

School Meals Debt Recovery Policy

VERSION CONTROL SHEET

POLICY NAME: School Meals Debt Recovery Policy

Policy Prepared by: Nigel Gooding

Document date	Filename	Meeting submitted	Summary of changes required
July 2013		July PSG	New policy
February 2018		LGB	Reviewed – no changes made
March 2021		LGB	Reviewed – no changes made

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

The Free School Meals system is there for parents of children in full-time education to claim if they are in receipt of certain benefits; information is available from the school office or [Plymouth City Council's website](http://web.plymouth.gov.uk/cateredfreeschoolmeals) at <http://web.plymouth.gov.uk/cateredfreeschoolmeals>.

Also, all pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are now entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School Meals.

Therefore, this policy only relates to pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) whose parents pay for school meals.

The Academy wishes to avoid a situation which allows parents to accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they then find difficult to clear.

A child will not be refused a meal in school if dinner money has not been paid. However, the school meals service is provided by CaterEd and must be paid for if a child does not receive universal infant or free school meals. If parents believe that their children may qualify for a free school meal, they should contact the office for an application form.

All school meals should be paid for in advance and we offer a variety of options that parents can use to make payment:

- Cash at the payment machines in reception
- Card payment through their Parent Mail account
- Cash or card payment at the reception desk

The office staff are happy to assist with any of these payment methods.

It is very time-consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for payment. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and, occasionally, it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

The Academy will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- Reminders in the academy newsletter
- Messages via Parent Mail
- The Academy Website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way and will be done at least once each year.

All parents will be provided with a copy of this policy when their child joins Key Stage 2.

Debt Recovery Policy Implementation

Debt up to £10.00

- Debt report checked
- Parents will be contacted either by telephone, letter or in person asking them to top up their account before any further meals are ordered.

Debt over £10.00

- A meeting will be arranged with parents and either the Family Support Advisor or Headteacher to discuss repayment of the debt and offer support.
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If no progress is made in reducing the debt after these steps have been followed, the Academy reserves the right to ask parents to provide a packed lunch or take their child home for lunch.

As a last resort, the Academy will consider commencing legal debt recovery proceedings.