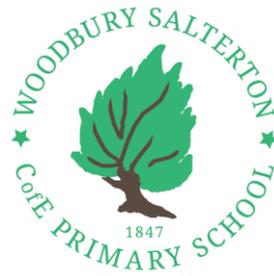




Pebblebed Heath Federation



Collection of School Meals Money and School Meals Debt Policy

Introduction

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. Parents/Carers can view this policy on our website and applies to children in our nursery and when they reach Key Stage 2 (KS2).

General Principle

Parents of pupils at Pebblebed Heath Federation have the choice of paying for a school lunch for their child or providing a healthy packed lunch. All school meals are prepared on the premises by our own team of cooks and meet the stringent guidelines laid down by the government regarding the provision of healthy school meals. We provide a minimum of three choices of meals each day and work on a three weekly menu cycle which changes each term.

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.25/2.50 per day. Any revision to the price of meals will be notified to parents/carers at least half a term prior to the new charge taking effect. School meals **must** be paid for in advance.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

Free School Meals Entitlement

KS2 pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to free school meals. If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the County Council. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons e.g. pupils forget their dinner money or are absent on the day it is collected. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

At least one gentle reminder text will be sent home after 1 week of accumulated arrears.

When the debt exceeds £30 for a child, the parent/carer will be informed in writing (by email and a letter in the post) that they will need to provide a packed lunch to prevent further arrears and advised to make immediate payment (Appendix 1). No meals will be provided to pupils once arrears exceed £30 until the debt is paid off in full.

A final letter will be sent to the parent/carer if payment has not been received within 4 weeks of the previous letter advising that the debt will be referred to the DCC Debt Recovery Team.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

At each meeting of the Governing Body Finance Portfolio/Committee, the Executive Head teacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner debt over £30 and the current position with regard to such debt. The aim of the school dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly involvement of the school's solicitors.

The school does however reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debt and inform the local authority that parents are failing to provide a child with a suitable meal at lunchtime.

Where necessary, the school will utilise the small claims court, in which case parents/carers will be liable for all costs incurred in addition to the original debt. Such measures will be taken even after a child no longer attends the school if they have left not having paid all money owed.

APPENDIX 1

Date:

Accumulated School Meal Arrears

Child's name:

Dear parent/guardian

Following the texts sent home regarding outstanding school dinner money, our records show that this has not been paid. To date the amount of arrears is now £_____. Please come to the office to pay this outstanding balance. If you are unable to pay this debt, we request that you attend a meeting to discuss the situation with the Executive Head teacher. Please telephone the school office to arrange this.

Until the debt is cleared, you must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with a packed lunch before lunch time.

If you have any queries and/or wish to discuss this matter, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mr Duncan Nelmes
Executive Headteacher

APPENDIX 2

Date:

Non-payment of school dinner money arrears.

Child's name:

Dear parent/guardian

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your child(ren) despite the previous letter sent home on _____.

Arrears to date total £_____

Following the school policy on dinner money arrears, a copy of which can be found on the school website, I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days of the date of this letter, the debt will be referred to the DCC Debt Recovery Team.

I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to Court.

Until the debt is cleared, I must instruct you to make alternative arrangements for your child(ren)s' lunch as no meals will be provided in school.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Mr Duncan Nelmes
Executive Headteacher