



Executive Headteacher: Mrs Cathy Draper

School Meals Arrears Policy Short Heath Federation

Date Adopted 01.12.2017

Executive Headteacher Signature

Chair of Governors Signature

Date for Review Sept 2018

This policy has been written to help school adopt a consistent approach to debt. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

There have been many discussions around whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. However the school meals service is no different to any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone.

Parents can easily relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying, yet a minority of parents expect free food in school. The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals, there should be no excuses. Applying for Free School Meals is straight forward and parents can apply over the telephone; assuming eligibility is authorised the child can take a free school meal the following school day.

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 or arrange to take them home for lunch

Level 1

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt

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

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

Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: send a 'Gentle debt reminder' Appendix 2

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 credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Someone will phone the parent to ask them to either bring money or pay online or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home at lunchtime.

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 credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send Strong debt letter Appendix 3

Level 4

Indicator: The parent consistently 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 credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 4: bring in outside agencies

School Meals Debt Policy for Parents

As from 1st December 2017, Short Heath Federation has adopted a strict NO DEBT policy relating to the school meal 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.

No parent would take their child to McDonald's 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 please contact the school office for further information and advice.

This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. Help is available with your application at the school office.

Parent/s must pay in advance for the school lunch using any of the methods of payment outlined below:

- Online using sQuid **THIS IS OUR PREFERRED METHOD**
- Send cash or cheque in a marked envelope

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 up to 3 meals. 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 Head of School or school office will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money or ask them to pay online immediately. Otherwise they must provide sandwiches before lunch time or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

If payment of the debt is not received by the next day, the Executive Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Social services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

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.

If you have any concerns please don't hesitate in contacting me.

Yours sincerely
Executive Headteacher

APPENDIX 2
Short Heath Junior School

Parent or carer of Mark Smith
1 The Court
Green Lane
Newtown
Newshire

01/01/2010

Dear ??????

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child Mark Smith, Class: 5G. As at 01/01/2010 your account is showing a debt of **£-1.90**. Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. Once the debt is cleared, please ensure the account is always in credit.

You have 2 ways to pay:

1. In the secure online payment system sQuid, using the login already provided, NB THIS IS OUR PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD

Your username and password are:

Username: xxxxxx Password: yyyyyyy

2. Send in money to school in a marked envelope

No matter how you pay, you can check the account balance anytime by logging into your sQuid account at www.?????????. You can see what meals have been taken and when.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Cathy Draper
Executive Headteacher

Short Heath Federation

APPENDIX 3
Short Heath Junior School

Parent or carer of Mark Smith
1 The Court
Green Lane
Newtown
Newshire

01/01/2010

Dear ??????

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child Mark Smith Class: 5G despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call. As at 01/01/2010 your account is showing a debt of **£-1.90**. Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately.

You have 2 ways to pay:

1. In the secure online payment system sQuid, using the login already provided, go to www.???????? NB THIS IS OUR PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD

Your username and password are:

Username: xxxxxx Password: yyyyyyy

2. Send in money to school in a marked envelope.

No matter how you pay, you can check the account balance anytime by logging into your sQuid account at www.????????. You can see what meals have been taken and when.

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

Since non-payment for 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.

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,

Cathy Draper
Executive Headteacher