



Penwortham Primary School  
Crookings Lane  
Penwortham  
PR1 0HU  
Tel: 01772 743321

## COLLECTION OF SCHOOL MEALS MONEY AND SCHOOL MEALS DEBT POLICY (YEAR 3 – YEAR 6)

### **Introduction**

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the cases of debts arising when parents/carers have not paid for school meals. Parents/carers will be advised a copy of this policy is on the school website. **This policy only relates to pupils in KS2 (years 3, 4, 5 and 6) whose parents pay for school meals.**

### **General Principle**

School meals must be paid for in advance. If a pupil is to have meals for the duration of the week monies must be received as the meal is ordered or in certain circumstances if the pupil is having an occasional meal, monies must be received on the day of the meal, or cleared by the end of the week. Payment can be made using our online payment system. Where a pupil's meal has been paid for in advance and they are absent on the day of the meal, the amount paid will be credited towards a future meal or refunded.

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**

Pupils cannot 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(children) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the County Council at [fsm.south@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:fsm.south@lancashire.gov.uk). 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.

**Pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to universal free school meals, which are government funded, allowing pupils to have a school meal free of charge.**

### **Exceptional circumstances and remissions**

The school will ensure that parents of pupils are aware of the help the school can extend to those in financial difficulty. Where the school expects that a parent with an overdue debt may qualify for remissions, the headteacher will contact them to discuss further. The governing board will consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether to waive or reduce the outstanding debt in these circumstances.



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### Procedure for Collection of Arrears

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

- A gentle reminder letter will be sent home after 1 week of accumulated arrears.
- The parent/carer will be informed in writing when two weeks' arrears have accumulated acknowledging the informal reminder and advised to make immediate payment.
- The school will send a third formal reminder three weeks after the first formal reminder, citing the details of both previous reminders and stating that concerted efforts have been made to make the parent aware that an outstanding debt is overdue.
- Where the parent does not respond to these reminders, school will send a follow up letter. Parents will be advised to send a packed lunch from home until arrears have been paid or a repayment plan agreed. From this point, and only in exceptional circumstances, school will provide a packed lunch only (not a hot meal) to those children who have not brought one from home.
- The school will work with the parent to establish, and agree on, a timeframe for a repayment or, if necessary, a payment plan for separate instalments.
- The school will inform parents that debts should be repaid as soon as possible, particularly after repeated reminders; however, delayed payments can be negotiated in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the governing board.
- The school will ensure that a written record is kept of the date and time all reminders are sent and any responses to those reminders, including informal reminders.

If there is a case where the parent is deemed to be refusing to pay without sufficient reason, once the final letter deadline has expired the debt will be passed onto the governing board and they will consider referring to the LA debt recovery team at Lancashire County Council where legal proceeding may begin to resolve the issue and recuperate owed funds.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all parents and relevant stakeholders.

Date policy last reviewed: October 2024 Headteacher: Miss K Penarski Chair of Governors: Mrs P Jones