

INTAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL



School Meals Debt Policy

Last Reviewed: January 2019

Review Date: January 2021

Background

The Intake School Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

Provision of School Meals

The School Meal Service is no different to any other business or food outlet in that meals have to be paid for by someone. Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. Anyone who may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents/carers who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a school meal each day.

Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Sheffield City Council's website

https://service.sheffield.gov.uk/selfservice/L2_Portal.html?formname=FSM_SelfSReq_V3

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parent/carers personal circumstances change the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner.

Costs of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.00 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals **must** be paid for in advance. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking place.

Payment for School Meals

School meals can be paid for using our School Gateway Service by following www.schoolgateway.com or by sending cash/cheque to the school office in a clearly marked envelope with your child's name, registration group and amount enclosed. The envelope should be handed to your child's class teacher at registration time.

Cheques should be made payable to Sheffield City Council.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of School Meal Debt the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Although, this may seem harsh to some parents it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not a small number.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, or if a child's entitlement to free school dinners has ceased, the school will telephone/text the parent/carer in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

When a child has failed to produce dinner money the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation e.g. lost or forgotten dinner money, temporary hardship etc. however details should be recorded in writing and a record maintained and monitored.

If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a letter/text detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school within 7 days. The same

process will be used if a cheque is not honoured by the bank. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue 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, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

When the debt exceeds £10 the child/children will not be able to have a school meal until the debt is cleared. Even if they bring in £2 for the cost of the meal for that day, the money will go towards the debt and parents will receive a phone call to bring a packed lunch. If the call goes unanswered the office will try repeatedly until the parents can be reached. If debts are not cleared, or a plan has not been agreed to clear the debt, we will engage the services of Thomas Higgins, a debt collection company.

Monitoring and Recover of School Meal Debts

At each meeting or the Governing Body/Finance Committee, the Headteacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt. 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 legal advisors. 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.

All write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Governing Body/Finance Committee following submission of details of the debt by the Headteacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Policy Agreements

This policy has been agreed by:

Headteacher	Name:	_____
	Date:	_____
Governor:	Name:	_____
	Date:	_____