



Highfield Community Primary School

Dinner Money Debt Policy
2025

Introduction

This policy has been written to help adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school meals. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents/carers clearly understand what is expected of them. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that a child is provided with either a packed lunch or a school meal each day. The responsibility of ensuring school meal payments are made by parents/carers lies with the school. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, we wish to implement one that ensures meals are paid for, whilst aiding parents/carers during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime. Highfield Community Primary School has a clear '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/carers. Every parent/carer will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support. We hope that through implementing this debt policy we will help parents/carers manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is used appropriately.

Free School Meals

If parents/carers believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact the school 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.

Payment for School Meals

School meals must be paid for in advance of meals being taken. All payments are made online through ParentPay. When Payment for school meals has not been received, we cannot allow dinner money debts to accumulate above two weeks and therefore require that parents owing more than this provide a packed lunch. If the weekly payment for school meals is not received by Friday of the first week, parent/carers will be notified by email. If debt payment is not received by Friday of the second week of non-payment, the school will again notify the parent/carer, to inform them that meals will be suspended on Monday of the third week and that they must provide a packed lunch. This is non-negotiable.

Consequences of Non Payment for School Meals

We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child. In the event of a child leaving a member school with an outstanding debt, the Finance and Audit Committee will need to consider what further steps to take. This may include contacting the child's new school and informing them of concerns.