



# School Meals Payment Policy

**Courtney Primary School**

Written by: Deborah Wood	Date: March 2016
Ratified by: Full Governing Body	Date: March 2016
Signed by: Janet Hinchliffe	
<b>Next Review Date</b>	<b>March 2017</b>

## **Background**

Courtney Primary School has adopted this policy to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

## **Provision of School Meals**

The Schools Meals Service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for by someone. Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. If any family think they qualify for Free School meals, then an application needs to be submitted. Please contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents/carers who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a School meal each day.

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parents/ carers personal circumstances change the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner.

## **Cost of School Meals**

All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are currently entitled to a hot school dinner free of charge. School meals are available to children to children in Key Stage 2 at a cost of £2.00 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals must be paid for in advance. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

## **Payment for School Meals**

Please send payment (preferably in cheque format made payable to South Gloucestershire Council) on Monday mornings in a sealed envelope clearly marked with your child's name, class and amount enclosed. This payment should be handed either to the class teacher at registration time or to the Office staff.

## **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 consider the fairest system to all families is to insist that all school meals are paid for in advance.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, or if a child's entitlement to free school dinners has ceased, the School will telephone/text the parent/carer in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

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 or 'one off' situation. e.g. lost or forgotten dinner money. If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a text message detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting immediate payment.

Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing. When the debt exceeds £10 for a child, or £20 for a family (whichever comes first), a formal letter will be sent to the parent/carer informing them to provide their child/children with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears.

If the child is not provided with the requested packed lunch and the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the School will provide a basic meal of a sandwich, a piece of fruit and a drink only.

The school will work closely with parents/carers and staff in working out a form of payment plan to help resolve the situation.

### **Consequences of Non Payment for School Meals**

If the debt exceeds £30 for a child, or £50 for a family, and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt. Social Services may also be informed that these parents/carers are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their child at lunchtimes. It is not the responsibility of the school to provide lunch for pupils. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to provide a meal, either a school lunch or a packed lunch.

### **Monitoring School Meal Debts**

At each meeting of the Governing Body/Resources Committee, the Head Teacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt.

The aim of the School's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to the School's solicitors. The School does however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

On rare occasions, the Governing Body may consider Write-offs of outstanding debt following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

### **Conclusion**

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are able to help parents/carers and staff manage school dinner money effectively, reduce administration time and costs involved chasing dinner money debts and at the same time ensure that all money is for children's learning.

## Appendix 1 Example – Letter 1



**Headteacher: Mrs Deborah Wood, BA (Hons), N.P.Q.H**

**'Learning together, we can achieve great things'**

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BS15 9RD**

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**Website: [www.courtneypriaryschool.co.uk](http://www.courtneypriaryschool.co.uk) Twitter @Courtney Primary**

**Tel: 01454 866670**

**Fax: 01454 866674**

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)  
(Address Line 1) (Address Line 2)  
(Address Line 3)  
(Post Code)  
Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the School's financial records you have not paid dinner money for your child (pupil name) in Class: xx. As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt of £xx.

In order that the school's budget is not used to clear your child's debt please make arrangements for the outstanding dinner money debt to be paid immediately.

Once you have cleared the current debt I should be grateful if you could ensure that you keep your account in credit.

The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day. Additional information and an application form can be found on the South Gloucestershire website <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/advice-and-benefits/benefits/free-school-meals/> or from our School office.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 2 Example – Letter 2



Headteacher: Mrs Deborah Wood, BA (Hons), N.P.Q.H

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@Courtney Primary

Tel: 01454 866670

Fax: 01454 866674

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)  
(Address Line 1) (Address Line 2)  
(Address Line 3) (Post Code)  
Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding school meal debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx in Class xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week. I would ask that you please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately and take steps to ensure your account is kept in credit in the future. If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information.

Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day. Additional information and an application form can be found on the South Gloucestershire website <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/advice-and-benefits/benefits/free-school-meals/> or from our School office.

Since the School has to fund all school meal debts from its budget it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. Unfortunately, if the debt is not cleared by xxxxx a school meal will no longer be provided to your child and you must make your own arrangements for your child's lunch. The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and to inform the local authority that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time. If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher