



# **SCHOOL MEALS DEBT POLICY**

Date of Issue: September 2017

Reviewed: September 2020

## **Boughton Leigh Junior**

### **School Meals Debt**

#### **Policy**

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

There will occasionally need to be a decision made about whether a child should be refused a meal in school if payment has not been received. However, the school meals service is no different than any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone.

Parents may relate to the situation that, just as they cannot take their child to a restaurant for a meal without paying, neither should they expect the school to provide food for their child if it has not been paid for. The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals - there should be no excuses.

It is very time consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for money - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

The governors at Boughton Leigh Junior School feel that a system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach. We understand that it may seem a very hard stance as there has been a culture of debt tolerance and that this will be tough to implement. However, it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for. Our SIMs Agora dinner money payment system highlights debt immediately, so keeping track will be easy.

The school will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- Reminders in the school's newsletter
- The school website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This will be done at least once each year, more often when it is first introduced.

All parents will be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school.

#### **Key Information**

1. All parents are directed to read the key policies on the website when their child joins the school
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 don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch.

### **Debt Policy Implementation**

#### **Level 1**

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt

- Check 1 is this an FSM child, are dates correct?
- Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
- Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one-off?

#### **Action 1:**

Send a 'Gentle debt reminder' email/letter – see APPENDIX A for example

#### **Level 2**

Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch

- Check 1 is this an FSM child, are dates correct?
- Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
- Check 3 has this parent made contact?

#### **Action 2: Personal contact**

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to either bring the money into school or bring sandwiches in before lunchtime.

#### **Level 3**

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

- Check 1 is this an FSM child, are dates correct?
- Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
- Check 3 has this parent made contact?

**Action 3:** Send strong debt reminder email/ letter - see APPENDIX B for example  
The Head Teacher will send a final letter.

#### **Level 4**

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

- Check 1 is this an FSM child, are dates correct?
- Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
- Check 3 has this parent made contact?

**Action 4:** Bring in outside agencies.

**APPENDIX A – Example letter 'Gentle Debt Reminder'**

**Boughton Leigh Junior School**

Wetherell Way, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 1LT

Head Teacher: Mrs P. Duynstee

Tel: 01788 577914

Email: admin2590@welearn365.com

<date/>

Dear Parent / Carer of <consumerforename/>

<consumersurname/> Class: <class/>

This is a reminder that, according to our records, you have arrears on your child's dinner money account.

Our records show that at <date/> your debt is <balance/>.

In order for your child to continue to receive school dinners, it is important to keep your account in credit at all times.

**Please arrange for the amount stated above to be paid within 7 days.**

In the meantime, you will need to provide your child with packed lunches until your account has been settled.

You can pay using SIMs Agora ([www.simsagora.co.uk](http://www.simsagora.co.uk)), our secure online payment system, by selecting the 'School Meal Payment' service. Your login details are:

User Name <loginname/> Password <password/>

**Please note that school meals should be paid for in advance (preferably at least weekly).**

You can check your account balance at any time by logging into your SIMs Agora account. If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Duynstee  
Head Teacher

## APPENDIX B: Example 'Strong Debt Reminder'

### **Boughton Leigh Junior School**

Wetherell Way, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 1LT

Head Teacher: Mrs P. Duynstee

Tel: 01788 577914

Email: admin2590@welearn365.com

<date/>

Dear Parent / Carer of <consumerforename/> <consumersurname/>

Class: <class/>

**Pupil: <consumerforename/> <consumersurname/>**

This is a reminder that, according to our records, you have arrears on your child's dinner money account.

Our records show that at <date/> your debt is <balance/>.

**Your debt has already been outstanding for more than 7 days. We would therefore ask you to make immediate payment. If you are unable to do so please provide your child with packed lunches until your account has been settled.**

If this continues to be unpaid, the school office will contact you to discuss any queries and arrange a payment schedule.

You can pay using SIMs Agora ([www.simsagora.co.uk](http://www.simsagora.co.uk)), our secure online payment system, by selecting the 'School Meal Payment' service. Your login details are:

User Name <loginname/> Password <password/>

**Please note that payment for school meals should be made in advance (£2.20 per day, or £11.00 for the week ahead), and that it is important to keep your account in credit at all times.**

You can check your account balance at any time by logging into your SIMS Agora account.

If you think your child may be entitled to receive Free School Meals, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Duynstee  
Head Teacher