

# Orchard Community Primary School



## School Meals Debt Policy

This policy was approved by the Governing Body of Orchard Primary School at their meeting on.....

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored rectangular background.

Chair of Governors

Version	Date	Author	Reason for Change
0.1	9/2018	FS	New Policy
0.2	9/2021	FS	Review
0.3	9/2024	FS	Review

Review Frequency	Next Review Date
Every 3 years	9/2027

## **AIMS**

Orchard Primary School has a strict **NO DEBT** policy relating to the school meal service.

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

No parent would take their child to a café or restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school.

If parents believe their child might be entitled to Free School Meals please contact the school office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that parents use it if they qualify. We will do whatever we can to help parents with their application if required.

## **PAYING FOR SCHOOL MEALS**

Parents/carers must pay in advance for the school meal via the SchoolMoney cashless payment system ([www.schoolmoney.co.uk](http://www.schoolmoney.co.uk)) using the login details and passwords provided by school.

If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of **one** meal. However, this debt must be paid by the end of the week and all future meals must be paid for in advance before meals are provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch.

In a case where a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the school office will telephone the parents and ask them to make payment via the SchoolMoney cashless payment system otherwise they must provide a packed lunch before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home for lunch and return him/her by 1:00pm.

If payment of the debt is not received by the end of the week, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against the parents to recover the debt. Children's Social Care (Social Services) may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

We hope that by implementing this School Meals Debt Policy we are able to help parents manage their school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for the children's learning is available for the school to spend on the children.

## **ESTABLISHING A DEBT POLICY**

Orchard Primary School will ensure that parents are aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- The school's newsletter
- The school website

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

## DEBT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

### Key Information

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the School Meal Debt Policy when their child joins KS2. (Appendix 1)
2. All school lunches must be paid in advance via SchoolMoney cashless payment system.
3. No child should be sent to school with insufficient money in their account and expect to be given a meal. The school senior management team/office staff will use common sense in these circumstances and no child will be left to go hungry.
4. Parents who do not want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take them home for lunch.

### LEVEL 1

**Indicator:** A child's record shows a debt

**Check 1:** Is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?

**Check 2:** Is there a possibility that meals have not been recorded correctly?

**Check 3:** Does this parent normally pay on time? Is this just a one off?

**Action 1: Send SchoolMoney chasing text/email or Letter 1 (Appendix 2)**

### LEVEL 2

**Indicator:** A child comes to school again without the debt paid or a packed lunch

**Check 1:** Is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?

**Check 2:** Is there a possibility that meals have not been recorded correctly?

**Check 3:** Has this parent made contact?

**Action 2: Personal Contact**

The Administrative Officer will telephone the parent to ask them to make payment via SchoolMoney ([www.schoolmoney.co.uk](http://www.schoolmoney.co.uk)) using their login details and password, bring a packed lunch to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

### LEVEL 3

**Indicator:** The parent does not comply with any of these options

**Check 1:** Is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?

**Check 2:** Is there a possibility that meals have not been recorded correctly?

**Check 3:** Has this parent made contact?

**Action 3: Resend SchoolMoney chasing text/email and Final Reminder Letter 2 (Appendix 3)**

### LEVEL 4

**Indicator:** The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options

**Check 1:** Is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?

**Check 2:** Is there a possibility that meals have not been recorded correctly?

**Check 3:** Has this parent made contact?

**Action 4:** Inform the Trust who may decide to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Children's Social Care may also be informed where children are not being provided with a meal by their parents/ legal guardians.

## APPENDIX 1 - Version of School Meal Debt Policy in letter form for parents

Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

Orchard Primary School has adopted a strict **NO DEBT** policy relating to the school meal service.

If debts are incurred then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support. No parent would take their child to a café or restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies to school.

If you believe that your child may qualify for Free School Meals entitlement and you have not yet claimed, please contact the school office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will, of course, help you with your application if necessary.

If your child is not entitled to Free School Meals and they are to have a school dinner, parents/carers must pay in advance via SchoolMoney ([www.schoolmoney.co.uk](http://www.schoolmoney.co.uk)) using the login details and password provided by school.

If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of **one** meal. However, this debt must be paid by the end of the week and all future meals must be paid for in advance before meals are provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case where a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the school office will telephone the parents and ask them to make payment via the SchoolMoney cashless payment system otherwise they must provide a packed lunch before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home for lunch and return him/her by 1:00pm.

If payment of the debt is not received by the end of that week, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against the parents to recover the debt, in line with Local Authority guidelines. Children's Social Care (Social Services) may also be informed of the school's concerns that parents are not providing food for their child at lunchtime on a regular basis.

We hope that by implementing this School Meal Debt Policy we are able to help parents manage their school dinner money better and, at the same time, ensure that money that is for children's learning is available for the school to spend on the children.

Although this letter may seem a little abrupt, we have to adhere to debt management policy and we appreciate that its content does not apply to the vast majority of our parents who already pay regularly in advance.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Fiona Shields  
Headteacher

**APPENDIX 2 - Example Letter 1 (Initial Reminder)**

Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

**UNPAID SCHOOL MEALS**

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child/children, \_\_\_\_\_ in Class(es) \_\_\_\_\_.

As at **(Date)** our records show a debt of £\_\_\_\_\_.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately via SchoolMoney ([www.schoolmoney.co.uk](http://www.schoolmoney.co.uk)) using the login details and password provided by school.

NOTE: All meals must be paid for in advance in accordance with our debt policy (copy enclosed). If you do not wish for your child(ren) to have a school meal please provide them with a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take them home for lunch.

The cost of a school meal is £\*\*\*\*\* per day - £\*\*\*\*\* per week.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Fiona Shields

Headteacher

### APPENDIX 3 - Example Letter 2 (Final Reminder)

Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

#### UNPAID SCHOOL MEALS

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child/children, \_\_\_\_\_ in Class(es) \_\_\_\_\_ despite a previous written reminder **(date)** and a telephone call **(date)**.

As at **(Date)** our records show a debt of £\_\_\_\_\_.

Please arrange for this money to be paid advance via SchoolMoney ([www.schoolmoney.co.uk](http://www.schoolmoney.co.uk)) using the login details and password provided by school.

The cost of a school meal is £\*\*\*\*\* per day - £\*\*\*\*\* per week.

Since non-payment for school meals affects the quality of service we offer to all of the children at Orchard, we need to ensure that all payments are up to date and I am afraid that if the debt is not cleared by **(Date)** it will not be possible to provide your child with a school meal. You will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch, i.e. a packed lunch or take your child home for lunch.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt and to inform Children's Social Care (Social Services) of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunchtimes.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Fiona Shields  
Headteacher