



School Meals Arrears policy

Date agreed by governors.	27/4/18
Review Date	1/5/21
Policy Written by	Helen Askham

Safeguarding Statement.

At Lane End we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by or invited to deliver services at Lane End.

We recognise our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect and bullying.

We also exercise this responsibility by educating our children so that they grow in their understanding of their rights and responsibilities to themselves and others, in safety consciousness, and, in their maturity and abilities to keep themselves and others safe.

We perceive this to be part of our role in promoting British values.

Reasons for this policy

The Governors of Lane End Primary School are committed to a transparent, consistent and fair approach to the operation of the school dinner system. By adopting this policy the governors wish to ensure that parents, carers and staff work together to ensure that the school dinner system works efficiently and effectively and that arrears in payments can be avoided. The meals service provided by school is no different to those provided by other businesses and meals must be paid for. Where debts build up it can sometimes be harder for parents / carers to pay them off. If debts remain unpaid this means money which should have been spent on all pupils' education is instead being used to pay for debts incurred by non-payment which has a negative impact on learning for all.

Free School Meal entitlement and Universal Free School Meals (FSM / UIFSM)

Universal Free School Meals. (UIFSM)

Currently Universal Free School Meals are provided to children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. This is a government led initiative to ensure all school age children in KS1 are provided with a free school meal regardless of benefit entitlement.

Free School Meals. (FSM)

Free School Meals for pupils in KS2 have to be applied for via Local Authority Benefits. Further information can be found at One Stop Shops or ask at the school office if you need assistance.

Children in KS2 will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for or we have confirmation from the Local Authority benefits service notifying us of entitlement to Free School Meals.

Parents / Carers who are experiencing difficulty in paying for meals and are not entitled to a Free School Meals should inform the office immediately. In most cases a payment plan will be put in place and if this is not adhered to debts will be forwarded to the Local Authority debt recovery team who will take action to legally recover funds on behalf of the school.

Dinner Money and Payment (if applicable)

Dinner money must be paid on a Monday morning for that week. Payments can also be made in advance for the half term or full term.

You will be notified of the daily charge at the start of the school year.

Payments can be made;

Online using T2P (Teachers 2 Parents School Money).

Or

At a Paypoint outlet

For either method please contact the school office for your own individual login details or Paypoint barcode.

Procedure for collection of arrears of unpaid dinner money.

Please ask at the school office if you need to be sent your individual logon / password or paypoint barcode.

- If your child takes a school meal which has not been paid for you will be sent a text message asking for payment. (week 1) (**appendix 1**)

- If no payment is made by the Friday of the same week you will receive another text and a letter relating to the outstanding debt and details of how to pay, informing you that your child will not be entitled to a school meal the following week and that a packed lunch must be provided or that child be taken home for lunch. (End of week 1). **(appendix 2)**
- Please note – it is your responsibility to provide a meal for your child and if you do not on a regular basis we will have to raise this as a 'Cause for concern'. If this is an ongoing issue then we would be concerned that you are not meeting your child's basic care needs as such we may have to get advice from Education Safeguarding or Children's Social Work Service
- You will continue to receive texts and arrears letter with details of how to pay (Week 2 and 3).
- If no payment is received the following Monday you will receive a text and a Final Debt Reminder' letter notifying of the next procedure of how school will recoup the debt owed. (Week 4).
- When we send the outstanding debt to the Local Authority for collection this could have a detrimental effect on future benefit awards from them. **(appendix 3)**

Once, any arrears have been paid, we are happy to resume school meal provision on condition regular weekly payments are made.

Welfare

Should a child arrive at school without a packed lunch or without payment for a school meal, the Lane End Primary School will telephone the parent to see whether alternative arrangements have been made. Lane End Primary School is not obliged to provide a school dinner where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school meals has not been received. Lane End Primary School retains its discretion to refuse to provide a school meal in circumstances where there has been persistent non-payment. However, we regard this as a last resort. We do not wish our children to be in a situation where their learning or welfare suffers and Lane End Primary School will therefore act promptly to address such issues at an early stage and to work with families in order to prevent arrears of dinner monies from accumulating to a point beyond parents means to settle.

However if a parent/carer repeatedly fails to provide a packed lunch, or sufficient money to cover the cost of school meals, Lane End Primary School may need to inform Social Services that the parent is not carrying out the responsibility of care by providing food for their child at lunchtime.

To prevent this parents/carers who are experiencing difficulty in paying for a chargeable service offered by the school should inform the school office immediately. In most circumstances a payment plan can be agreed to help parents clear their debt to the school as soon as possible.

Summary of procedure

Payment of school meal money	
1	Dinner money should be paid on a Monday morning for at least that current week. Payments should be made Online using T2P School Money or by Paypoint.
2	If your child is absent from school and meals have been paid for, these will be carried forwards as credits and the following weeks payment will be adjusted accordingly

Procedure for the collection of school meal arrears	
1	Reminders will be sent by text message to parents who have not paid.
2	Text and letter will be sent
3	Reminder texts and letters will be sent for payment options
4	Text and final debt reminder letter
5	Forward debt to Local Authority (<i>this could have a detrimental effect on future benefit awards</i>)

Free School Meals	
1	If parents believe that their child may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, then applications can be made at One Stop Shops or via the Local Authority . Staff in the office can help parents and carers with their application if required.
2	If a child is in receipt of free school meals, but they prefer to bring a packed lunch, the school office must still be informed as the school kitchen will be catering for those children who have arranged to take a school meal.
3	The school reserves the right to charge parents where they have brought a packed lunch and not informed the school that they do not want to receive a free school meal even though they are eligible.

Meal Patterns	
Parents should make the decision as to whether their child is taking a school meal or bringing a packed lunch and stay with that pattern for the half term. Where meal patterns are changed without informing the office, any charges that have been accrued will have to be paid in full regardless of free school meal entitlement or packed lunches.	

Appendix 1

TEXT MESSAGE INFO

Hello. You have an overdue payment of £## for school meals. Please pay on www.schoolmoney.co.uk using password #?????

Appendix 2

School Lunch Arrears

Name of Child:

DOB:

As of today your school lunch arrears are £_____

Please pay these arrears today or your child will need to bring a pack lunch tomorrow.

Pay using your online payment account with Teachers2Parents or via Paypoint.

If you have misplaced your logon text or paypoint barcode please contact the school office.

Thank you

Helen Askham

School Business Manager

Appendix3

Ref: (CHILDS INITIALS, YEAR,)

Outstanding arrears for dinner money for (Child's Name)

(Parent's name and Address)

????

????

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(Date)

Dear (Parents Name)

I am writing regarding the outstanding arrears of unpaid dinner money for Child.
To date the arrears stand at £???.??.

You have been contacted on numerous occasions via text, telephone conversation and in person.

School has given you the option to clear this debt by online payment or by using pay point, but the debt is still outstanding.

If no payment has been received by DATE I will have no alternative but to forward your debt to Leeds City Council Debt recovery team who will then act on school's behalf.

If you need the details again of how to access online payments or the pay point barcode, please contact the main office and they will be provided.

Yours faithfully.

Helen Askham
School Business Manager.