



Nightingale Primary School

COLLECTION OF SCHOOL MEALS MONEY AND SCHOOL MEALS DEBT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. This policy will be published on the school website and parents/carers advised of the policy when their children start at Nightingale Primary School and through periodic reminders on the newsletter.

GENERAL PRINCIPLE

School meals must be paid for in advance. If a child is to have meals for the duration of the week, monies must be received before the start of that week or, as we accept children having an occasional meal, monies must be received on the day of the meal. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on all children's education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents / carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents / carers give this policy their full support.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS ENTITLEMENT

Children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 receive Universal Free School Meals. Children in Key Stage 2 will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to Free School Meals. If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the County Council. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying children, it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to children where this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority. Parents should note that Free School Meals are only awarded from the date of application and therefore the outstanding debt to school must still be paid.

PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTION OF ARREARS

It is accepted, that on occasion, arrears may arise for various reasons eg. children forget their dinner money or are absent on the day it is collected. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

- A gentle reminder letter will be sent home after one week of accumulated arrears (see Appendix 1).
- £20 debt per child - parents required to have a meeting with the school to discuss the repayment of debt including for breakfast club.
- £50 debt per child - parents cannot order any further school meals including breakfast.
- A second letter will be sent to the parent/guardian if the arrears still haven't been cleared after three weeks. This will state that with immediate effect no further school meals will be provided for their child(ren) and the debt must be cleared within five working days (see Appendix 2).
- A final letter will be issued after four weeks if the arrears have still not been cleared. This letter informs the parent/guardian that once the final five working day deadline has expired the debt will be passed onto the Debt Recovery Team at Hampshire County Council where legal proceedings may begin (see Appendix 3).

APPENDIX 1

Gentle Reminder Letter

Date: _____

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parent / Guardian

According to our records your school meals payments are in arrears. The debt amounts to £_____.

Please settle this amount as soon as possible by sending cash or cheque into the school office, or by making payment on Scopay. If you are not already registered for Scopay, please click [here](#) to request an online access code which will be emailed directly to you.

Our Collection of School Meals Money and School Meals Debt Policy is published on the school website in both the 'Policies' and 'School Lunches' sections. A paper copy of this document can be made available on request.

Information on who is eligible for Free School Meals is available at: <https://www.cloudforedu.org.uk/ofsm/hants/apply>. If you would like assistance with this, please contact the school office. Parents should note that Free School Meals are only awarded from the date of application and therefore the outstanding debt to school must still be paid.

If you have any queries, please contact the school office.

Kind regards

Mrs H Beckett
Headteacher

APPENDIX 2

Accumulated School Meal Arrears

Date: _____

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parent / Guardian

Following our letter dated _____ regarding outstanding school dinner money, our records show that this has not been paid.

The amount of arrears is now £_____.

If this debt is not cleared immediately, you must provide a daily packed lunch for your child from this point until the debit is cleared. If the debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with the outstanding arrears or to provide sandwiches before lunch time. Please note, no further school meals will be provided until this debt is cleared. Parents cannot send in payment for specific days unless arrears are cleared.

This debt needs to be paid within five working days, either by sending cash or cheque (made payable to HCC) into the school office, or by making payment on ScoPay. If you are not already registered for Scopay, please click [here](#) to request an online access code which will be emailed directly to you.

If you have any queries or wish to discuss this matter please contact the school office.

Kind regards

Mrs H Beckett
Headteacher

APPENDIX 3

Non Payment of School Dinner Money Arrears

Date: _____

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parent/ Guardian

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your child(ren), despite previous letters sent home on _____ and _____.

Arrears to date total £_____

In line with the school policy on dinner money arrears, a copy of which is published on the school website, I must inform you that if payment is not received within five working days of the date of this letter, the debt will be referred to the HCC Debt Recovery Team.

I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to Court. Cheques are to be made payable to HCC.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs H Beckett
Headteacher

Date of Policy Approval: Spring 2023
Date of next Review: Spring 2026