



SCHOOL MEALS PAYMENT AND DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

Policy Statement

The Carfield Primary School Meals Debt Recovery Policy is in place to prevent the build up of significant debt. The Local Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt and the responsibility falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result, the school budget will be affected by any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered, thereby directly affecting the education of all children in school.

Payment for School Meals

Payment for School meals must be made in advance. Parents/carers should ensure that children keep to the specified number of days for which payment has been made. Payment can be made using our online payment system, ParentPay, or by using a Paypoint letter. When parents/carers log onto ParentPay they can easily see the balance of their account. ParentPay provides a facility they can subscribe to which will remind them if their balance becomes low and we encourage them to use this facility. The school office no longer accepts payments by cash or cheque.

If a child arrives at school without payment having been made for a school dinner, packed lunch, or if a child's entitlement to free school dinners has ceased, the school will immediately contact the parent/carer to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

If a child takes a second school meal without payment further contact will be made with parents/carers. It is then expected that parents/carers will make a payment or, alternatively, provide a packed lunch.

If a child continues to take unpaid meals, the school may try to 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 will be invited to apply for free school meals or speak in confidence to the Headteacher if they do not qualify for this financial support.

If any debt exceeds £6, and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the school will inform our Safeguarding Team and will formally write to the parent/carer, explaining that the school is not obliged to provide a school dinner where advance payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received.

Free School Meals

The free school meal system is there for parents/carers who cannot afford school meals. Parents/carers who meet certain criteria may qualify for Free School Meals. 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. Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Sheffield City Council Website:

<https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/schools-childcare/school-meals.html>

Please ask at the school office for details or if you need any help with an application.

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 arrange payment in advance for a school dinner.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

The Head Teacher will regularly provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt. The school reserves 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. Any additional charges incurred in recovering the debt may be passed onto the parent/carer.

This policy has been agreed and adopted by the governing body:

Date: July 2019

Updated:

Headteacher's signature: _____ *W Edwards* _____

Chair of Governor's signature: _____ *A Goodwin* _____