

Collection of School Meals money & School Meals Debt Policy



Introduction

This policy concerns the collection of school meal money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. This policy came into effect from September 2018 has been reviewed in January 2021 and is published on the school website and parents/carers advised of the policy when their children start at Dunmow St Mary's and through periodic reminders.

General Principle

School meals must be paid for in advance. If a child is to have meals for the duration of the week monies must be received before the start of that week or as we accept children having an occasional meal, monies must be received on the day of the meal. The current cost of a lunch (from 5th September 2018) is £2.30.

Meals should be paid for via our online payment system Scopay. Details of how to set up accounts for new children can be obtained from the office.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on all children's 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 Meal Entitlement

Children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 receive Universal Free School Meals.

Children in Key Stage 2 will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those 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 children it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to children where this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons e.g. children forget their money or parents forget to top up their child's account online. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing board has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

Stage 1. On a weekly basis accounts with dinner arrears are sent an email reminder.

Stage 2. Should the arrears reach £11.50 (the cost of 5 meals) then a letter requesting immediate payment will be sent to parents/carers.

Stage 3. Should the arrears reach £23 (the cost of 10 meals) no further meals will be provided by the school and parents/carers/ will be called and asked to either bring in the money or provide a packed lunch until the debt is cleared.

Only when the debt is cleared will the child once again then be able to access school meals.

The procedure for collecting arrears will be conducted with sensitivity and with the aim of working with the family if there is genuine reason for the arrears accruing. Families that are experiencing financial difficulty will be offered an appointment with a member of the SLT to discuss what avenues of support may be available.

Agreed by Governing Board on 19th January 2021

To be Reviewed on January 2022

Chair of Finance & Premises Committee