



School Meals & Other Debt Policy

Nova Primary School Governor Information	
Model Policy	No
Local Changes	
Customisation*	
Originally Adopted	Summer 2016
Last Review Date	
Next Review Date	Summer 2017
* additions made to policy (eg local detail) but not a change to any policy structure	

History of most recent Policy changes – Must be completed

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change e.g. TU request, change in legislation

School Meals and Other Debt Policy

Rationale

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents for chargeable items. This includes music lessons and school dinners that don't come under the Free School Meals scheme, i.e. those children who are in KS2 and are not eligible for a free school meal. The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity and consistency in managing the debt and to help parents understand clearly what is expected of them and the procedures the school will follow to recover the debt.

The school meals service is a business and as with any business the meals that are taken must be paid for. School budgets are reducing year on year and we do not have the ability to write off dinner money debt or the capacity in the office to spend time trying to recover payment from families who have not paid for the service or meals their children have taken. On very rare occasions decisions may need to be taken as to whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. If this is the case the parent/carer will be contacted and asked to come into school with payment or a packed lunch. Of course welfare of the child is at the heart of everything that Nova Primary stands for. In cases where a child comes to school regularly without either money for a school dinner or a packed lunch it may raise welfare or child protection concerns. In these circumstances the safeguarding procedures will be followed and may include a referral to safeguarding agencies.

The Free School Meals system is there for parents/carers who cannot afford school meals and we provide help to parents in obtaining this. In addition, in cases of hardship the school can provide information and access to foodbanks. Our Learning Mentor is able to provide support and advice about foodbanks.

Where there is a problem regarding payments the Governing Body at Nova Primary School expects the parents and school to work together to resolve it quickly. However it considers a zero tolerance approach works best and follows the procedure outlined in this policy which may culminate in external debt collection agencies being employed and possible litigation.

The school has an online payment system which parents can use to pay for school dinners via bank transfer.

The school makes parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- Reminders in the school's newsletter
- The school website

Key Information

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.
2. All children in Key Stage 1 are entitled to a free school meal under the Universal Free School Meal scheme.
3. All school meals must be paid for in advance.
4. Parents should not expect their child to be given a meal unless they have paid for it IN ADVANCE or they have credit on their online account.
5. Parents who do not wish their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch.
6. All children who are entitled to a free school meal will be provided with a meal unless they have indicated that they have a packed lunch.
7. A parent that continues to send a child to school without money for a school meal or a packed lunch may be subject to safeguarding concerns. This could constitute a form of neglect, but in all cases this will be discussed with the family in the first instance before any decision is made to involve safeguarding agencies i.e. Early Help or First Response.

Procedure

Level 1

- Indicator: A child's account goes into debt
- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
- Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
- Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?
- Check 4 are there existing safeguarding concerns?

Action 1: Text

- Send a 'Gentle debt reminder' via text.

Level 2

- Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch
- Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
- Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
- Check 3 has this parent made contact?
- Check 4 are there existing safeguarding concerns?

Action 2: Personal contact - a member of office staff will phone the parent to ask them to either bring the money into school or bring a packed lunch in before lunchtime

Level 3

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options,
Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 has this parent made contact?
Check 4 are there existing safeguarding concerns?

Action 3: Send Outstanding Debt Letter
See Appendix 1 for template

Level 4

Indicator: The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options,
Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 has this parent made contact?
Check 4 are there existing safeguarding concerns?

Action 4: Send final debt reminder letter
This letter states that if payment is not received by a given date an external debt collection agency will be employed.
See Appendix 2 for template