



## Dinner Money Debt Policy

### Background

The Hadfield Nursery School Dinner Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners.

### Provision of School Meals

The Schools Meals Service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for by someone.

### Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.10 per day. School meals **must** be paid for in advance. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

### Payment for School Meals

Please send payment (by cash or in cheque format made payable to *Derbyshire County Council*) on a Monday morning in a sealed envelope clearly marked with your child's name, and amount enclosed. This payment should be placed in the locked silver post box next to the children's entrance. The School must ensure that all dinner money collected is banked in a timely manner in accordance with the School's Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by audit.

## Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of School meal debt the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Although, this may seem harsh to some parents it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not a small number.

When a child has failed to produce dinner money the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation. e.g. Lost or forgotten dinner money, temporary hardship etc. however details should be recorded in writing and a record maintained and monitored.

If a child takes school meals which have not been paid for, a note detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school within 7 days. The same process will be used if a cheque is not honoured by the bank. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require meals, the School must establish if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to terminate school meals or speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

When the debt exceeds £6 for a child or family, a note will be sent, reminding parents that they must clear their debt and pay for meals in advance. They will be informed that if the debt exceeds £10 their child's lunches will be terminated.

When the debt exceeds £10 for a child or family a formal letter must be sent to the parent/carer informing them that if the debt is not cleared, school meals will be terminated to prevent further arrears.

## Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

At each meeting of the *Governing Body/Finance Committee*, the Head Teacher will provide *Governors* with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt. The aim of the School's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to the School's solicitors. The School does however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts.

All Write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the *Governing Body/Finance Committee* following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

## Letter 1

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date:

XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

### School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding school meal debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of a school meal is £x per day.

I would ask that you please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately and take steps to ensure your account is kept in credit in the future.

It is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. Unfortunately, if the debt is not cleared by xxxxx a school meal will no longer be provided to your child and your child will be taken off lunchtime provision.

The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher