

Nelson St Philip's Church of England Primary School

Debt Collection Policy (School lunch arrears policy)



Member of staff responsible: Miss R Moulden

Date Policy Reviewed: February 2024

Date Approved by Governors: March 2024

Date to be reviewed: February 2025



Our Vision Statement

**We love to learn. We learn to love.
With Christ as our Guide,
We love and learn together.**

Our children are encouraged to respect their own faith and those of others in our caring Christian environment.

Christian values lie at the heart of all we do.

'God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.'
1 John 4:16

Living out our vision, we aim to:

Guide our children to prepare them for life; Respect themselves and one another; Aspire to achieve their highest potential; Care for the local and wider community; Every child is special in God's eyes.

GRACE

Guide Respect Aspire Care Each of us is special

Introduction

This policy relates to the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for this. As a result, money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual

parents/guardians. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/guardians give this policy their full support.

Parents/guardians can view this policy on the schools website.

General Principle

School meals must be paid for in on a weekly basis. School meals are available to pupils at a cost of £2.20 per day or no cost to those in receipt of a free school meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals (Reception, Year 1 and 2).

Payments should be made to the school office.

Free School Meals Entitlement

Pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, or if the pupil is confirmed as entitled to free school meals. If parents/guardians 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 pupils it is important that parents/guardians make use of it.

The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where this is officially approved and the school informed by the Local Authority.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of School meal debt, the Governors agree that the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Although, this may seem overly strict to some parents, it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not a small number of pupils.

When a child has failed to produce dinner money, the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation, e.g. lost or forgotten dinner money, temporary hardship etc. However, details should be recorded in writing and a record maintained and monitored. Where a child continues to require meals, the School should establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances, the parent/carer should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the School Office or Family Support Worker.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons, however, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

1. An outstanding dinner money message will be sent to parent/guardian after 1 week of arrears, requesting immediate payment (Appendix 1).
2. If unpaid, after a further week another message will be sent, advising immediate payment (Appendix 2).
3. If unpaid, a final letter non-payment of dinner money arrears will be sent informing them that no meals will be provided for their child(ren) if payment has not been received by a specified date, (i.e. in accordance with the policy when 2 weeks or the equivalent arrears have accumulated (£22.00). This letter will also advise that an

LCC Invoice will be issued that would be subject to LCC Debt Recovery Policy (Appendix 3).

No meals to be provided to pupils when arrears exceed 2 weeks

Once the final letter deadline has expired an LCC Invoice may be issued therefore being subject to LCC Debt Recovery Policy where legal proceedings may commence.

Dinner money is collected and banked in a timely manner in accordance with the School's Financial Regulations and can be periodically inspected by audit.

APPENDIX 1

Outstanding Dinner Money Reminder – Message 1

Date:

Child's name:

Year Group:

Dear parent/ guardian

There is an outstanding balance on #ChildName's Dinner account. Would you kindly make payment as soon as possible

If you require any assistance please do not hesitate to contact the office.

APPENDIX 2

Accumulated Dinner Money Arrears – Message 2

Date:

Child's name:

Registration Group:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Following the message sent on *INSERT DATE* regarding outstanding school dinner money, our records show that this has not been paid for the period *INSERT DATE* to *INSERT DATE*.

To date the amount of arrears is now £_____.

If the debt is not cleared within 5 days, it will not be possible provide a school dinner and you must the make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

Please make payment immediately by: _____

If you have any queries and/ or wish to discuss this matter, please contact the school office.

APPENDIX 3

Non-Payment of Dinner Money Arrears – Letter

Date:

Child's name:

Registration Group:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your child(ren) despite previous messages sent home on *INSERT DATE* and *INSERT DATE*.

Arrears to date total £ _____

In following the school policy on dinner money arrears, a copy of which is available on the school website, I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days of the date of this letter, the debt will be referred to the authority for issue of an LCC Invoice. This would therefore be subject to LCC debt recovery policy.

I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in additional costs and potentially a summons to court.

Until the debt is cleared, you must make alternative arrangements for your child(rens)'s lunch as no meals will be provided in school from *INSERT DATE*.

Please make payment immediately by Cash/Cheque. If you wish to pay by cheque, please make it payable to St Philip's C E Primary School

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school.

Yours faithfully

Miss R Moulden
Headteacher