



Collection of School Meals Money & Debt Policy



Approved by: Resources Committee

Ratified: 22nd January 2019

Last reviewed on: January 2019

Next review due by: January 2020

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. This policy will be published on the school website.

Where debts are incurred, these costs must be covered by the school's budget. This means that money that should be spent on all children's education in school is instead used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers. The governing body considers this to be unacceptable and requests that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

General Principle

If a child is to have school meals, this must be paid for in advance. All parents and staff are set up with a ParentPay account for paying for school meals for each child in the family. ParentPay is linked with our Management Information System so that all meals taken by a particular child are charged to that child's ParentPay account. Occasional meals are permitted and are paid for in the same way.

Free School Meals Entitlement

Bristol City Council encourages all parents, regardless of circumstances, to check their eligibility for Free School Meals as this entitlement is also used to determine whether a child is entitled to Pupil Premium funding. This is additional funding that goes directly to the school and is used for things like school trips, breakfast and after-school clubs as well as additional teaching and support staff. Parents/carers can check eligibility and make an application using the website below. If parents/carers require support with accessing this website, they should contact the Family Liaison Support Worker via the school offices.

www.bristol.gov.uk/schools-learning-early-years/free-school-meals

All children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 receive Universal Free School Meals regardless of family circumstance. Children in Key Stage 2 will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to Free School Meals. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying children, it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to children where this has been officially approved and the school has been notified in writing by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

The school understands that on occasion arrears arise for a number of reasons. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following course of action where arrears arise:

1. A **first letter** will be sent home five working days after payment became due.
2. A **second letter** will be sent to the parent/carer if the debt remains unpaid after three weeks. This will state that, with immediate effect, no further school meals will be provided for their child(ren) until the debt has been cleared, and that the debt must be cleared within five working days.
3. A **final letter** will be issued after four weeks if the debt has still not been cleared. This letter will inform the parent/carer that if the debt remains unpaid after five working days, it shall be passed on to the Debt Recovery Team at Bristol City Council.

This policy shall take effect from the 22nd of January 2019. For the purposes of collecting arrears, existing debts as at the 22nd of January 2019 shall be treated as becoming due as of that date.

Appendices

First letter: Reminder of overdue payments

According to our records, your school meals payments are in arrears. The debt amounts to £_____ as of today.

Please settle this amount as soon as possible by making payment, preferably on ParentPay. If you are worried about repaying these arrears, please contact the school office to discuss your current circumstances.

Second letter: Accumulated school meal arrears

Following our letter dated _____ regarding outstanding school dinner money, our records show that this has not yet been paid.

The amount of arrears is now £_____.

If this debt is not cleared by _____, you must provide a daily packed lunch for your child from this point until the debit is cleared if you wish them to stay at school during the lunch break. If the debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with the outstanding arrears or to provide sandwiches before lunch time. Please note that no further school meals will be provided until this debt is cleared. Parents cannot send in payment for specific days unless arrears are cleared.

This debt needs to be paid within five working days by making payment, preferably on ParentPay.

Final letter: Non-Payment of school dinner money arrears

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your child(ren) despite previous letters sent home on _____ and _____.

The amount of arrears is now £_____.

In line with the school policy on dinner money arrears, a copy of which is published on the school website, I must inform you that if payment is not received within five working days of the date of this letter, the debt will be referred to Bristol City Council Debt Recovery Team. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to Court.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school office as soon as possible.