

Amberley Primary School

School Meals Debt Policy



Reviewed July 2024

To be updated and reviewed July 2025

Amberley Primary School Debt Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy has been written to help our school to adopt a consistent approach to debt with a view to complete elimination. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents and carers clearly understand what is expected of them.
- 1.2 Recognising the variety of children's backgrounds, the Governors and staff seek to be sensitive to and cater for their individual needs. We work to create a safe and secure environment with consistency, tolerance and generosity of time for all members of our school community.

2.0 Key Information

- All parents / carers are provided with a copy of this debt collection policy when their child joins the school.
- This policy is available on the school website.
- 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.
- Parents / carers who do not want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch instead.
- Taking meals without paying for them deprives the school and children of learning materials and resources.
- Payment of school meals should be made regularly via the School Gateway and parents/carers may make lump sum payments if they wish to.

3.0 Free School Meals Entitlement

- 3.1 Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 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 may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, they should contact North Tyneside 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 / carers 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.

4.0 Payments

4.1 School meals should be paid in advance. Meals are priced at £2.60 each day which is £13.00 per week. The payment needs to be made the School Gateway. If you are having difficulties accessing School Gateway or do not have access to the internet, please contact the school office for assistance.

5.0 Dealing with payment arrears

5.1 At Amberley Primary School, we do not allow dinner money to go into arrears unless an agreed arrangement has been made. Remember taking meals without paying for them deprives the school of resources.

5.2 We do understand that parents / carers sometimes get into financial difficulties and are not able to pay for services at the usual time. If you are in this position, it is always best that you contact the school and discuss the matter as soon as possible and not let the matter be ignored. We are here to help. School can make arrangements for a payment plan to be put in place to help parents / carers who are in arrears. The school can also signpost parents / carers to advice and information such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

6.0 PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTION OF ARREARS

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

- A gentle reminder message will be sent home after two days of accumulated arrears.
- £13 debt per child – parent/carer contacted by telephone to discuss the repayment of debt.
- £26 debt per child – if the arrears still haven't been cleared after two weeks with no justification, then a letter will be sent to the parent/carer. 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.
- A final letter will be issued after four weeks if the arrears have still not been cleared. This letter informs the parent/carer that once the final five working day deadline has expired the debt will be passed onto a debt recovery agency.

7.0 Monitoring and review

7.1 The Staffing and Finance Committee of the Governing Body will review and monitor outstanding debts from information contained in a termly debt report provided by the school office, to make a decision about pursuing outstanding debts through legal proceedings.

7.2 This policy is monitored by the governing body and will be reviewed by the Staffing and Finance Committee annually or earlier if deemed necessary and was ratified by the Full Governing Body on 9th July 2024.

7.3 This policy is due for review in the Summer Term 2025.