

Oxton St Saviour's CofE Aided Primary School

School Meals Debt Policy for Parents

It is important that every child is able to have a nutritious meal at lunchtime whilst at school. At Oxton St. Saviour's school, a dedicated and committed catering team deliver a lunch service to our children. Healthy meal choices are now part of the lunchtime experience and we do hope your child enjoys them. The menu is on a three week rotation and can be viewed on the school website.

This policy has been written to assist the school in adopting a consistent approach to parents who have an outstanding debt on the school dinner money account (ParentPay), whereby a dinner has been ordered and provided but the school has not received payment. This policy will provide clarity and consistency in managing the situation and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

The school meal service is available to all children, but is only available when parents have paid online using the school payment system. Occasionally, a decision will have to be made as to whether a child should be refused a meal due to the school not receiving payment.

ParentPay

A small number of parents expect the school to provide a meal for their child(ren) without actually paying for it; this practice would not be accepted in any other restaurant when ordering meals.

It is not acceptable that office staff have to constantly send out reminder letters and make telephone calls to parents requesting immediate payment to clear their accounts. This has such a negative effect on relationship with some families and can cause embarrassment for both parties in question.

All school meals have to be paid for. The online payment system will automatically keep track of account balances on a daily basis, therefore showing all accounts that are in a debt situation. From this information contact will be made with the parents.

All parents have access to this policy when their child starts the school, both upon request and via the website.

- All school lunches must be paid for in advance
- No child should attend school and expect to receive a meal if there is no money in their ParentPay account.
- Parents who do not want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of school meal debt the School has no option but to adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach.

We understand that it may seem a hard stance to adopt but, historically this has not been the case. We have unfortunately been in situations when parents, who have continuous 'debt' for dinners, have seen this as being 'acceptable'.

However, the school can no longer continue with this. Parents have to understand that the only free meals provided will be for those children in Key Stage 1 (children in year groups Reception to Year 2) as they qualify for Universal Free School Meals. In addition to this, those children who qualify for Free School Meal entitlement will also receive free school meals.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or funds available in their online account, or if a child's entitlement to FSM (free school meals) has ceased, the school office will telephone the parent in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements can be made.

When a child does not have funds available on their dinner money account, the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation.

Where a child continues to require meals, the parents/carers can ask support from the school to establish if the child is entitled to free school meals. The office staff will support and assist all parents to set this system up and therefore the parents would still be responsible for the cost of meals until the award of free school meals, if eligible.

If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement for Free School Meals please contact the Main Public enquiry telephone number 0151 666 3455. Parents may also either obtain or submit a claim, and get help and advice by visiting any One Stop Shop. Parents can obtain a Free School Meals application form and a list of One Stop Shops from the school office.

Debt Recovery Procedure

When an account is showing as being in debit a formal 1st reminder letter will be sent to the parents informing them that their account is in arrears, in accordance with our Debt Recovery Procedure. If payment is not received by the following week, a formal 2nd reminder letter will be sent to parents. If payment is still not cleared after the 2nd reminder letter, the school office will contact parents via telephone requesting them to provide their child/children with a packed lunch. If the child/children is/are not provided with the requested packed lunch and the parents cannot be contacted, the school will provide a sandwich and a drink only.

If the school has been unsuccessful in securing dinner money that is £50.00 or over in arrears, Accounts Receivable will be contacted by the school and an invoice will be sent out by the local authority to parents.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

The aim of the School's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up. The school does, however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time. (please refer to Debt Recovery Procedure on the schoolweb under policies and procedures)

Taken to Finance Meeting dated 29/11/17