



**SCHOOL MEAL DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY**  
**FOR SCHOOLS WITHIN**  
**THE KEYS FEDERATION ACADEMY TRUST**

**St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School, Hindley**  
**Hindley Green Community Primary School**  
**St. John's C. of E. Primary School, Hindley Green**  
**St. John's C. of E. Primary School, Abram**



September 2016

## THE KEYS FEDERATION ACADEMY TRUST School Meal Debt Management Policy

### Aims

- To outline the school's procedures regarding school meals payments
- To work with parents to provide a flexible approach to the lunchtime nutritional needs of our pupils
- To ensure the smooth, efficient and cost effective operation of the school meal system
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of school staff, parents and pupils
- To present a workable, fair mechanism for the collection of school dinner money.

### School Meals Debt Policy for Parents

As from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011, schools within the Keys Federation Academy Trust adopted a strict NO DEBT policy relating to the school meals service. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

If parents believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact Wigan Council's Benefits Section for more details. Application forms are available from the Council's website at [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk). This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that parents use it if they qualify. Schools will offer to help parents with their application.

**School meals must be paid for IN ADVANCE on a weekly, monthly or half-termly basis by cash or cheque.** If a cheque is returned unpaid school will be charged the relevant banking fee. School may also be charged an administration fee representing 5% of the value of the cheque. In St. Peter's, Hindley Green CP and St. John's Hindley Green, school meals can also be paid by direct debit to the catering provider, Dolce.

Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However this debt must be paid next day and future meals must be paid in advance before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the school will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money or to provide sandwiches before lunch time or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

If a payment of the debt is not received by the next day, the CFO reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Learning Mentors will be informed at Level 2 of the process. Social Services may also be informed about concerns that parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime. The school is not obliged to provide a school dinner where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school meals has not been received. We will therefore act promptly to address such issues at an early stage, in order to prevent arrears of dinner monies from accumulating to a point beyond parents means to settle.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are able to help parents manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available.

Signed: *S. Bruton*  
CEO (on behalf of The Keys Federation Academy Trust)

Date: .....

## Appendix a of the School Meal Debt Management Policy

### Debt Recovery Procedure

The following information provides a recommended procedure for schools to adopt in relation to school meals debt including example letters. Admin Staff should keep a record of all follow-up action, including telephone conversations, on the follow-up form at appendix f.

#### Level 1

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt, ie payment in advance not made or credit runs out.

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

**Action 1: send a 'reminder letter' – see example at Appendix b**

#### Level 2

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

- Check 1 Is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
- Check 2 Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded?
- Check 3 Has this parent made contact?

**Action 2: Personal contact**

Office staff in school will phone the parent to ask them to either bring money or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home at lunchtime. Office staff should inform Learning Mentor.

#### Level 3

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

- Check 1 Is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
- Check 2 Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded?
- Check 3 Has this parent made contact?

**Action 3: send 'Final Warning letter' – see example at Appendix c**

The Federation Finance & HR Officer will send a final letter and Office Staff should inform Learning Mentor.

#### Level 4

Indicator: The parent still does not comply with payment request,

- Check 1 is this a 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: send 'Withdrawal of School Meals letter' – see example at Appendix d**

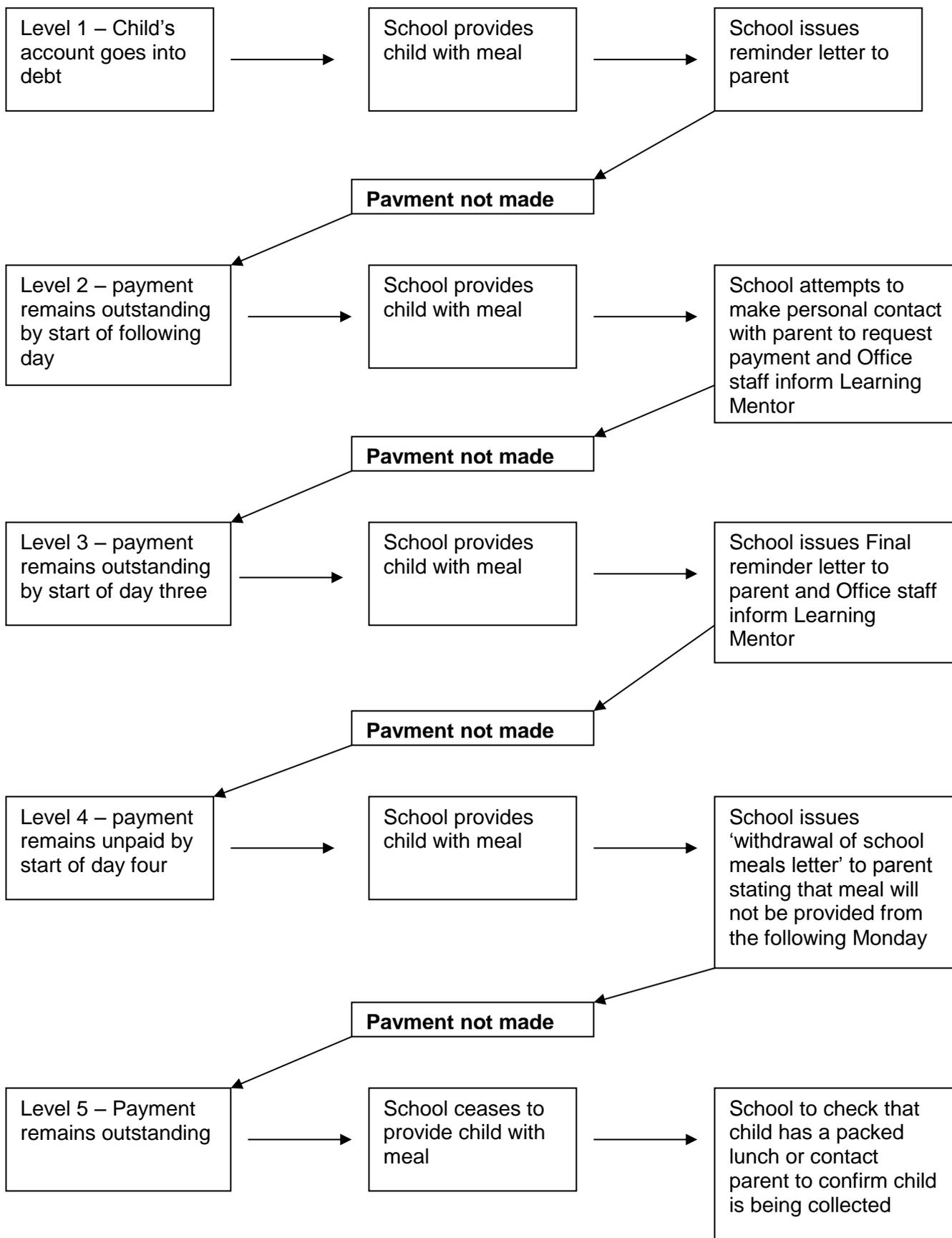
The CFO will send notification of withdrawal of school meals letter.

The CEO/Executive Principal to consider notifying social services of action.

The CFO to refer matter to governing body for debt write off if appropriate.

**NOTE** – There may be instances when the parent chooses to change from school meals to a packed lunch or qualifies for free school meals but does not pay the outstanding debt. If this happens at any point in the procedure the school should continue to pursue the debt until the CFO considers it is irrecoverable in accordance with the school's debt management policy. An example letter is included at Appendix e.

**School Meals Debt Recovery Procedure**



**Appendix b of the School Meal Debt Management Policy**

**1<sup>st</sup> Reminder letter**

Dear Parent/Carer of .....

**REMINDER – OUTSTANDING DINNER MONIES**

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child .....  
in class: .....

As at ..... your account is showing a debt of £.....

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. Once the debt is cleared please ensure the account is always in credit. Please send in money to school in a named envelope.

The cost of a school meal is £2.10 per day - £10.50 per week.

If you think your child should be eligible for a free school meal, please contact the school office to discuss this.

I wish to remind you that this school operates a NO DEBT policy in relation to school meals. I have attached a copy of the School Meals Debt Policy for Parents for your future reference.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Federation Finance & HR Officer

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Encs: (School Meals Debt Policy for Parents)

**Appendix c of the School Meal Debt Management Policy**

**Final warning letter**

Dear Parent/Carer of .....

**FINAL WARNING – OUTSTANDING DINNER MONIES**

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child ..... in Class ..... despite a previous written reminder.

As at ..... your account is showing a debt of £.....

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. If you have a problem paying these arrears, please contact the school office to discuss.

Non-payment of school meals affects the quality of service we offer to the children. We need to ensure that all payments are up-to-date and I am afraid that if the debt is not cleared by the end of this week it will not be possible to provide your child with a school meal. You will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch by either providing a healthy packed lunch or collecting your child at lunchtime.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt and to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunch time.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Finance Officer

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**Appendix d of the School Meal Debt Management Policy**

**Notification of withdrawal of school meals**

Dear Parent/Carer of .....

**NOTIFICATION OF WITHDRAWAL OF SCHOOL MEALS**

Our records show that dinner monies are still outstanding for your child ..... in Class ..... despite previous written reminders and you have not contacted school to discuss this.

As at ..... your account is showing a debt of £.....

Unless this debt is cleared by Friday ..... I will have no option but to cease providing your child with a school meal. **With effect from Monday ..... you will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch by either providing a healthy packed lunch or collecting your child at lunchtime.**

I sincerely regret this course of action, but I cannot allow the school budget to subsidise the cost of providing school meals.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt and to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunchtime.

If you wish to discuss this please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Finance Officer

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**Appendix e of the School Meal Debt Management Policy**

**Reminder letter for outstanding monies when child no longer has a school meal**

Dear Parent/Carer of .....

**REMINDER – OUTSTANDING DINNER MONIES**

Our records show that you still owe dinner money for your child ..... in class: .....

As at ..... your account is showing a debt of £.....

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately.

I wish to remind you that this school operates a NO DEBT policy in relation to school meals. Any unpaid meals have to be paid for from the school budget which means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. I am sure you will agree that this is unacceptable.

Furthermore, I will not be able to allow your child to have a school meal in the future until this debt has been cleared.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Finance Officer

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Encs: (School Meals Debt Policy for Parents)

Appendix f of the School Meal Debt Management Policy

Record of actions taken to recover outstanding dinner money

Child's Name ..... Class .....

Parent/Carer's Name .....

Contact Telephone Number .....

Amount outstanding ..... Date of debt .....

Date first reminder letter sent ..... By whom .....

Date telephone contact with parent/carers ..... By whom .....

Learning Mentor informed – Yes/No

Outcome of telephone conversation with parent/carers:

.....  
.....

Date final warning letter sent ..... By whom .....

Learning Mentor informed – Yes/No

Date withdrawal of meals letter sent ..... By whom .....

For debts of up to £50

Date reported to CEO: .....

**Action agreed:**

referral to solicitors for legal action /  
referral to a debt collection agency /  
write-off the debt

**Reason for action:**

Date reported to Resources Committee:

.....

For debts in excess of £50

Date reported to Resources Committee

.....

**Action agreed –**

referral to solicitors for legal action /  
referral to a debt collection agency /  
write-off the debt

**Reason for action:**

