

Lea Community Primary School



School Meal Arrears Policy



Date of last review: Autumn 2023

Policy holder: School Business Manager

Introduction

This policy concerns to the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the case of all debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. This policy will be applied consistently in all cases.

General Principle

If a pupil is to have meals for the duration of the week monies must be received in advance, before the start of that week or at the latest by the end of that week. If the school is to accept pupils having an occasional meal, monies must be received on the day of the meal. School meals are charged at £2.50 per day.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for this. As a result, money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents / carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents / carers give this policy their full support.

Free School Meals Entitlement

Pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, or if the pupil is confirmed as entitled to free school meals. If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the County Council. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/carers make use of it.

The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where this is officially approved and the school informed by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons eg pupils forget their dinner money or are absent on the day it is collected. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

1. A reminder text using the school system will be sent after 2 weeks of accumulated arrears/ arrears reach £25.
2. The parent/carer will be informed in writing when three weeks' arrears have accumulated and advised to make immediate payment (Appendix 1).
3. If no payments have been received towards the debt after four weeks and we have not had contact from you to discuss a payment plan a further letter will be sent and you be invited to a meeting with the headteacher (may be face to face or by online platform such as Zoom). (Appendix 2)
4. A final letter to the parent/guardian informing them that no meals will be provided for their child(ren) if payment has not been received by a specified date, (ie in accordance with an agreed payment plan). (Appendix 3).

Meals will not be provided to pupils when arrears exceed four weeks and you will be informed to provide a packed lunch for your child.

If payment is not received or commitments to a payment plan are not met and the final letter deadline has expired, the debt will be passed onto the debt recovery team at Lancashire County Council where legal proceeding may begin.

We must reiterate that the school budget has to pay for any unpaid debts from failure to pay for school meals. As a result, money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents / carers, this is unacceptable.

Last Reviewed: Autumn 2023

APPENDIX 1

Date:

Outstanding Dinner Money reminder letter

Child's name:

Dear parent/ guardian

According to our records there is outstanding dinner monies for your child(ren) amounting to £_____ as of today's date.

Please send in £_____ by_____.

If you have any queries, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Bursar

APPENDIX 2

Date:

Accumulated Dinner Money Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/ Carer

Following the letter dated _____ sent home regarding outstanding school dinner money, our records show that there have been no payments made.

To date the amount of arrears is now £_____.

If the debt is not cleared within the next 5 working days, you must provide a packed lunch for your child(ren) with immediate effect. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with the money or to provide sandwiches before lunch time.

This debt needs to be paid as soon as possible please.

I would be grateful if you could please attend a meeting with the Headteacher on _____ at _____. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the debt and to establish a payment plan to clear the debt.

Following the meeting you will be issued with a payment plan in writing and we will be in regular communication with you to ensure this can be met. Failure to meet the expectations of the payment plan will result in us moving to the next stage of the School Meals Debt Policy, a copy of which is available on the school website.

If you are unable to attend this meeting please contact the school office as a matter of urgency to arrange an alternative date.

Yours sincerely

School Business Manager

APPENDIX 3

Date:

Non payment of school dinner money arrears.

Child's name:

Dear Parent/ Carer

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

Arrears to date total £ _____

In following the school policy on dinner money arrears, a copy of which is available on the school website, I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days of the date of this letter, the debt will be referred to the LCC Debt Recovery Team.

I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in additional costs and potentially a summons to Court.

As previously informed, until the debt is cleared, you must make alternative arrangements for your child(rens)'s lunch as no meals will be provided in school.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school office to arrange an appointment with myself.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher