

# **St John of Beverley RC Primary School**

## **School Meals Policy**

At our school, a dedicated and committed catering team deliver an in-house lunch service to our children. Healthy meal choices are now part of the lunchtime experience and we do hope your child enjoys them.

An Autumn/Winter and Spring/Summer three-week rotational menu is served and can be viewed on our website.

This policy has been written to assist the school in adopting a consistent approach to parents who have an outstanding amount on the school dinner money account, whereby a dinner has been ordered and provided but the school has not received payment. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the situation and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

Occasionally, a decision will have to be made as whether a child should be refused a meal due to the school not receiving payment. The school meal service is available to all children and dinners can be ordered on a daily basis, but is only available when parents have either paid on line using the school payment system **School Money** or by cash or card at the school office.

A small number of parents expect the school to provide a meal for their child/children without actually paying for it; this practice would not be accepted in any other restaurant when ordering meals.

It is not acceptable that office staff have to constantly make telephone calls, send texts or statements to parents requesting immediate payment to clear their accounts. This has such a negative effect on relationships with some families and can cause embarrassment for the children in question.

All school meals have to be paid for. The online payment system will automatically keep track of outstanding amounts on a weekly basis, therefore showing all accounts that are in a debt situation. From this information contact will be made with the parent.

All parents have access to this policy when their child starts the school, both upon request and via the website.

- All school lunches must be paid for in advance
- No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal.
- Parents who do not want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch.

### **Management of School Meal Debts**

To ensure that the school's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of school meal debt the school has decided that the system will be a 'zero tolerance' approach.

We understand that it may seem a hard task as historically this has not been the case, parents that have had 'debt' for dinners in the past see it as being acceptable.

However, the school can no longer continue with this. Parents have to understand that the only free meals provided will be for those children who qualify for the free school meal entitlement. More information about who is entitled to free school meals can be found on our website.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or funds available in their on line account, or if a child's entitlement to free school meals has ceased, the school will telephone/text the parent in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

When a child has failed to have funds available on their dinner money account the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation.

If a child takes a meal which has not been paid for, a text detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent, requesting payment within seven days. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issues at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require meals, the school must establish if the child is entitled to free school meals. The office staff will support and assist all parents to set this system up and therefore the parents would still be responsible for the cost of meals until the award of free school meals, if eligible.

When the debt exceeds the value of one week's lunches a formal letter will be sent to the parent informing them to provide their child/children with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears. If the child/children is/are not provided with the requested packed lunch and the parent cannot be contacted, the school will provide a sandwich and a drink only.

If the debt exceeds £25 for a family and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the school should inform the local Safeguarding Team and formally write to the parent, explaining that the school is not obliged to provide a school dinner where advance payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school meals has not been received.

### **Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts**

The aim of the school's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Legal Department. The school does, however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

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