



SCHOOL MEALS DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

Policy Statement

The Abbey Woods Academy Debt Recovery 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. The responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result, the school budget will be directly affected by any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered, thereby directly affecting all children in school.

There is a statutory right to the free school meals system for families who meet certain criteria. 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. The school have purchased an Online Free School Meals software package (www.cloudforedu.org.uk/ofsm/sims) which, once a parent/carer is registered, will continually check whether their child(ren) qualify for free meals. In circumstances where parents do not have access to the internet a form can be provided from the school office who will then make the application on the parent/carers behalf. Our intention is that **all families at Abbey Woods Academy should be registered** so that entitlement to free school meals are kept up to date, whether the parent/carer currently qualifies or not.

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 make payment via ParentPay in advance for a school dinner. The school will always be happy to meet with parents/carers to discuss their circumstances if this is required.

Payment for School Meals

The school now operates a cashless system, therefore school meals should be paid for via ParentPay using either a debit or credit card. There is also the facility to pay via PayPoint – for those parents wanting to use the PayPoint method. PayPoint cards can be requested via the School Office. In exceptional circumstances cash payments, can be made through the school office. Payment for school meals should be made in advance and parents should ensure that children keep to the specified number of days for which payment has been made. Where parents/carers do not pay in advance for school meals it is expected that they will pay via Parentpay no later than the end of that school week so that no debt is incurred.

Management of School Meal Debts

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch and payment has not been received or if a child's entitlement to free school meals has ceased, the School will give the child a meal in the first instance whilst trying to establish what alternative arrangements have been made. If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a note detailing how much is owed will be made and parents/carers will be notified requesting immediate payment on ParentPay. It is then expected that parents/carers will provide a packed lunch, until payment for future school meals are made.

Where a child continues to take unpaid meals, the School may try to establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer will be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Headteacher.

If a debt of £21 or more is incurred the parent will be required to provide a packed lunch for their child(ren) until the debt has been cleared. If any debt exceeds £21, and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the School will inform the Safeguarding Team and formally write to the parent/carer, explaining that the School is not obliged to provide a school dinner where advance payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

The Headteacher may provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position about the debt. The aim of the School's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up. The School reserves 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. Any additional charges incurred in recovering the debt may be passed onto the parent/carer.

This policy has been agreed and adopted by the governing body:

Date: January 2017

Headteacher's signature:



Chair of Governor's signature:

