



School Meals Debt Recovery Policy

Following a recent Local Authority Board (Previous Governing Body) meeting, the board members have decided to amend the School Meals Policy and the way in which meals are ordered, in line with the other schools in the MAT (Multi-Academy Trust).

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.

The Free School Meals system is there for parents of children of all ages to claim if they are in receipt of certain benefits; information is available from the school office or Plymouth City Council's website.

All pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are now entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School Meal.

This policy only relates to pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) whose parents pay for school meals.

The school's current approach has been incurring a large amount of debt and this consequently is very time consuming for the School's office staff to continually chase parents for payment - 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 School wishes to avoid a situation which allows parents to accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they then find difficult to clear.

The outcome of the meeting was that the board 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 country-wide culture of debt tolerance. However, it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM or UIFSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for. Our School Money online cash collection / dinner money system highlights debt immediately so the process is supported.

There will occasionally be the decision to be made by the School about whether a child should be refused a meal in school if there is no credit on their account. However, the School is no different than any other café/restaurant and meals taken must be paid for.

The School will make parents aware of this policy in a number of ways:

- A letter to parents;
- Reminders in the school's newsletter
- The school's Parent Handbook and website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This will be done at least once a year. All parents will be reminded of this policy when their child enters KS2.

January 2017



Glen Park Primary School



Key Information

- All school lunches must be paid for in advance and ordered in class
- No child should be sent to School with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
- Where a debt has accrued amounting to £10 (5 meals), parents will be asked to provide packed lunches from home until the debt has been cleared
- Parents who do not want their child to have a school meal should provide a healthy packed lunch
- PayPoint barcodes are available on request from the office to use instead of on-line transactions

Debt Recovery policy implementation

Weekly check

£2 - £10 debt

- Debt report checked
- A reminder text will be issued to all parents reminding them to top up their child's account

£10 debt to £25

- A reminder letter will be issued to all asking parents to top up account before any further meals are ordered and to send their child to school with a packed lunch (Appendix 2)

£26 plus

- A letter will be issued to parents asking that debt be cleared within 7 days or that the debt will be referred to a debt collection agency for recovery under their debt recovery procedures. Parents will again be asked not order any meals until their account is in credit and to send their child to school with a packed lunch (Appendix 3)

See appendix letters attached



Glen Park Primary School



APPENDIX 1 DRAFT LETTER TO KS2 PARENTS-NEW POLICY

Dear Parents / Carers,

School Meals Debt Recovery

Due to an increase in the number of school meals that are regularly not being paid for, we have, like all other schools in our MAT (Multi-Academy Trust) decided to adopt a **NO debt** policy.

We hope that all parents will give this policy their full support. As we all know, nobody takes their child to cafes/restaurants and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school.

The School wishes to avoid a situation which allows parents to accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they then find difficult to clear.

School meals must be paid for in advance using our online payment system at **www.schoolmoney.co.uk** (please contact us if there is a genuine reason e.g. no access to a computer, that you are unable to pay in this way and we will try to help with an alternative and provide a barcode for you to use a PayPoint bar code). Lunches will then be ordered in class by the children.

If you believe that you may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.

If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the School may grant a debt allowance of up to 5 meals. However, this debt must be cleared and the account topped up as soon as possible.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the office will phone the parent to ask them to clear the outstanding balance or provide a packed lunch before lunchtime.

If the debt rises and payment is not received within 1 week of the final reminder letter, as a school we will be forced to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. This would be carried out by referring the debt to a debt collection agency for collection under their debt recovery measures. The School's Education Welfare Officer and Social Services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

By implementing this debt policy we are aiming to help parents manage school dinner money better and to ensure that money given to the school for educational purposes is spent in the correct way.

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Hutchings
Head Teacher
January 2017



Glen Park Primary School



APPENDIX 2 DRAFT LETTER TO PARENTS

Dinner Money Letter 1

Dear Parent/Carer

Dinner Money Balances

We have checked the balance on your child's dinner money account today and unfortunately this now amounts to - £xxxxxxxxx

As you will be aware, all school meals must be paid for in advance using our online payment system (unless you have made alternative arrangements with us) and we must therefore ask you to clear the outstanding balance and top up your child's account before any further meals are taken.

If your child orders a further meal we will unfortunately have no choice but to telephone to ask you to provide a packed lunch. We do not like doing this as it causes embarrassment to us both and we would therefore ask that you clear the account so that this can be avoided.

If you believe you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.

We look forward to receiving your payment, however if you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Hutchings
Head Teacher

January 2017



Glen Park Primary School



APPENDIX 2 Dinner Money Letter 2

Dear Parents / Carers,

School Meals Debt Recovery

We have checked the balance on your child's dinner money account today and unfortunately this now amounts to - £xxxxxxxxx

As stated in Glen Park's School Meals Debt Recovery Policy, all school meals must be paid for in advance using our online payment system (unless you have made alternative arrangements with us) and we must therefore ask you to clear the outstanding balance within the next 7 days and top up your child's account before any further meals are taken.

If your child orders a further meal we will unfortunately have no choice but to telephone to ask you to provide a packed lunch. We do not like doing this as it causes embarrassment to us both and we would therefore ask that you clear the account so that this can be avoided.

If payment is not received within 7 days we will unfortunately have to refer the debt for recovery under their debt recovery procedures. We must implement our policy as we have to ensure that the money given to the school for educational purposes is spent in the correct way.

If you believe you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.

We look forward to receiving your payment, however if you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Hutchings
Head Teacher

January 2017