



School Debt Policy

**March
2023**

Approved by Governing Body:

Next Review due: March 2024

Objective

To significantly reduce the level of school debt regarding school meals, breakfast club, after school club, music lessons and any other charging activity.

Key Principles

- To take prompt action to ensure that school debts do not build up.
- To have a clear threshold beyond which debts will not be allowed to increase.
- To ensure that parents are made aware of the policy.
- To ensure a fair and consistent approach to dealing with late payments
(In the event of a having a debt for school meals and breakfast and after school clubs (any other debt) two warning letters will be sent followed by a third letter stipulating that their child(ren) will not be given a school lunch or be allowed to attend breakfast/after school clubs until the debt is cleared).

The school has no facility to carry debts. If debts are incurred, then the school has to use its budget to pay for them. This means that money, which should be spent on children's education, is used to pay for debts incurred by parents and carers not paying.

The Procedure

EXTENDED CLUBS / TRIPS

To pay for breakfast club and after school clubs and please register for Parent Pay online payments by requesting an access code from the main office.

SCHOOL MEALS

To pay for school meals please register for Parent Pay online payment by logging on to:

www.parentpay.com

All school meals taken must be paid for in advance.

Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

Children will not be given a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those who are entitled to free school meals. We appreciate that sometimes it can be easy to forget to pay for lunches and for that reason we will allow parents a **maximum of £13.50** leeway. If parents do not pay once your debt reaches **£13.50** parents will be responsible for providing their child(ren) with a packed lunch. This will prevent parents or carers incurring large debts.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In the instance of a debt payment not being received and a packed lunch not being provided, a member of the Administration Team will phone the parent or carer to ask them to pay for the lunch via Parent Pay or come to the school with a packed lunch. If payment of the debt is still not received after what the school deem to be a reasonable amount of time, then the Headteacher reserves the right to start legal proceedings.

If parents are finding it hard to pay the debt, then a payment plan will be set up before any other legal proceedings are put in place.

This policy intends to provide clear guidelines to assist parents and carers by providing greater clarity regarding the payment of school dinner money and school dinner money debt. It is hoped that this will help the school to maximise the amount of money available to spend on children's learning.

Free School Meals

If a parent or carer believes that their child may be entitled to free school meals, then additional information on this statutory right can be obtained by visiting:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

Only eligible pupils will qualify and the school will be happy to assist parents and carers with completing the necessary online application form if required. If a parent or carer is notified by Crowland Primary School that their child is no longer eligible for Free School Meals, then they are required to notify the school immediately to prevent incurring a school meal debt.

Establishing a Debt Policy

Crowland Primary School will notify parents of this policy through the following ways:

- A letter sent home
- The school's newsletter
- The school website

Notification will occur at least once each year. All parents will be provided with information in the new Entrants Handbook about the school's 'no debt' policy when their child first joins the school.

Early reminder procedure to inform parents once debt has surpassed **£1.00** (weekly notification system)

Level 1

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly? Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: send a 'Gentle debt reminder' by email or letter via pupil

Level 2

Indicator: A child comes to school on a consecutive day without the debt being paid or a packed lunch

Check 1 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

A member of the Administration Team will phone the parent to ask them to pay the money owed online or bring a packed lunch to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home at lunchtime. Set up payment plan if finding hard to settle the debt. This must be agreed by Finance Manger or Head Teacher

Level 3

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send Strong debt letter and ask child to bring in pack lunch

Level 4

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options, Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 4: Start proceeding to recover the debt with Redwood Collections