



School Meals Policy

2022 - 2025

*I am the bread of life.
(John 6:35)*

Document Control

Owner

The owner of this document is the Headteacher. All requests for change should be directed to them. Any printed copies of this document are for reference only; the definitive version is the computer file held on the school office administrator's computer.

Revision history

Version	Date	Changes	Author(s)
2	26/01/22	None	DCC
3	18/07/22	Update to name of policy, costs of paid meals, changes to wording on applications for free school meals and general tidy up of terminology. Change of review timescale to every year to reflect pricing changes	MSW

Approval

Version	Date	Approver(s)	Minute number
2	01/07/19	Finance and Resources Committee	FR 26/19
2	09/02/22	Full Governing Body	GB 145/21
3	18/07/22	Full Governing Body	

Review period This policy will be reviewed every year

Version	
	July 2023

Aim

The Youlgrave, All Saints C of E (VA) Primary School Meals Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach is taken to charging for school meals and dealing with debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. The School is accountable for the administration of school meals including the collection of dinner money and any resulting debt and 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. 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. In addition to the funding for a free school meal the school also receives additional funding to spend on the education of those children who qualify so it is really important that as many parents as possible who qualify apply.

Information on the entitlement to Free School meals and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Councils' website.

<https://derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your-child-at-school/meals/school-meals/free-school-meals.aspx>

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. In some cases, entitlement to a Free school Meal will be protected and the school office will be able to confirm this for you.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.30 per day (1 September 2022) or at no cost to those eligible for Free School Meal. There is also no cost to Infant children under the universal infant free school meals criteria. Those parents would meet the criteria for Eligible Free School Meals should be encouraged to make a claim as this may protect their entitlement when their child reaches Junior age. **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

The online payments system (Eduspot) must be used wherever possible to make a payment for school meals. Payment can also be sent to school in cash or a cheque made payable to Derbyshire County Council (if this method is chosen the payment must be sent in a sealed envelope clearly marked with your child's name, class number and amount enclosed and handed to the class teacher at registration). The School must ensure that all dinner money is banked in a timely manner in accordance with the School's Financial Regulations which are subject to inspection by internal audit.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by 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 pupils.

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

If a child does not have either a packed lunch or dinner money and does not qualify for a free school meal 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.

If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a letter/text 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 at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require meals, the School must 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 should be invited to apply for Free School Meals or speak confidentially with the Headteacher.

When a debt exceeds £20 for a child or family a letter (Example Letter 1) will be sent to the parent/carer informing them that they will need to provide their child/children with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears. If the child/children is/are not provided with the requested

packed lunch and the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the School will provide a sandwich and drink only.

If the debt exceeds £30 for a family and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the School should inform the local Safeguarding Team and 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 Meals has not been received (Example letter 2).

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

At each meeting of the Governing Body/Finance Committee, the Headteacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt. The purpose of the School Meals Policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incur 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.

All write-offs of outstanding debt must be reported to and approved by the Governing Body / Finance Committee. For each request details of debt and action taken should be provided by the Headteacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Example Letters

Example – Letter 1

Parent or carer of (pupil name)
(Address Line 1)
(Address Line 2)
(Address Line 3)
(Postcode)

Contact : Mr/s XXXXXXXX
Ref : DMdebt1 (pupils initials)
Telephone : 01629 636289

Date : xx/xx/xx

Dear xxxxxxxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the Schools' financial record you have not paid dinner money for your child/ren (pupil name/s). As at xx/xx/xxxx, 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 Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the internet.

<https://derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your-child-at-school/meals/school-meals/free-school-meals.aspx>

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

Mrs Heather Stelling
Headteacher

Example – Letter 2

Parent or carer of (pupil name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Postcode)

Contact : Mr/s XXXXXXXX
Ref : DMdebt2 (pupils initials)
Telephone : 01629 636289

Date : xx/xx/xx

Dear xxxxxxxx

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 correspondence and messages, the debt for your child xxx in Class xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xxxx your account is £x in debt and I enclose invoice number xxxxxxxx for payment of the above.

Please make arrangements to pay the enclosed invoice as per the instructions on the reverse 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 Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the internet.

<https://derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your-child-at-school/meals/school-meals/free-school-meals.aspx>

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 xx/xx/xxxx 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

Heather Stelling
Headteacher