



Dinner Money Debt Policy

Essa Primary Academy

Date approved by the LGB:	25 January 2017
Date updated:	November 2019
Date for next review:	November 2021
Policy written by:	Joanna Atherton
Policy revised/updated by:	Joanna Atherton

Introduction

The responsibility of ensuring school meal payments are made by parents lies with the Academy. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, the Governors of Essa Primary Academy 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.

Procedures

School meals must be paid for in advance of meals being taken. All meals for the period being paid for must be paid on a Monday morning via the Parent Pay online payment system or at the nearest paypoint.

When a child is leaving it is imperative for the school office in conjunction with the finance team to check the balance of the child's account and refund any credit balance and obtain any debt outstanding.

Debt Procedures

In collecting any outstanding debts, a step by step process will be followed. The time lapse between the steps will normally be 5 school days. However, this may vary depending on factors such as the level of debt and the time period within the term. The next step will be implemented if the debt has not been repaid or any contact made with the school.

Week 1

Each Friday debts will be reviewed and a "debt letter one" will be sent via the child for all debts. (Appendix A)

Week 2

For those debts which received 'letter one' the previous week and have not been cleared and still have debts of over £20, 'debt letter 2' will be sent home via the child. This letter requests that the child is provided with a packed lunch until the debt is cleared. The school office will ensure this is adhered to. If the child arrives in school without a packed lunch the parent/carer will be phoned asking them to bring it to school immediately. (Appendix B)

Week 3

For those debts which received 'letter 2' the previous week have not been cleared and still have debts over £20. 'Debt letter 3' will be sent out via Royal Mail requesting that the parent/carer makes an appointment with the Principal to discuss the outstanding debt.

Week 4

For those debts which received 'letter 3' the previous week have not been cleared and still have debts over £20, the school will contact the parent by phone and arrange an appointment. If this meeting is not kept or a satisfactory situation agreed, the debt will be referred to the Local Governing Body and 'debt letter 4' will be sent via Royal Mail recorded delivery (Appendix D).

Week 5

For debts over £20, which received 'letter 4' the previous week the Local Governing Body will need to make a decision on how to deal with the debt and may consider a claim in the small claims court.

We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the Academy 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 Essa Primary Academy with an outstanding debt, the Local Governing Body will need to consider whether to write off the debt or pursue payment by other means including making a claim in the Small Claims Court.

Policy written	December 2016
Agreed by LGB	December 2019
Next review date	November 2021

Appendix A

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

Re Meal Payments for _____ Class _____

Meal Rate: Daily £2.50/Weekly £12.50

According to our ParentPay records we have not received sufficient money to pay for your child's school meals.

The outstanding balance on _____ was £_____. I would be grateful if payment could be made this week, including monies for the forthcoming week.

This is a standardized letter we send out whenever dinner money is owed. I would be grateful if you could arrange prompt payment of this outstanding debt since the academy is unable to provide credit for meals.

Due to the ever increasing debts owing for children's dinners, I must remind all parents that it is imperative that payment for meals is made promptly to the academy, in advance of meals being taken. If payment is not received there is a possibility that the academy may not provide lunch for your child/children as the academy may be liable for any debt that arises. Academies cannot provide free meals to children who are not entitled to them.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Joanna Atherton
Principal

Appendix B

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Meals

I am writing to advise you that there is an outstanding balance of _____ on _____ dinner money account. We are not able to pay for dinners on behalf of any children who are not entitled to free meals.

As a result of this, I need to advise you that we **will be unable** to provide a dinner for _____ until the debt is cleared. A weekly payment plan to pay the debt would be acceptable, i.e. £5 per week, and I would appreciate your co-operation in setting this plan up.

Please ensure _____ is provided with a packed lunch until this debt is cleared and school dinners can re-commence.

Thank you for your assistance. If you wish to discuss this further, then please do not hesitate to contact me. I enclose a copy of the Dinner Money Debt Policy for your information.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Joanna Atherton
Principal

Appendix C

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Meals

You will recall that I wrote to you a few days ago regarding the outstanding balance on _____ dinner money account to the value of £_____. As you know, we are unable to pay for dinners on behalf of the children. I am disappointed that you have not been able to start a weekly payment plan as suggested in my previous letter, and would request that you phone the office to make an appointment to see me to discuss this further.

Thank you for your assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Joanna Atherton
Principal

Appendix D

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Meals

I am disappointed that you have been unable to contact me to make arrangements to recover the outstanding debt of _____. In line with the Dinner Money Debt Policy, a copy of which was sent to you with the previous letter, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to the Local Governing Body.

The Local Governing Body will consider the situation and will contact you in due course over the action they will take, which could include making a claim in the small claims court.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Joanna Atherton
Principal