

Longstone CE (VA)
Primary School

Dinner Money Policy



Version: 1.2

Date: April 2019

Summary

This policy has been written to address the management of monies paid for School dinners and also states the School's position on money owing.

Document control

Owner

The owner of this document is the Head Teacher. 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 by office administrator.

Revision history

Date	Version	Changes	Author(s)
12/05/2014	1.0	New policy	M. Headington
Oct 2018	1.1	All references to <i>Governing Body</i> changed to <i>Governing Board</i> Removal of appendices 3.4 - Time of billing to beginning of term; payment due 2 weeks later. 3.5.5 – 6 Changes to process regarding communicating to parents about money owed. 4 – Timing of payments to be made; removal of references to cheques and cash. Replaced with reference to online payment system. Appendix – updated letter template	G. Harvey
April 2019	1.2	Section 1 – Replace 'debt' with 'dinner money' Section 3 – Replaced name of catering provider Section 4 – Change to billing for parents. Addition of minimum requirement for number of meals to be purchased Section 5.5 – Stipulated that school will only provide a meal for one day when no payment has been made.	S. Needham

Approval

Date	Version	Approver(s)	Minute number
12/05/2014	1	Resources Committee	12/05/2014 - 6.2
17/10/18	1.1	Resources Committee	11.5
10/4/19	1.2	Resources Committee	13

Review period – This policy will be reviewed every 4 years

Version	Next revision due
1.2	April 2023

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Financial Regulations & Procedures
- Charging & Remissions Policy

Statement of Policy

1 Background

The Longstone Dinner Money Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of 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.

2 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 and from September 2014 for all Infant School Pupils. Anyone who may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the school office for further information. 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 Derbyshire County Council's website:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals

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.

3 Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost set annually by Leicestershire Traded Services (LTS) or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. 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.

4 Payment for School Meals

Meals will be charged daily via Parent Pay so parents have a live view of debits on their account.

If a child ceases to have school meals, and has paid in advance, then a refund will be made

There is a minimum requirement to pay for 5 meals. Parents/Carers can opt to pay weekly and must pay each Monday for that week's meals.

Payment must be made on the online payment system.

5 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.

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

5.2 If a parent/carer fails to produce dinner money the school will 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.

5.3 If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a message detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school within 7 days.

5.4 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 to the Head Teacher.

5.5 When the debt exceeds 2 weeks worth of school meals per child a message will be sent to the parent/carer informing them 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 meal for one day only.

5.6 If the debt exceeds 4 weeks worth of school meals per child and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, a formal letter will be sent 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 *(See Appendix 1: Letter 1)*.

6 Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

At each meeting of the Resources Committee, the Head Teacher 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 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 approved by the Resources Committee following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Signed: Head Teacher

Signed: Chair of Committee

Signed: Chair of Governing Board

Appendix 1: Letter



Dear Parent/Carer of (Pupil Name),

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 correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx in Class xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week.

I would ask that you please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately 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.** All information regarding Free School Meals is confidential.

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:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals

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 xxxxx a school meal will no longer be provided to your child and you must make your own arrangements for your child's lunch. We will pass the debt over to Derbyshire County Council who will begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours Sincerely,