



Glenmere Langmoor Academy Trust

School Meals Debt Policy and Procedure



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 a restaurant 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, there should be no excuses.

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. Although this will be tough to implement it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for.

Some schools may feel 'zero debt policy' is too harsh and of course you can choose to carry the cost of giving these children a meal.

Establishing a debt policy

Schools should first discuss this policy with staff and agree its debt policy with governors. Once agreed, schools should make parents aware of this policy. This could be by including it in one or more of the following:

- A letter to parents
- The school's newsletter
- The school brochure
- The school website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This should be done at least once each year, more often when it is first introduced.

All parents should be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school.

The policy is attached as Appendix C.

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 or arrange to take them home for lunch

Level 1

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

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

Level 2

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 recorded correctly?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to bring in the money owed or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home at lunchtime.

Level 3

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 recorded correctly?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send Strong debt letter Appendix E

Level 4

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 recorded? Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 4: Notify School Food Support Service

Complete Notification of School Meal Debt Form (Appendix F), send to School Food Support Service immediately.

School Meals Debt Policy for Parents

As from January 2012 Glenmere Langmoor Academy Trust has adopted a strict NO 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 meal by sending in cash or a cheque in a marked envelope.

Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However this debt must be paid next day and future meals must be paid in advanced before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for 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. Otherwise they must provide sandwiches before lunch time or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

If payment of the debt is not received by the next day, 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

ABC Primary School

Parent or carer of xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXX

xx/xx/xxxx

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child
xxxxxxx xxxxxxxx Class: xx

As at xx/xx/xxxx our records show a debt of **£-xx.xx**

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by sending cash or a cheque in a clearly marked envelope into the office.

NOTE: All meals MUST be paid for in advance in accordance with our debt policy (copy enclosed). If you don't wish for your child(ren) to have a school meal please provide them with a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take them home for lunch.

The cost of a school meal is £2.10 per day - £10.50 per week.

Enclosed is a Free School Meals Information leaflet for Parents and Guardians, detailing the eligibility criteria and how to apply for free school meals, or alternatively call 0116 3057093 or 0116 3056588 to check eligibility (this process takes less than 5 minutes).

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

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

ABC Primary School

Parent or carer of xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXX

xx/xx/xxxx

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

As at xx/xx/xxxx our records show a debt of **£-xx.xx**

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by sending cash or a cheque in
a clearly marked envelope into the office.

The cost of a school meal is £1.95 per day - £9.75 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 sincerely

Headteacher

A new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content of this school policy may not reflect current Government policy. This policy may therefore be amended at short notice, if advice or legislation from central or local authority sources necessitates change. This will be organised by the Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair of Governors.