



PROVISION OF MEALS & REFRESHMENTS POLICY & PROTOCOL

PROTOCOL FOR NON-PAYMENT OF SCHOOL MEALS (PAID MEALS)

This is a protocol to cover circumstances where parents' have not paid for their children's' school meals for a period.

The school should identify non-payment, investigate the reason for non-payment, and enquire whether the family is eligible to receive Free School Meals. If so, the parents should be advised to make an application via the Free School Meals Helpline, telephone number – **0300 123 5012**. If the pupils are entitled to free school meals, the application will **not** be backdated. The school needs to ascertain the first day of eligibility and still pursue any outstanding debt from the parents.

If the school is concerned about the wellbeing/welfare of the pupil(s) at any stage in this process, they should contact the appropriate local safeguarding authority services for advice and guidance.

N.B. – these services are not involved in the procedures for the recovering of debt

Throughout any stage of these processes, schools may agree a payment by instalment process with the parents that would negate the need for further action to be taken. Should that agreement then break down, the Protocol would be re-introduced.

It may be necessary to manage the situation more closely in schools where more than one child from the same family receives school meals (where a substantial debt can accumulate quickly), and where there is a known history of bad debt.

Protocol to be followed:-

Step 1. Parent fails to pay for a pupil's school meal and the debt amounts to 5 days meals. A reminder letter on school headed notepaper should be sent to the parents once this threshold has been breached. See Appendix 1.

Step 2. Parent continues to fail to pay for pupil's school meal and this continues until the debt reaches 10 days meals.

A further letter is sent to the parent – See Appendix 2.

The letter must also state that if payment is not made then meals will not be provided to their child/children from the start of the following week and that the parent must make alternative lunchtime arrangements e.g. provision of a packed lunch.

NB Schools should not continue to provide meals on the basis that payment has been promised.

Step 3. Parent fails to pay the outstanding debt but provides a packed lunch for the pupil.

A chasing letter is sent – See Appendix 3

Step 4. Parent continues to fail to pay for school meals and send their child in without any food provision for a further week with a total debt of 15 days meals.

A further letter is sent – See Appendix 4 requesting a meeting with the Head Teacher.

If the debt continues, a schedule of ‘bad debts’ may appear and if non-payment is confirmed, the school will need to decide whether to ‘write-off’ the debt **(they would stand the cost)** – or whether to ask the County court to take legal proceedings against the parents.

CAREFUL CONSIDERATION BY THE GOVERNING BODY WOULD NEED TO BE GIVEN TO THIS BEFORE REACHING SUCH A DECISION

A record of all letters sent to parents/carers should be kept with date sent. The letters should be sent in the post and via parent mail if available.

This policy was adopted by the Trust board on: 23rd May 2019

Appendix 1

Dear

Re: School Meal Payments for

Xxxxx has been taking school meals recently, but the school has not received any payment for these meals.

School meals should be paid for in advance, online via the school payments system Sims Agora- this is our preferred method of payment. Alternatively, if you wish you can pay in cash at the school office. Please arrange to settle the balance of £x which is outstanding as at xx/xx/xxxx. If any further meals are taken the balance will increase by £2.xx per meal taken.

If you are in receipt of some benefits, you may be eligible for free school meals; this must be applied for. If you need further information, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Office Manager

Appendix 2

Dear

Re: School Meal Payments for

Further to my letter of , we still have not received any payment for 's school meals. To date your account stands at £ .

School meals should be paid for in advance, online via the school payments system Sims Agora- this is our preferred method of payment. Alternatively, if you wish you can pay in cash at the school office

The school must pay for the provision of school meals and in us covering your debt; we lose money from our school budget that should be supporting children's learning. It is important that you start paying immediately. If you are having difficulties paying, please make an appointment to see me so we can arrange a payment plan.

Unfortunately until your debt has been settled you will need to provide your child with a packed lunch as we can no longer provide a school meal.

Yours sincerely

Office Manager

Appendix 3

Dear

Re: School Meals

Further to my letter of _____, we still have not received any payment for _____'s school meals. To date your account stands at £ _____.

School meals should be paid for in advance, online via the school payments system Sims Agora- this is our preferred method of payment. Alternatively, if you wish you can pay in cash at the school office. You must continue to provide your child with a packed lunch.

The school must pay for the provision of school meals and in us covering your debt; we lose money from our school budget that should be supporting children's learning. It is important that you start clear the outstanding balance immediately. If you are having difficulties paying, please make an appointment to see me so we can arrange a payment plan.

As we have received no response to our previous letter's we will now have to pass the matter to the County Court and seek a small claims judgment against you. The cost of this will also be coming from the school's budget and the children's education support.

Yours sincerely

Office Manager

Appendix 4

Dear

Re: School Meals

I am writing to you about your school meal account for . To date your debt is £x.
As you know the school policy is that school meals must be paid for in advance.

I am therefore asking that you make an appointment to see me as soon as possible
so we can discuss a repayment plan and a way forward to ensure that meals
are paid for each week. Please phone the office to arrange a suitable time.

Failure to provide your child with a school lunch may be considered a safeguarding
issue. As this has now been an ongoing issue, it has now been recorded as a child
protection concern in our own internal school records. As yet, we have not made
an external referral.

I look forward to meeting with you to resolve this issue.

Yours sincerely

HEADTEACHER