



**Aim High ... Fly High**

Name of Policy	Dinner Money Debt Recovery Policy
Approved	
Date to be reviewed	February 2027
Governor Committee	Resources
Key Member of staff	Headteacher/Business Manager
Statutory	No

Duxford Church of England Community Primary School Meals Debt Recovery Policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

The Free School Meals system (FSM) is there for parents of children of all ages to claim if they are in receipt of certain benefits; information is available from the school office or Cambridgeshire County Council's website. All pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 are entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM). Therefore, this policy only relates to pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) whose parents pay for school meals.

Duxford Church of England Community Primary School wishes to avoid a situation which allows parents to accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they then find difficult to clear. School is no different than any other business and meals taken must be paid for in advance. It is very time consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for payment - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on relationships with families.

The school can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM or UIFSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for. It is easy to keep track through Parentpay.

**The school will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:**

- A letter to parents (Appendix A)
- Reminders in the weekly newsletter
- The school's website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This will be done at least once each year. All parents will be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school.

**KEY INFORMATION**

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
3. No child should be sent to school without money in their account and expect to be given a meal
4. Where a debt for **2 meals per child** has accrued, parents will be asked to provide packed lunches from home until the debt has been cleared.
5. If you are experiencing financial hardship and wish to discuss your situation further, please contact the School Business Manager or Headteacher.
6. Parents who do not want their child to have a school meal should provide a healthy packed lunch

## SCHOOL MEAL DEBT – ACTION TIMELINE

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Action to be taken by school</b>
1 meal unpaid	Email sent to parents to remind them of the policy. Request to clear their debt and apply a credit amount.
2 meals unpaid	Email reminder to parents to clear debt and apply a credit amount. Request for packed lunch for the following day to be provided until the debt is cleared.
3 meals unpaid	Headteacher informed. Reminder letter sent to parents. (Appendix B) School will refuse further school meals until the debt has been cleared / as long as the child is being provided with a home packed lunch. Only provide a school packed lunch if none is provided from home – these will be charged for in the usual way.
5 meals unpaid	Letter sent to parents and a meeting arranged with the headteacher.(Appendix C) Continue to refuse further school meals until the debt is cleared / as long as the child is being provided with a home packed lunch. Only provide a school packed lunch if none is provided from home.

Appendix A

Dear Parents/Carers

### School Meals Debt Recovery Policy

Due to an increase in the number of school meals that are not being paid for, the governing body has adopted a debt recovery policy.

We hope that all parents will give this policy their full support. As we all know, nobody takes their child to restaurants and expects them to be given a meal without paying; the same applies at school.

If you believe that you may be entitled to Free School Meals, please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you with your application.

All pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 are entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School Meals.

**Therefore, this policy relates to pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5, 6) whose parents pay for school meals.**

We wish to avoid a situation which allows parents to accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they then find difficult to clear. If you are experiencing financial hardship, do please come and talk to us.

School meals must be paid for in advance using [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com)

If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school will grant a debt allowance of one meal. However, this debt must be paid the next day and future meals must be paid in advance before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case when debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the office will email the parent to ask them to pay online or provide a packed lunch before lunchtime. The school reserves the right to bring legal proceedings to recover the debt.

By implementing this policy, we are aiming to help parents limit unmanageable dinner money debt; limit the time staff spend contacting parents about dinner money debt and ensure that money given to the school for educational purposes is spent in the correct way.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Blackburne-Maze & Sarah Medley  
Co Headteachers

Appendix B LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear

DEBT REMINDER

Our records show that, despite previous reminders, you have still not paid dinner money for your child .....

Class: .....

As at <date/> your account is showing a debt of <balance/>. Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. You must now provide a packed lunch for your child until the debt is cleared. The school reserves the right to bring legal proceedings to recover the debt.

Once the debt is cleared please ensure your child's school meal account remains in credit.

You have two ways to pay the outstanding amount:

1. Online payment via ParentPay</b>

Please visit [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com) and login using your username and password:

User Name <loginname/> Password <password/>

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the finance office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Blackburne-Maze & Sarah Medley  
Co Headteachers

Appendix C

Dear parent / carer

Re: School dinners

You will recall that we have written to you recently regarding the outstanding balance on ..... dinner money account. The balance as at ..... is £ ..... As you know, it is the policy of this school that all school dinners are paid for in advance.

I am disappointed that you have not paid the monies owing via Parentpay as requested in the previous correspondence and request that you telephone the school office to make an appointment to see me to discuss this further.

Thank you for your assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Blackburne-Maze & Sarah Medley  
Co Headteachers