

# **Great Bardfield Primary School**



## **Dinner Money Debt Recovery Policy**

<b>Approved by:</b>	Elizabeth Crow (Headteacher)
<b>Ratified by Governors:</b>	March 2024
<b>Next review due by:</b>	March 2026

The Governing Body has resolved to ensure that all children receive a meal at lunch time whilst recognising the school budget should not be used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers.

## **1.0 Introduction**

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in cases of debts arising when parent/carers fail to pay for school meals. Parents/Carers will be sent a copy of this policy when their children reach Key Stage 2 (KS2).

All pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key stage 1 are now entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School meals

## **2.0 General Principle**

- 2.1 School meals must be paid for in advance. If a pupil is to have meals for the duration of the week, monies must be received in advance of, or during that week.
- 2.2 If the school is to accept pupils having an occasional meal, monies must be received during that week.
- 2.3 If debts are incurred, these have to be paid from the school budget. This means that money which should be spent on all pupils' 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.

## **3:0 Free School Meals**

- 3.1 KS2 pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to free school meals.
- 3.2 If parents/carers believe that their child/children may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, they should contact the school or complete an online application form on the Local Authority website.
- 3.3 As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/carers make use of it.
- 3.4 The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where entitlement has been verified.

## **4:0 Procedure for Collection of Arrears**

- 4.1 It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate.
- 4.2 The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

- A gentle reminder message will be sent home after one week of accumulated arrears (Appendix 1)
  - The parent/carer will be informed in writing where two weeks of arrears has accumulated and advised to make immediate payment (Appendix 2).
  - A final letter to the parent/carer informing them that no meals will be provided for their child/children if payment has not been received by a specified date in accordance with the policy, the date when four weeks of arrears have been accumulated. (Appendix 3)
- 4.3 Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.
- 4.4 No meals to be provided to pupils when arrears exceed four weeks.
- 4.5 Once the final letter deadline has expired the Governing Body will decide whether legal proceedings should begin.

## APPENDIX 1 First Reminder

Date

Gentle Reminder Letter

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

According to our records there are outstanding dinner monies for your **child/children**.

The arrears are for the week commencing .....

Please make the payment of £ ..... tomorrow.

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

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## APPENDIX 2 Second Reminder

Date:

Accumulated School Meals Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

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

To date, the amount of arrears is £..... We now request that you attend a meeting to discuss the situation with the Headteacher. Please telephone the school office to arrange an appointment.

Until the debt is cleared, you must provide a packed lunch for your **child/children**. In a case when payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with either the money or a packed lunch before lunch time.

These arrears need to be cleared as soon as possible. Payment can be made via the **online payment system**, in cash or by cheque made payable to **school name**.

Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

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

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## APPENDIX 3 Final Reminder

Date:

Non-payment of school dinner money arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your **child/children** despite previous letters sent home on ..... and .....

Arrears to date total £ .....

Following the school policy on dinner money debt recovery, a copy of which was sent to you when **your child started school/started in KS2**, I must inform you that if payment is not received with 5 working days, the Governing Body will be asked to consider starting legal proceedings for debt recovery. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to Court.

Until the debt is cleared no meals will be provided in school and you need to provide a packed lunch for your **child/children**.

Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

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

Yours sincerely

Headteacher