



Hemingford Grey SCHOOL

DINNER MONEY DEBT POLICY

Date policy was last reviewed and approved:

February 2016

HEMINGFORD GREY PRIMARY SCHOOL

DINNER MONEY DEBT POLICY

Introduction

The responsibility of ensuring school meal payments are made by parents lies with the School. In addition, Cambridgeshire County Council cannot and will not sustain any debts outstanding. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, the Governors of Hemingford Grey Primary School wish to implement one that ensures meals are paid for, whilst aiding Parents/Carers during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime.

Procedures

School meals must be paid for in advance of meals being taken. All meals for the period being paid for must be paid on a Monday morning via the Agora online payment system.

Meals may be paid for on a weekly, half termly or termly basis. If parents choose to pay either half termly or termly and a debt arises at the end of that period it will be the parent's responsibility to provide the office with information as to where the error occurs.

All meals must be booked at the beginning of the period paid for, meals may no longer be booked or paid for during the week, therefore, all money must come into school for any meals required from Monday to Friday.

When a child is leaving it is imperative for the school office to check the balance of the child's account and refund any credit balance and obtain any debt outstanding.

If a pupil has a school meal every day it will be assumed that on promotion days they will take that meal. Parents will need to advise the school office if that is not the case. If a pupil does not have meals every day the parents will need to return the appropriate form to confirm that lunch is required.

When adults are invited to lunch meals must be booked and paid for in cash by 10 o'clock on the date given. No meals will be provided after this date.

If you think that your child may be eligible to receive free school meals, please contact the following service for further advice and guidance: Education Welfare Benefits Service, Telephone: (01480) 372307, Email: ewb.fsm@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Debt procedures

In collecting any outstanding debts, a step-by-step process will be followed. The time lapse between the steps will normally be 5 School days. However, this may vary depending on factors such as the level of debt and the time period within a term. The next step will be implemented if the debt has not been repaid or any contact made with the School.

WEEK 1: Each Monday debts will be reviewed and a "debt letter one" will be sent either via SchoolComms or via the child for all debts. (Appendix A)

WEEK 2: For those debts which received "letter one" the previous week and have not been cleared and still have debts over £10, "debt letter two" will be sent via SchoolComms or via the child. This letter requests that the child is provided with a packed lunch until the debt is cleared, the School Office will ensure this is adhered to – if the child arrives at School without a packed lunch the parent/carer will be telephoned asking them to bring this into School immediately. (Appendix B)

- WEEK 3: For those debts which received “letter two” the previous week have not been cleared and still have debts over £10, “debt letter three” will be sent via Royal Mail requesting that the parent/carer makes an appointment with the Head to discuss the outstanding debt. (Appendix C)
- WEEK 4: For those debts which received “letter three” the previous week have not been cleared and still have debts over £10, the school will contact the parent by telephone to arrange an appointment. If this meeting is not kept or a satisfactory situation agreed, the debt will be referred to the Governing Body and “debt letter four” will be sent via Royal Mail recorded delivery. (Appendix D)
- WEEK 5: For debts over £10, which received “letter four” the previous week the School Governors will need to make a decision on how to deal with this debt and may consider a claim in the Small Claims Court.

We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child.

In the event of a child leaving Hemingford Grey Primary School with an outstanding debt, the Governing Body will need to consider whether to write off this debt or pursue payment by other means including making a claim in the Small Claims Court.

Appendix A

Date: Day Month Year

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: School Meal Payments for Forename, Surname
Dinner Money Rate: £2.20 per day / Weekly £11.00

According to our records Forename has been taking school meals recently. It appears that we have not received sufficient money to cover this cost.

The outstanding balance on today's date was £00.00. I would be grateful if payment could be sent in by date, including monies for the forthcoming week/half term/term if this is relevant. Please can you pay cash or a cheque (make any cheques payable to Hemingford Grey Primary School) thank you.

I would be grateful if you could arrange for prompt payment of this outstanding debt since the school is unable to provide credit for school meals.

Due to the ever increasing debts owing for children's dinners, I must remind all parents that it is imperative that payment for meals is made promptly to the school, in advance of meals being taken. If payment is not received there is a possibility that the school may not provide lunch for your child/children as the school may be liable for any debt that arises. Schools cannot provide free meals to children who are not entitled to them.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Fox
Head Teacher

Appendix B

Date: Day Month Year

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: School Meals

I am writing to advise you that there is still an outstanding balance of £00.00 on Forename's dinner money account. It is the policy of Cambridgeshire County Council that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. As a result of this, I need to advise you that the school will be unable to provide a dinner for Forename until this debt is cleared. A weekly payment plan to pay the debt would be acceptable, i.e. £1 per week, and I would appreciate your co-operation in setting this plan up.

Please ensure that you continue to provide a packed lunch for Forename until this debt is cleared.

Thank you for your assistance. If you wish to discuss this further, then please do not hesitate to contact me. I enclose a copy of the School's Dinner Money Debt Policy and procedures for your information.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Fox
Head Teacher

Enc. Debt policy and procedures

Appendix C

Date: Day Month Year

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: School Meals

You will recall that I wrote to you a few days ago regarding the outstanding balance on Forename's dinner money account to the value of £00.00. As you know, it is the policy of Cambridgeshire County Council that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. I am disappointed that you have not been able to start a weekly payment plan as suggested in my previous letter, and would request that you telephone the office to make an appointment to see me to discuss further.

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

Yours sincerely,

Kate Fox
Head Teacher

Appendix D

Date: Day Month Year

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: School Meals

I am disappointed that you have been unable to contact me to make arrangements to recover the outstanding debt of £00.00. In line with the school's Dinner Money Debt Policy and procedures, a copy of which was sent to you with a previous letter, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to the School Governors.

The School Governors will consider the situation and will contact you in due course over the action they will take, which could include making a claim in the small claims court.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Fox
Head Teacher