



# **Southfields Community Primary School**

## **Dinner Money Policy**

**Date last reviewed:** Autumn 2023

**Date signed off by Headteacher and Governing body:** Autumn 2023

## **Background**

Southfields Primary School Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure that there is a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt, the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result, the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

## **Provision of School Meals**

Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. Anyone who may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the School Office for further information. Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents/carers who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a School meal each day.

Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Coventry City Council website:

[http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/54/benefits/168/free\\_school\\_meals](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/54/benefits/168/free_school_meals)

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires, or the parents/carers personal circumstances change the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner.

## **Cost of School Meals**

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.20 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. **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**

The primary method for payment should be online via The My Child at School app: [www.mychildatschool.com/MCAS](http://www.mychildatschool.com/MCAS). This system enables parents to pay by card, check balances and view meals taken when they log in. Parents will receive an email receipt once payment has been made. Payments should be made at the weekend for the following week or on a Monday morning. We request that parents notify the school promptly with any changes to their phone numbers and email addresses.

If it is not possible for parents to pay online, payment may be made by cash on a Monday morning in a sealed envelope clearly marked with your child's name and Class and the amount enclosed. This payment should be handed to the School Office only.

Dinners may be paid on a weekly, half termly or termly basis. The school will 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.

## Framework for Managing School Meal Debt

<p><b>Level 1</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator:</b> A child's account goes into debt  (over <b>£20/two weeks</b>)</p>	<p><b>Check 1</b> is this a Free School Meal child, are dates correct?</p> <p><b>Check 2</b> is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?</p> <p><b>Check 3</b> does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?</p>	<p><b>Action 1:</b>  <b>Admin team</b> to send a 'Gentle debt reminder by Letter or Text</p>
<p><b>Level 2</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator:</b> A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch  (over <b>£30/three weeks</b>)</p>	<p><b>Check 1</b> is this a Free School Meal child, are dates correct?</p> <p><b>Check 2</b> is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?</p> <p><b>Check 3</b> has this parent made contact?</p>	<p><b>Action 2:</b>  Make <b>personal</b> contact  <b>Admin team</b> will phone the parent to ask them to either bring the money into school or bring packed lunch in. Parents to be asked if they are experiencing difficulties or would like any help / advice.  Another reminder letter to be sent home – in addition to the phone call.</p>
<p><b>Level 3</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator:</b> The parent does not comply with any of these options  (over <b>£40/four weeks</b>)</p>	<p><b>Check 1</b> is this a Free School Meal child, are dates correct?</p> <p><b>Check 2</b> is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?</p> <p><b>Check 3</b> has this parent made contact?</p>	<p><b>Action 3:</b>  Refer to <b>Business Manager</b>  <b>Pastoral Team</b> to contact parents to advise parents around benefits and support available</p>

<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Indicator:</b>  A child's account is in arrears - <b>£50+</b>	<b>Refer to Headteacher for action</b>	<b>Action 4:</b>  <b>Headteacher</b> to meet with the parent(s)
----------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------

### **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 and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

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.