



New Marston Primary School

School Meals Debt Policy

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. 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 who cannot afford school meals, so there should be no excuses for non-payment.

It is time-consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for money - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

The Governors at New Marston Primary School feel that a system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach. We understand that it may seem a very hard stance as there has been a culture of debt tolerance and that this will be tough to implement. However, it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for. Our ParentPay dinner money system highlights debt immediately so keeping track will be easy.

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

- A letter to parents
- Reminders in the school's newsletter
- The school prospectus
- The school website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This will be done at least once each year, more often when it is first introduced.

All parents will be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school.

The letter to parents is attached as Appendix 1.

Key Information

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
3. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
4. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch

Debt policy implementation

Level 1

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt

Check 1 Is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 Does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1:

- Send a 'gentle debt reminder'

Level 2

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

Check 1 Is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 Has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

- Someone will phone the parent to ask them to either bring the money into school or bring sandwiches in before lunchtime

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 payments have not been credited?

Check 3 Has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send strong debt letter

- The head teacher will send a final letter.

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 payments have not been credited?

Check 3 Has this parent made contact?

Action 4: bring in outside agencies

- RLT to advise, small claims court, social services