



School Meals Debt Policy & Procedure – September 2018

We have amended our existing policy relating to the school meal service in order to prevent families falling into debt. Our school has always supported parents and carers with dinner money payments and will continue to do so without large debts building up. The school recognises its own responsibility in ensuring that these debts do not mount up and that our funding should be spent on the children's education rather than pay for debts incurred by parents. You will appreciate that no-one would take their child to a restaurant five days a week and expect them to be given food without paying, so this also applies at school.

We have therefore updated our policy to make it more effective and expect all parents to give this policy their full support. This letter provides a summary of the policy for you but a copy of the policy is available if you wish to see it.

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. Payments can be made online, in cash or cheque which should be sealed in an envelope and placed in the box in the office, or paid for at the time the meal is taken.
- 2) If a parent forgets to pay in advance, **the school may grant a debt allowance of one meal**. This debt **must** be paid **no later than the next morning**, and a telephone call will be made on the day advising the parent of the debt.
- 3) 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 second phone call to the parent to ask them to pay the outstanding amount or provide a packed lunch before lunch time.
- 4) 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 on to relevant agencies as a concern.
- 5) Children of families with a debt **will not be able to purchase morning snacks** from the school kitchen until the debt is cleared.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we can avoid unmanageable debt and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available. If you have any questions please contact us at school.

Yours truly

V O'Brien

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School Meals Debt Policy & Procedure 2018 **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 do not 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: Telephone call to notify parent of debt on the day the meal is taken.

Action 2: If the debt remains unpaid the next day, a further telephone 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

Action 4: If no contact made by parents by the end of the following week send debt letter – Appendix B

Action 5: If no contact made by parents by end of the following week, refer debt to CWAC.

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APPENDIX A

Parent/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 £2.25 per day - £11.25 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 me immediately.

Yours truly

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APPENDIX B

Parent/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 £2.25 per day - £11.25 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 me immediately.

Yours truly

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