



Micklem Primary School School Dinner Money Debt Recovery Policy

Responsible Committee	Resources
Date ratified	March 2017
Date last reviewed	January 2025
Next review date	January 2027
Signed on behalf of the Governing Body	<i>K Shah</i>
Print name	K. Shah

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

We request that all parents give this policy their full support. If debts are incurred, the school has to pay for the meals eaten. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education has to be used for debts incurred by parents. No parent would take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying – the same applies to this school

The Free School Meals system is there for parents of children of all ages (from Reception upwards) to claim if they are in receipt of certain benefits; information is available from the school office or www.hertsdirect.org.uk.

Also, all pupils in Reception 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 School wishes to avoid a situation which allows parents to accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they then find difficult to clear.

The Governors at Micklem Primary School 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 schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM or UIFSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for.

It is very time consuming for the School's office staff to continually chase parents for payment – via email, 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 the decision to be made by the School about whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. However, the School is no different than any other café / restaurant and meals taken must be paid for.

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

- A letter/email to parents;
- Reminders in the School's newsletter;
- The School 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 reminded about the 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 meal
3. Where a debt has accrued amounting to 5 meals or more, parents will be asked to provide packed lunches from home until the debt has been cleared
4. Parents who do not want their child to have a school meal should provide a healthy packed lunch
5. Where parents refuse to provide a packed lunch, school has a duty to feed the child and a basic meal will be provided. School will also view a continued refusal to provide basic food for a child as neglect and will take the necessary steps to alert the authorities of this safeguarding issue.

Debt Recovery policy implementation

Weekly check to be carried out every Monday

- Emails issued to relevant parents via Arbor
- Further emails issued on a weekly basis
- Continued debt will be referred to Hertfordshire County Council for their debt recovery process