



Shardlow Primary School

Aspire Achieve Thrive



School Meals Arrears Policy

Approved by:	Local Governing Body
Date:	24 Feb 2025
Minute no:	Out of Committee
Version:	v2
Review cycle:	Every 2 years



Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Changes
V1.2	19.11.2018	K Magner	6. Monitoring and recovery section- Updated to state that the Head teacher can authorise that dinner money debt be written off as opposed to governors. Updated reporting section to state that an annual report to resources committee to inform them off total amount written off in previous year as opposed to asking for permission to write off the debt each meeting. 7. Added Appendices section including letter templates.
V1.3	16/12/2020	M Davies	4. First sentence changed to remove reference to payments made directly to school, as all payments are now made via school money. 5. Sentence removed about payments by cheque as we no longer accept these. Formal letter to be triggered after debt of £30 is accrued, not £10.
V1.4	30.01.2023	K Magner	Added section 7- policy review
V2	Feb 2025	K Magner	Changed Title of Policy Amended wording throughout but no changes to meaning or processes Updated outdated weblinks Reference to 'debt' replaced with 'arrears' to correspond to change of title.

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Shardlow Primary School School Meal Arrears Policy has been adopted to ensure a fair and consistent approach to managing any arrears incurred by parents or carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Education Authority is no longer responsible for the administration of school meal arrears, the responsibility now lies with the school. This means that any unpaid arrears must be recovered by the school, and failure to do so may directly impact the funds available for providing educational resources to all pupils.

2. Provision of School Meals

- 2.1 The School Meals Service operates similarly to any other service in that meals must be paid for by someone. Free School Meals (FSM) are available to parents who meet specific criteria, including those in receipt of state benefits. Parents who believe they may be eligible should contact the school office for further information. It is essential that parents/carers who qualify for FSM take advantage of this entitlement so that their child can receive a school meal each day.
- 2.2 Information on FSM eligibility and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council website: Information on the entitlement to free school meals can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website:
<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your-child-at-school/meals/school-meals/free-school-meals.aspx>
- 2.3 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.

3. Cost of School Meals

- 3.1 School meals are available to children at the cost determined by the catering supplier 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. The prices for school meals are set currently by Derbyshire County Council who are the meal providers.

4. Payment for School Meals

- 4.1 Payments are made via the School Money payment system. Any parents not making the payment on time will be contacted by the school office. The School must 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.

5. Management of School Meal Arrears

- 5.1 To ensure the school budget is not impacted by unpaid debts, the Governors have agreed to a proactive approach to managing school meal arrears. While we understand that financial difficulties can arise, it is important to address non-payment to ensure that all pupils benefit from the available resources.
- 5.2 If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, or if their entitlement to free school meals has ceased, the school will first contact the parent/carers by phone or text to confirm if alternative arrangements have been made.
- 5.3 In cases of lost or forgotten payment, temporary hardship, etc., the school will allow a meal to be provided, but details of the situation will be recorded, and the matter will be monitored.
- 5.4 When a child receives a meal that has not been paid for, the school will send a text detailing the amount owed and request payment within 7 days. Action will be taken promptly to address any arrears, and if unpaid, a formal letter will be sent.
- 5.5 If a child continues to need meals and the arrears situation remains unresolved, the school will explore whether the child is entitled to FSM or if the parent/carers is experiencing financial hardship. In such cases, parents/carers will be encouraged to apply for Free School Meals or to speak confidentially with the Headteacher for support.
- 5.6 When the arrears exceed £30, the school will send a formal letter requesting that the parent/carers provide a packed lunch to avoid further arrears. If the requested packed lunch is not provided and the parent/carers cannot be contacted, the school will continue to provide meals in special circumstances.
- 5.7 If the arrears continue to exceed £30 and no resolution is found, the school will involve the local Multi-Agency Team and formally inform the parent/carers that the school is not obliged to provide meals without advance payment or FSM entitlement.

6. Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

- 6.1 All outstanding **arrears** will be reviewed by the Headteacher. Any write-offs of debt will require approval from the Headteacher, who will also report any write-offs annually to the Chief Financial Officer for oversight.

7. Policy Review

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Headteacher and approved by the Local Governing Body.