

School Meals Debt Policy and Procedure

Rationale

Any money owed to school has an impact on the budget and may affect the resources we can provide to all children. We hope that parents understand this and will make every effort to avoid owing the school money.

The school will take all reasonable measures to vigorously collect debts as part of its management of public funds. A debt will be written off or passed onto Bath and North East Somerset Legal Department only after all reasonable measures (commensurate with the size and nature of the debt) have been taken to recover it.

No parent would take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school.

If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals then the admin team can support them in applying. Eligibility for Free School Meals means the child qualifies for Pupil Premium (currently £1300) which the school can utilise to improve educational outcomes for that child.

Reporting of outstanding debt levels

- The Head Teacher will receive a weekly Debt Report
- Total value of debt to the school (as a result of School Meals) will be reported termly to the Resource Committee.
- The Resource Committee will review the level of outstanding debts every term to determine whether this level is acceptable and whether action to recover debts is effective.

If people are unable to pay

The School may reduce or write off debt in certain circumstances. A sensitive approach to debt recovery will be carried out, taking the following factors into account.

- Hardship – where paying the debt would cause financial hardship.
- Ill health – where our recovery action might cause further ill health.
- Time – where the debt is so large compared to the person's income that it would take an unreasonable length of time to pay it all off.
- Cost – where the value of the debt is less than the cost of recovering it.
- Multiple debts – where someone owes more than one debt to the School. In this situation an attempt to agree one repayment plan to include all debts will be established.

Debt policy implementation

Key Information

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy 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
5. Where a parent has not provided lunch (paid or sandwiches) for a pupil a discussion with the Designated Safeguarding lead may be arranged to determine if this is 'Child Protection' matter.



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Universal

Each week parents will be emailed their current balance regarding school meals.
(Appendix One)

Level 1

Indicator: A pupil's record shows a debt

Check 1 is this a FSM pupil, are dates correct?

Check 2 does this pupil now qualify for FSM?

Check 3 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 4 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: send a 'Gentle debt reminder' Appendix Two

Level 2

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

Check 1 is this a FSM pupil, are dates correct?

Check 2 does this pupil now qualify for FSM?

Check 3 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 4 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to bring in the money owed or the pupil will no longer be able to have school meals and must bring sandwiches

Level 3

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

Check 1 is this a FSM pupil, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send Strong debt letter Appendix Three

Parent must provide sandwiches for the pupil

Level 4

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

Check 1 is this a FSM pupil, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 4: Notify Bath and North East Somerset Legal Team

Date of last Review: May 2015

Date of Next Review: May 2016



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Appendix One:

Parent/Carer of XXXXXXXXXXXXX
ADDRESS

DATE
03 May 2015

INVOICE No.
Name
Class

INVOICE

VAT REGISTRATION NUMBER: 639-6779-71

DATE OF SUPPLY		£
03/05/15	DINNER MONEY Outstanding Balance as at today's date	£X.00
	SUB TOTAL	£X.00
	VAT 20%	£0.00
	TOTAL	£X.00

PLEASE MAKE YOUR PAYMENT WITHIN THE NEXT 7 DAYS



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Appendix Two:

Parent/Carer of XXXXXX

ADDRESS

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: XXXXXX, CLASS

According to our records, it appears that there is dinner money outstanding for your child. The amount due for payment is £X.XX. We would be grateful if you would kindly clear this balance as soon as possible.

For your information, the last payment shown on our system was made on XXXX.

If you have any query or difficulty with payment of this amount, please let us know and we will endeavour to help.

Yours sincerely

School Office



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Appendix Three:

Dear

School Meals Arrears

Despite my previous letter of *(date)* it appears that the amount owing for school meals remains outstanding and has now reached £*(amount)*. This amount should be paid with immediate effect.

Payment can be made at the school office by cash or cheque or alternatively you may wish to pay using your debit or credit card via the secure online payment system at <https://www.scopay.com/login.html> using the login already provided.

Until the debt is cleared you should make alternative arrangements for your child(ren) at lunchtime as a school meal can only be provided if payment is received.

If no payment is received within **10 days of date of this letter**, the debt will be passed to the Local Authority for collection.

Free School Meal Eligibility

A free school meal is available to children whose parents have applied for free school meals and who are in receipt of **any one of the following:-**

- Income Support
- Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (**but not if you are also receiving Working Tax Credit**) **and** your joint Annual Taxable Income (as assessed by the Inland Revenue) is £16,190 **or less** per annum (this figure is subject to change in April of each year)
- Employment and Support Allowance (income related)
- State Pension Credit (Guarantee Element)
- Supported under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

To obtain a copy of the Free School Meals application form you should contact the school office.

If you would like to discuss this matter please do not hesitate to contact the school. The school is keen to provide any necessary assistance and support it can to try and resolve this matter as quickly as is possible.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

