

School Meals Debt Recovery Policy

This policy has been written to help our Academy adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children have school dinners. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

Free School meals are available for parents of children of all ages to claim if they are in receipt of certain benefits; information is available from the school office or Peterborough City Council.

All pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School Meals.

Therefore, this policy only relates to pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) whose parents pay for school meals.

The Academy wishes to avoid a situation where parents accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they then find difficult to clear.

We feel that a system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach. We understand that it may seem a very hard stance as there has been a country-wide culture of debt tolerance. However, it will become easy to maintain once parents realise that schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM or UIFSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for. Our cash collection / dinner money system highlights debt immediately so keeping track is relatively easy.

It is very time consuming for the Academy's office staff to continually chase parents for payment - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

There will occasionally be a decision made by the Academy about whether a child should be refused a full meal in school if they have not paid. However, the Academy takes the view that any meal taken must be paid for.

The Academy will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents;

- Information on the Academy website.

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This will be done at least once each year.

All parents will be informed about this policy when their child joins KS2.

Key Information

1. All school lunches must be paid for in advance;
2. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a school lunch;
3. In the event that a child requires a school lunch and there are insufficient funds in their account, the school will contact the parent to enable them to either:
 - a. Top up the account online using Parentpay;
 - b. Provide a packed lunch by bringing it into school before the lunch break;
 - c. Collect their child at the lunch break to eat at home
4. In exceptional circumstances, if none of the above are possible, then, with prior agreement by the Academy, we will provide up to a maximum of **five** school lunches only; thereafter a hot meal will not be provided for your child until the account is brought up to date.
5. Parents who do not want their child to have a school meal should always provide a healthy packed lunch.

Debt Recovery policy implementation

- Debt report checked on a weekly basis
- A reminder letter / text will be issued to all parents reminding them to top up their account
- Where a debt remains unpaid after the reminder letter / text has been sent, a further letter will be issued to parents asking that debt be cleared within 7 days.
- **In all instances where the account remains overdrawn, parents will be expected to provide a packed lunch or make suitable alternative lunchtime arrangements.**

	Admin Action	Catering	Academy involvement
Child in credit	None	School meal provided as normal	None
Child in debit (<£11.00)	Parent Mail/ text message to family on each day.	School meal provided as normal	None
Child in debit (>£11.00)	Block on children ordering a hot school meal on Cunninghams. Final reminder letter. Phone call to family asking family to top up child's account or bring in a packed lunch. Text to family if no answer. Support offered setting up Parent Pay. Request that child has a packed lunch, until debt is cleared.	Home dinners, packed lunch, or basic school meal provided.	Senior leader to meet with family if not providing packed lunch, or reducing the level debt.
Family not clearing debt	Block on children ordering a hot school meal on Cunninghams. Trust debt recovery system.	Home dinners, packed lunch, or basic school meal provided.	Family to meet with Head Teacher.