

## **School Meals Arrears and Debt Recovery Policy**

DATE OF ADOPTION: July 2019

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: July 2022

TO BE REVIEWED BY: Business and Management Committee



This policy has been written to help the school to adopt a consistent approach to debt. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals and applying for Free School Meals is straight forward. Parents can apply either online or over the telephone, assuming eligibility is authorised the child can take a free school meal the following school day. The school administration team will be able to support a parent if they have questions about the application process.

Decoy School will take all practicable measures to collect debt as part of its management of public funds. Debtors will be actively pursued for the collection of monies owed.

- In general, payment for all goods and services will be collected in advance or at point of sale.
- We appreciate that there may be an exceptional circumstance when your child needs to have a school lunch prior to payment – in these cases the school expects payment for this on the next working day. The preferred payment method is via the online payment system, but we can accept cash or cheque (made payable to DCC) in advance or on the day of purchase.
- Should parents/carers allow their dinner money to go into arrears, then a letter will be sent at the end of that week asking for payment before any further school meals are taken.
- Should this debt not be cleared in a timely fashion (by the end of the following week) then a further letter will be sent out.
- Should a debt reach in excess of £10 per child, a further letter is sent stating a final payment due date and stating that no further meals will be provided until the debt is cleared or a payment plan has been put in place. This will be followed up by a direct telephone conversation with the School Business Manager or Headteacher.
- Should a pupil in these circumstances request a meal, parents/carers will be contacted and asked to provide a meal for their child.
- On-going debts may be referred to Devon County Council who will follow up with necessary action to recover the arrears.
- All children in Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2 are automatically entitled to receive free school meals under the government's Universal Free School Meal offer. However, all parents/carers who are in receipt of certain benefits are encouraged to apply for Free School Meals when they enrol their child in school or after a change of circumstances, as this can help attract additional funding, Pupil Premium, into school to

support learning and will mean your child qualifies for free school meals through into Year 3 and beyond. You can ask for a form at the school office or apply at:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/school-information/school-meals>.

## **APPENDIX 1**

Date

Address

Dear

Re: School Meal Payments for xxx,

xxxxxxx has had xx school meals, for which the school has not received any payment. The outstanding balance on date was £..... and I would be grateful if payment could be arranged, before any further school meals are taken.

Please remember that it is school policy that all school meals should be paid for in advance, preferably with one payment made on a Monday morning.

We encourage our parents to use the Cypad online payment system for any dinner money, but we can also accept cash and cheques into the school office. All cheques should be made payable to Devon County Council (DCC) and any cash payments should be placed in a clearly marked envelope.

If dinner arrears reach £10 we request that no further school meals should be ordered so that further outstanding payments do not build up and we request that you provide a packed lunch for your child.

If you have a query with regard to this letter, please telephone or ask at the school office straight away to ensure that the matter is resolved swiftly.

Thank you for your support with this matter

Yours sincerely,

Mrs K Dicken  
School Business Manager  
Decoy Community Primary School

## **APPENDIX 2**

DATE

ADDRESS

Dear

We are writing with regard to outstanding school meal arrears totalling £10.00 for xxxxx.

Please ensure that the outstanding amount is brought to the school office by DATE or is paid using the Cypad online system.

Please do not order any further meals until the full amount has been paid. Until then, we request that xxx should bring a packed lunch to school. We would like to remind you, that all school meals should be paid for in advance.

If you will have difficulty in meeting the payment, please contact the school office by the end of DATE to discuss a payment plan

Yours sincerely,

Mrs K Dicken  
School Business Manager  
Decoy Community Primary School