free to contact me on 020 77.....

Yours sincerely

Head of Centre

Appendix 8: 2nd Arrears Notice Community over 3

.....Children's
Centre

ADDRESS

<0207.....>.

This Matter is being dealt with by:

<NAME>

RE: 2nd ARREARS NOTICE

<DATE>

Dear .

You did not respond to my letter<DATE>notifying you that you were in arrears.

According to our records, by the end of this week<DATE>you will be <£.....> in arrears for <NAME OF CHILD>'s place at the Centre. Please find enclosed a copy of your statement of account, for your information.

The lunch is also in arrears of £..... as of the same date. (Please note lunch is payable separately to charges).

I regret to inform you that, unless all the arrears and all charges due are cleared by Monday <DATE>your child's place will be withdrawn from Monday <DATE>inclusive.

I would like to invite you to a further meeting at the Centre to discuss arrangements for clearing these arrears by the deadline. Please feel free to contact me on 020 7.....

Yours sincerely

Head of Centre

Appendix 9: 2nd Arrears Notice Community under 3

.....Children's

Centre

<ADDRESS>

<Tele>.....

This Matter is being dealt with by:

<NAME>

RE: 2nd ARREARS NOTICE

<DATE>

Dear .

You did not respond to my letter, <AMOUNT> notifying you that you were in arrears.

According to our records, by the end of this week <AMOUNT>, you will be <AMOUNT> in arrears for <NAME OF CHILD>'s place at the Centre. Please find enclosed a copy of your statement of account, for your information.

I regret to inform you that, unless all the arrears and all charges due are cleared by Monday <DATE> your child's place will be withdrawn from Monday <DATE> inclusive.

I would like to invite you to a further meeting at the Centre to discuss arrangements for clearing these arrears by the deadline. Please feel free to contact me on 020 7.....

Yours sincerely

Head of Centre

Appendix 10: Discharged arrears notice

.....Children's
Centre

<ADDRESS>

<Tele>.....

This Matter is being dealt with by:

<NAME>

DISCHARGED ARREARS NOTICE

<DATE>

Dear

According to our records, there remains an outstanding balance of <£AMOUNT> for <CHILD's NAME> former place at the centre. (See statement attached).

As you are aware the council operates a **"No Arrears Policy"**

We must ask you to make arrangements as soon as possible for clearing these arrears.

Please contact me on 020 7<TEL> by <DAY DATE>, to discuss your arrangements for clearing these arrears. I am afraid if we do not hear from you by this date we will have no alternative but to forward this matter to the Councils debt collections service.

Yours sincerely

<NAME>

Head of Centre

Appendix 11: Final Notice discharged arrears

.....Children's
Centre

<ADDRESS>

<Tele>.....

This matter is being dealt with by.

<NAME>

<DATE>

FINAL NOTICE – DISCHARGED ARREARS

Dear <NAME>

You did not make your agreed payment for week beginning <DATE>.

As set out in further to our conversation you have agreed to make payments of £<AMOUNT> every calendar month starting on <DATE>

As you are aware the council operates a “NO ARREARS POLICY”

Please complete and sign the bottom of this letter and return the whole letter to me by Monday <DATE>.

I agree to the payments as set out above and understand that if I miss a payment I will have to clear all of the outstanding arrears. Should I fail to do this my account will be referred to London Borough of Islington debt collection service.

Signature.....

Date.....

Yours sincerely

<NAME>

Head of Centre

Appendix 12 – Extended day Provision



Dear Mums, Dads and Carers,

AMBLER PRIMARY SCHOOL EXTENDED DAY PROVISION

We currently run three main provisions as an extension to the standard school day which parents and children can take advantage of.

Unfortunately due to the current economic climate and reductions to our budget, we are unable to offer free clubs and therefore **ALL** clubs will be charged.

All fees for After School Clubs must be paid for a minimum of half a term in advance (if you wish to pay by standing order, please fill out the attached form and give it to your bank). Please note that all clubs are booked for the whole course and not on a weekly basis. Your child will not be able to join a club halfway through the term. Breakfast Club and Play Centre can also be attended on a 'pay as you go' basis. Please see attached an outline payment schedule which tells you payment due dates.

Please also note:

- Clubs are on a first come first serve basis. Please note that places for clubs will be prioritised to children in the Playcentre in the first instance.
- If your child is not collected promptly from Club at 4.45pm, an additional charge of £5 is payable to the after school care team. If there are persistent arrears, we may not be able to provide and extended day provision to your child. Please read our payment terms and conditions carefully.
- **Registration forms have to be completed in all cases**

If you have any questions regarding this, please come and speak to myself, Kym, Charlie, Emine or the school office.

Yours sincerely

Juliet Benis

Annex 13 – After School Terms and Conditions

To enable us to provide and maintain the highest quality of care we expect all parents/carers to be aware of and abide by the following conditions:

- Parents / carers should inform staff if anyone other than those listed on this form will be picking up your child.
- Fees should be paid for a minimum of half a term in advance for After School Clubs. Club monies are due by 11 April this half term and by 6 June for the following half term.
- Fees for breakfast club, after school club, play centre or childcare sessions can be paid by cash or cheque to Charlie or Emine at the start of the day or either at the end when you are collecting your child.
- We now have formal debt collection procedures in place. If you are more than two weeks in arrears, your child will be stopped from attending provision. If you receive a debt invoice and this is not paid within 7 days of receipt, your child will also be stopped from attending provision. We are happy to discuss with you reasons for late or non-payment of fees and can look at ways of coming to an arrangement to bring your account up to date. This will have to be discussed with the business manager with final confirmation from the headteacher.
- **Children should be collected by 4.45pm for after school clubs**
- **Children should be collected by 5.45pm for playcentre & child care.**

Name of Parent / Carer: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____