

# LBC Catering Services

## School Meals Debt Policy

LBC Catering Services has a 'no debt' policy relating to school meals.

It is appreciated there will be occasions when dinner money is not presented in advance of meals being taken, i.e. a parent/carer has forgotten to add money to an account resulting in a temporary lack of funds.

A debt policy is proposed to reduce the level of debt but maintain a sympathetic approach to temporary non-payments.

If debts occur, the school budget has to pay for them, which means money that should be spent on children's education is used to pay debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree this is unacceptable and we request all parents give this policy their full support.

School lunches must be paid for in advance using any of the payment methods below:

### Schools Payment:

- **Online** – using a debit card via Tucasi's internet payment service [www.scopay.com](http://www.scopay.com)
- **Over the counter** – by presenting the barcoded letter at any PayPoint outlet (if you need a copy of your child's barcoded letter please let us know and we will send one home).
- **Via mobile device** – by visiting the Tucasi website ([www.scopay.com](http://www.scopay.com)) and accessing the mobile features.

**Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those entitled to Free School Meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals.**

If a parent/carer forgets to pay in advance:

- the school may grant a debt allowance, this is the individual school Headteachers decision
- the debt on the child's account, including any meals that the school have been responsible for must be paid the next day and any future meals must be paid in advance before any meal is provided
- If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch
- If the debt remains unpaid after 7 days, LBC will use all legal means to recover this debt in line with Council procedure.

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

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact the kitchen manager at the school.

# School Meals Debt Procedure

## Debt policy implementation

### Key Information

- A copy of the debt policy will be published in the school's newsletter and website
- A copy of the debt policy will be available on the school and LBC Catering Services web sites
- 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, unless they are entitled to FSM or UIFMS
- Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch

If a parent/carer forgets to pay in advance:

- the school may grant a debt allowance, this is the individual school Headteachers decision
- the debt on the child's account, including any meals that the school have been responsible for must be paid the next day and any future meals must be paid in advance before any meal is provided
- If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch
- If the debt remains unpaid after 7 days, LBC Catering reserve the right to begin legal proceedings against the parent/carer to recover the debt
- If the debt is not cleared and no packed lunch is provided, Social Services could also be informed that parents/carers are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime
- If the debt is not cleared, the school will be charged for any unpaid meals at the end of each half term
- If in the future, payment is received from a parent/carer to cover any outstanding debt, the school will be refunded for the amount invoiced

If there is a debt on a child's account the following procedure will be followed:

### Stage1

**Indicator:** A child's account goes into debt over £1.00

Check 1: Is this a FSM/UIFSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is the register correct? Check with the school and SIMS data.

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

Check 4: Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Payments made at a PayPoint can take 48 hours to appear on the Catering account.

If a receipt of payment from Paypoint is provided, it may be possible for the child to receive a meal

**Action:** Primary School

Debt letter 1 is automatically generated from Tucasi system

### **High School**

A telephone call will be made to the parent/carer - same day  
– a maximum of 1 meal will be available on overdraft

### **Stage 2**

**Indicator:** A child comes to school again without the debt being paid and doesn't bring a packed lunch

Check 1: Is this a FSM/UIFSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is the register correct? Check with the school and SIMS data.

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

Check 4: Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Payments made at a PayPoint can take 48 hours to appear on the Catering account.

If a receipt of payment from PayPoint is provided, it may be possible for the child to receive a meal.

**Action:** **Primary and Secondary?**

**Letter 2 is sent by e mail or the pupil**

**The Headteacher is Informed and given a copy of the letter**

School will phone the parent/carer again to ask them to either bring money or pay online or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime.

### **Stage 3**

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

Check 1: Is this a FSM/UIFSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is the register correct? Check with the school and SIMS data.

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

Check 4: Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Payments made at a PayPoint can take 48 hours to appear on the Catering account.

If a Receipt of payment from PayPoint is provided, it may be possible for the child to receive a meal.

**Action:** **Letter 3 sent by post**

**Inform Headteacher and give a copy of the letter**

**Telephone call – (logged who spoken to and read from a script)**

**Inform Luton Borough Debt Collection Services.**

**Involve outside agencies including Social services**