

MANUDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL MEALS DEBT POLICY



APPROVED BY GOVERNORS: 22.09.2020

POLICY TO BE REVIEWED: Annually

Nurturing life skills and inspiring achievement for today and tomorrow.

Aims

- To outline the school's procedures regarding school meals;
- To ensure the smooth, efficient and cost effective operation of the school dinner system;
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of school staff, parents and pupils;
- To present a workable, fair mechanism for the collection of school dinner money.

Background Information

When debts are incurred, the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money that should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts accrued by parents. Every parent should agree that this is unacceptable and we hope that all parents give this policy their full support. No parent would take their child out for a meal and expect them to be given food without paying: the same applies at school.

If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free Schools Meals please contact the school office. This allowance is a statutory right and it is beneficial that you use it if you qualify. All children in Reception and Key Stage One are entitled to a free school meal under the Universal Free School Meals entitlement.

Parents of children in Key Stage Two must pay in advance for the school lunch (£2.20 per child, each day). School meal money must be sent into school on a Monday morning to pay for school meals for that current week. Alternatively, termly payments can be made at the beginning of each term. Payments should be handed to your child's class teacher in an envelope and clearly marked with your child's name, 'Dinner Money' and the amount. School meals may be paid for in cash or by cheque payable to Essex County Council. If your child is absent from school and meals have been paid for, these will be carried forward as credits and the following week's payments will be adjusted accordingly. If credits continue to the end of term, they will be credited to the following term.

Reminders will be sent to parents who have not paid for school meals that week. If payment is not received, a second reminder will be sent to chase any outstanding payments the following week. Should arrears total £22.00 (2 weeks costs), then parents will be sent a letter from the Headteacher (Appendix 1) and will be required to send packed lunches for

their child(ren) until the debt is cleared. In the event that a school dinner is expected when arrears stand at more than £22.00, then parents will be contacted by the school administrator and will be expected to bring a packed lunch to school. In the event that the debt is not recovered and packed lunches are not provided from home, school reserves the right to request advice and assistance from the Education Welfare Officer or in extreme cases Children's Services.

The school is not obliged to provide a school dinner where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school meals has not been received, and some schools are known not to provide a meal in these circumstances. We will therefore act promptly to address such issues at an early stage, in order to prevent arrears of dinner monies from accumulating to a point beyond parents' means to settle.

The school will in exceptional circumstances postpone the refusal to provide meals where parents have advised the school of their financial situation and school is satisfied that the funding will be forthcoming.

The school will work closely with parents in working out a form of payment plan to help resolve the situation if requested by the parent. However, where no attempt is made to clear the debt, it will follow the procedure of the school's Debt Management Policy.

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