



CHARLESWORTH SCHOOL

...from tiny acorns great oaks grow

Dinner Money Policy



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Charlesworth Primary School Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result, the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

PROCEDURES

Provision of School Meals

The Schools Meals Service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for by someone. Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. Currently, all children in KS1 are receive a free school meal. Anyone who may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents/carers who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a School meal each day. In addition to this, additional money is paid to the school for any child eligible for free school meals. This is used to provide additional support and opportunities for pupils from lower income families.

Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parents/carers personal circumstances change the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.15 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

Payment for School Meals

Charlesworth Primary School only accepts payment over ParentMail for school dinners. If there is a problem using ParentMail please contact the school office.

Each child will be put on a dinner register on ParentMail and on a Friday, using the class register each child will be marked as having a school lunch or not.

Once the child has been marked as having a lunch it will immediately come off the child's balance on ParentMail. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure there is enough money on the balance, so it doesn't fall into debt.

Management of School Meal Debts

If a child's account is in arrears, the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation. e.g. forgotten dinner money, temporary hardship etc., a record will be maintained and ParentMail monitored.

If a child takes a school meal which hasn't been booked in or paid for, an email/text detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment within 7 days. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require meals, the School must establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these

circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

When the child's balance gets to £2.15 or less a weekly reminder is sent out via ParentMail. If it continues to get into debt more regular reminders are sent

When the debt has not been cleared within 21 days from sending the initial reminder for a *child or family* a formal letter must be sent to the parent/carer informing them to provide their child/children with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears, once the arrears have been paid they are only allowed school dinners if paid weekly upfront.

If action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the School should inform the local Safeguarding Team and formally write to the parent/carer, explaining that the School is not obliged to provide a school dinner where advance payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received

MONITORING AND REVIEW

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

The aim of the School's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to the School's solicitors. The School does however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

All Write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Governing Body/Finance Committee following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years in line with the *Governing Body* policy review schedule (or earlier if required e.g., changes in charges) at the Resources Committee meeting.

Appendices

1. Letter 1 (initial communication of outstanding debt)
2. Letter 2 (follow up on continued outstanding debt)

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date:

XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the School's financial records you have not paid dinner money for your child (pupil name) in Class: xx. As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt of £xx.

In order that the school's budget is not used to clear your child's debt please make arrangements for the outstanding dinner money debt to be paid immediately. Once you have cleared the current debt I should be grateful if you could ensure that you keep your account in credit. The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date:

XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding school meal debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx in Class xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week.

I would ask that you please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately and take steps to ensure your account is kept in credit in the future.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals

Since the School has to fund all school meal debts from its budget it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. Unfortunately, if the debt is not cleared by xxxxx a school meal will no longer be provided to your child and you must make your own arrangements for your child's lunch. The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and to inform the local authority that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

