



School Meals Debt Policy & Procedure - January 2015
Full Version

Our school has adopted a clear 'no debt' policy relating to the school meal service which will begin on 19th January 2015. Our school has always supported parents and carers with dinner money payments, but this has resulted in our school having a debt of over £1000, This money should be spent on the children's education to buy books, paper, pencils, paint etc. but has to be used to pay for debts incurred by parents until we recover the money. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable, it cannot carry on and we request that all parents give this policy their full support. The school also recognises its own responsibility in ensuring that these debts do not mount up. We therefore must update our policy and bring it in line with other schools. This letter provides a summary of the policy for you but a copy of the policy is available if you wish to see it.

As most parents will appreciate, no-one would take their child to a restaurant five days a week and expect them to be given food without paying, so the same applies at school. *If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact the Free School Meals Customer Service Team on 0300 123 7039. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.*

- 1)** Parent/carers must pay in advance or on the day for the school meal by cash or cheque, placed in the box in the office, or paid for at the time the meal is taken. If a parent forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one meal. This debt must be paid the next morning directly to the school office, and a note will be sent home on the day advising the parent.
- 2)** If the debt is not cleared the following day, parents must provide a packed lunch. If no packed lunch is provided there will be a phone call to the parent to ask them to come to school with the money or provide a packed lunch before lunch time. A reminder letter will be sent home on this day.
- 3)** If the debt has not been paid by the end of the first week then a debt letter will be issued with a statement of the amount owed. If a packed lunch is NOT provided by the parent/carer, the matter may be referred to Social Services by the school if this situation continues. Children of families with a debt will not be able to purchase snacks from the school kitchen until the debt is cleared.
- 4)** If the amount owed reaches £25.00 a final debt letter will be issued. Parents/carers should also be advised that failure to pay within a further 7 day deadline, will lead to the outstanding debt being referred to County (CWAC) and more formal procedures being invoked.

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 to contact us at school.

Yours truly,

V O'Brien

Walpole St, Chester, CH1 4HG
Head Teacher: Mr V O'Brien
Telephone: 01244 981098
Email: admin@chesterbluecoatce.cheshire.sch.uk



School Meals Debt Policy & Procedure - November 2014

Establishing a debt policy

Chester Blue Coat CE Primary School will ensure that parents are aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- The school newsletter
- The school website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This should be done at least once each year, more often when it is first introduced. All parents should be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school.

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 without money or a packed lunch 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.

Checklist

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

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

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

Actions

Action 1: Slip sent home to notify parent of debt

Action 2: If no money or packed lunch provided following day – a phone call will be made to ask parents/carers to bring in the money owed or bring a packed lunch to school before lunchtime

Action 3: Send a reminder letter - Appendix A

Following Reminder Letter:

Action: If no contact made by parents by the end of the week send debt letter – Appendix B

Following Debt Letter:

Action: If no contact made by parents by end of the week. Phone call to agree payment plan.

In the instance of £25.00 debt:

Action 4: Debt referred to CWAC for further action.

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APPENDIX A

Parent or carer of _____

Address:

Date: _____

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child

_____ Class: _____

As at _____ our records show a debt of £_____.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by sending cash or a cheque in a clearly marked envelope into the office.

NOTE: All meals MUST be paid for in advance or on the day in accordance with our debt policy (copy enclosed). If you don't wish for your child(ren) to have a school meal please provide them with a healthy packed lunch.

The cost of a school meal is £2.15 per day - £10.75 per week.

You will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch. If you do not provide a packed lunch for your child(ren), the matter may be referred to Social Services due to concerns this raises.

Your child will not be permitted to purchase snacks from the school kitchen until this debt is cleared. If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

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APPENDIX B

Parent or carer of _____

Address:

Date: _____

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child _____

Class: _____ despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call.

As at _____ our records show a debt of £_____.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by sending cash or a cheque in a clearly marked envelope into the office. The cost of a school meal is £2.15 per day - £10.75 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 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.

The school will begin proceedings to recover the debt after the end of this week. The debt will be referred to Cheshire West and Chester for more formal procedures to begin.

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

Yours truly,

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