



Dinner Money Debt Policy

Background

The St. Patrick's Primary School Dinner Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents / carers whose children take school dinners.

Provision of School Meals

The School Meals Service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for by someone.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.60 per day. Our 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 (by cash or in cheque), on a Monday morning in a sealed envelope clearly marked with your child's name, and amount enclosed. This payment should be given to your child's class teacher. The school must ensure that all dinner money collected is banked in a timely manner in accordance with the School's Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by audit.

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 pursue a "Zero Tolerance" approach. Although this may seem harsh to some parents it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not a small number.

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.

If a child takes school meals which have not been paid for, a note detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school within 7 days. The same process will be used if a cheque is not honoured by the bank. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require meals, the School must establish if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to terminate school meals or speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

When the debt exceeds £5 for a child or family, a note will be sent, reminding parents that they must clear their debt and pay for meals in advance. They will be informed that if the debt exceeds £10 their child's dinners will be terminated.

When the debt exceeds £10 for a child or family a formal letter must be sent to the parent/carer informing them that if the debt is not cleared, school meals will be terminated to prevent further arrears.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

At each meeting of the Governing Body / Finance Committee, the Principal 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.

All Write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Governing Body/ Finance Committee following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

APPROVED BY B.O.G. 21ST NOVEMBER 2019

NEXT REVIEW: NOVEMBER 2021