

ST ANNE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



MEALS AND OTHER DEBT POLICY

This policy has been written to help the school to adopt a consistent approach to debt. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

There should be no debts incurred for school journey, music lessons, breakfast club or after school clubs as attendance is dependent upon payment requested for the appropriate period being received in full prior to participation.

There have been many discussions around whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. However the school meals service is no different than any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone.

Parents can easily relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to McDonalds and expect them to be given food without paying, yet a minority of parents expect free food in school. The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals.

The system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach. It may seem a very hard stance in a school where there is a culture of debt tolerance and where we appreciate that parents and carers strive hard to make ends meet. Although this will be tough to implement it will become easy to maintain once parents understand that the school can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for.

The school is invoiced for meals taken, and it is essential that sufficient funds are credited for these meals into the school's bank account, either by parents paying online or through the cash and cheque deposit process. If there are insufficient funds then schools will be asked to cover the shortfall from their own budget.

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 with no money in their account 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

Level 1 (Monday morning)

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt

- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: send a 'Gentle debt reminder' Appendix 2

Level 2 (Tuesday morning – first thing)

Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch

- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to either bring money or pay online or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime.

Level 3 – Tuesday afternoon

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options,

- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send Strong debt letter Appendix 3

The head teacher will send a final letter offering option to pay.

Level 4 - Wednesday

Indicator: The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options,

- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 4: Text parents

Level 5 – Thursday

Indicator: No contact from parent or promises to pay that have not been fulfilled.

- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 5: Text parents

Level 6

Indicator – no payment by the end of the week

Action 6: Withdrawal of Meals – Appendix 4

Total withdrawal of meals

Call parent to inform them all meals have been withdrawn – make a note of time and who you spoke to.

Text parent saying “This is to advise you that as you have not settled your school meal debt your child will be unable to have any meals at the school – see letter”

Date agreed by governing body on	Signature of Chair or Vice Chair
Date agreed for review Autumn 2019	Frequency of Review Annual / Bi-annual / Three-year cycle
Review Responsibility Resources Committee/Headteacher	

APPENDIX 1

Our Ref: RSMD/01

Dear Parents/Carers

School Meals Debt Policy for Parents

As from September 2016 St Anne's Catholic Primary School adopted a School Meals Debt Policy relating to the school meal service.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

No parent would take their child to McDonalds and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school. If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact the office for more details. 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.

Parent/s must pay in advance for the school lunch using any of the methods of payment outlined below:

- Online via the school website
- Send cash or cheque payment in person at the school office

If a debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the head teacher will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money or ask them to pay online immediately. Otherwise they must provide sandwiches before lunch time.

If payment of the debt is not received after being requested by the school, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Social services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

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 for learning.

If you have any concerns please don't hesitate in contacting me.

Yours faithfully

Catherine Davis
Headteacher

APPENDIX 2

Our Ref: RSMD/02

St Anne's Catholic Primary School

Parent or carer of XXXXX

Address

03/11/2016

Dear XXXX

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

Class: XXXX

As at **Date** your account is showing a debt of **£XXXX**

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. Once the debt is cleared please ensure the account is always in credit.

You have two ways to pay:

- Online via the school website
- Send cash or cheque payment in person at the school office

No matter how you pay you can check the account balance anytime by calling the school.

The cost of a school meal is £1.90 per day - £9.50 per week.

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

Yours faithfully

Louise Hanscombe
Administration Officer

APPENDIX 3

Our Ref: RSMD/03

St Anne's Catholic Primary School

Parent or carer of XXXX
Address

04/11/2016

Dear XXXX

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child XXXX Class: XXXX despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call

As at Date your account is showing a debt of £XXXX

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately.

You have two ways to pay:

- Online via the school website
- Send cash or cheque payment in person at the school office

No matter how you pay you can check the account balance anytime by calling the school.

The cost of a school meal is £1.90 per day - £9.50 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 I am afraid that 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. You will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt and to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunch time.

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

Yours faithfully

Marie Dunbar
School Business Manager

APPENDIX 4

Our Ref: SMD/05F

St Anne's Catholic Primary School

Parent or carer of XXXX

07/11/2016

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child XXXXX Class: XXXX despite two previous written reminders, a telephone call and two texts

As at Date your account is showing a debt of £XXXX

Until the above debt is settled in full and any further meals paid for in advance; the school will not be able to provide your child with a meal. It is your duty of care to ensure your child has access to food at lunch time so you will need to provide them with a packed lunch.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt owed as well as any costs associated with legal proceedings. This will add a minimum of £10.00 and you will be liable for any costs that are incurred in this process which will add to your debt by a minimum of £35.00

We also reserve the right to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunch time.

Yours faithfully

Catherine Davis
Head Teacher