



# Wood End Primary School

## School Meal Debt Policy and Procedures September 2024 – July 2025

### **Introduction**

This Policy will run in conjunction with the Local Authority's Guidelines for the Administration of School Meals. It is hoped that this policy and procedures will provide a clear and consistent approach that all parents/carers will adhere to.

If dinner money arrears are incurred, then the school budget must pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers. Every parent/carer should agree that this is unacceptable, and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

### **Free School Meals**

If a parent/carer believes that they are entitled to Free School Meals for their child, they can speak to a member of office staff who can check this with the Local Authority. Whilst the check is being carried out, school meals must be paid for and will then be refunded if the claim is successful. In addition to this, all new families that join the school will be asked for information to enable us to carry out a check during the admission process. Parents/Carers are not obliged to provide this information if they do not wish to do so.

### **Universal Infant Free School Meals**

Due to a Government initiative, all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to receive free school meals. This entitlement does not depend on a families' income, it is available to all children. However, to receive free milk and the other benefits associated with Free School Meals, families that are eligible should still apply as above.

### **Responsibilities of parents/carers**

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to provide a meal: either a school lunch or a packed lunch. If a parent/carer would like their child to receive a school meal, they must ensure that adequate arrangements have been made for them to receive the meal, either by ensuring they have made a successful free school meal claim, or in the case of Reception, Year 1 or Year 2 children, they have informed us that their child would like to have school meals, or if their child is in KS2, they have made payment for school meals. If parent/carers provide their child with a packed lunch, we request that it follows our 'Healthy School' guidelines.

Parents/carers must pay for school meals (when required) in advance and must not allow their account to be in debt.

Children can choose each day whether they would like to have a school meal or bring a packed lunch.

### **Responsibilities of School**

School staff will:

- regularly monitor the list of children eligible for free school meals;
- consistently follow the Policy and Procedures to ensure a fair approach for all;
- administer the school meals section of the management information service (SIMS.net) in a timely manner to ensure that the system is accurate at all times;
- work with parents/carers facing particular difficulties to ensure that no child goes without food.

### **Payment for school meals**

Parents/carers must pay in advance for school meals by making a payment on their online Schoolcomms account before a meal is taken. The system will highlight any credit on a child's school meal account and parents/carers can top up the account as they wish.

### **When payment for school meals has not been received**

We will not allow dinner money debts to accumulate above the cost of two weeks meals (currently £24), and therefore expect parents/carers owing more than this to provide a packed lunch. We will send text messages and letters to parents/carers following the procedures below.

Parents/Carers will be informed that once a debt reaches £24, they must provide a packed lunch until the debt has been cleared.

### **Consequences of non-payment for school meals**

If payment of the debt is not received after we have followed the procedures below, we will refer to the Local Authority's Guidelines for the Administration of School Meals. Social Services may also be informed that the parent/carer is not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their child at lunchtime. It is not the responsibility of the school to provide lunch for pupils, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to make adequate arrangements for their child's school lunch or provide a packed lunch from home.

## Procedures for the Administration of School Dinner Money

- Stage 1 -** Text messages to be sent on Fridays to Parents/Carers of children who owe payment for school meals
- Stage 2 -** Letter 1 (Appendix 1) sent to Parents/Carers who owe at least £12
- Stage 3 -** If no payment made, text message and letter 2 (Appendix 2) to be sent to inform parent/carer that as their debt has reached £24 they must send packed lunch to school until balance is cleared

### **Conclusion**

We hope that by implementing this Debt Policy:

- we are able to ensure parents/carers manage school dinner money effectively.
- we reduce the administration time and costs involved in chasing dinner money arrears.
- we are able to ensure that all monies for children's learning are available for that purpose.

This Policy will be reviewed annually or in the event of changes or new guidelines being introduced.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Chair of Finance Committee**

**Date approved by Governors:** 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**Reviewed:** July 2024

**Date of next review:** Summer Term 2025

LETTER 1

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Carer of: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Carer

Further to our recent text message, I am writing to remind you that there is £\_\_\_\_\_ outstanding on your child's school meal account.

Could you please arrange for this to be paid using your Sims Pay account as soon as possible.

Please note that as per our School Meal Debt Policy and Procedures, meals will no longer be provided if your debt accrues to £24. You will therefore be expected to make alternative provision for your child's meals.

Yours sincerely

Miss S Sharma  
Headteacher



**LETTER 2**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Carer of: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Carer

Further to our letter dated \_\_\_\_\_, our records show that we have not yet received full payment.

As your balance owing has now reached £24, we will no longer provide school meals to your child until the debt has been cleared. Please continue to provide your child with a packed lunch until payment has been made.

If you would like to discuss possible payment options, please speak to Miss Sharma or Mrs Cresswell in the school office.

Yours sincerely

Miss S Sharma  
Headteacher

