

School Meals Arrears Policy

**St. Bernard's Catholic Primary School
April 2022**

Introduction

This policy relates to the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for this. As a result, money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/guardians. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/guardians give this policy their full support.

Parents/guardians can view this policy on the schools website & will be sent a copy of this policy when their children start at the school.

General Principle

- School meals must be paid for in advance *weekly*. School meals are available to pupils at a cost of £2.35 or at no cost to those in receipt of a free school meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals (Reception, Year 1 and 2).
- Payment should be made by *schools electronic payment system (e.g. ParentPay)*

Free School Meals Entitlement

Pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, or if the pupil is confirmed as entitled to free school meals. If parents/guardians believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the County Council. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/guardians make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where this is officially approved and the school informed by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons, however, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

1. An outstanding dinner money message & email will be sent to parent/guardian after 2 weeks of accumulated arrears, requesting immediate payment (Appendix 1).

2. If unpaid, an accumulated dinner money arrears letter will be sent when *3 weeks'* arrears have accumulated, advising immediate payment (Appendix 2).
3. If unpaid, a final message / email of non-payment of dinner money arrears will be sent informing them that no meals will be provided for their child(ren) if payment has not been received by a specified date, (i.e. in accordance with the policy when *3 weeks'* arrears have accumulated). This letter will also advise that an LCC Invoice will be issued that would be subject to LCC Debt Recovery Policy (Appendix 3).

No meals to be provided to pupils when arrears exceed *3 weeks*

Once the final letter deadline has expired an LCC Invoice may be issued therefore being subject to LCC Debt Recovery Policy where legal proceedings may commence.

APPENDIX 1

Outstanding Dinner Money Reminder – Message 1

Date:

Child's name:

Year Group:

Dear parent/ guardian

According to our records there is outstanding dinner monies for your child(ren).

As of *INSERT DATE* there is a total debt of £_____ for the period *INSERT DATE - INSERT DATE*.

Please make payment immediately by *Cash/Schools Electronic Payment System*.

If you have any queries, please contact the school office.

Regards

Headteacher

APPENDIX 2

Accumulated Dinner Money Arrears – Message 2

Date:

Child's name:

Year Group:

Dear parent/ guardian

Following the letter dated *INSERT DATE* regarding outstanding school dinner money, our records show that this has not been paid for the period *INSERT DATE* to *INSERT DATE*.

To date the amount of arrears is now £_____.

If the debt is not cleared *5 days* it will not be possible provide a school dinner and you must the make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

Please make payment immediately by *Cash /Schools Electronic Payment System*

If you have any queries and/ or wish to discuss this matter, please contact the school office.

Regards

Headteacher

APPENDIX 3

Non-Payment of Dinner Money Arrears – Message 3

Date:

Child's name:

Year Group:

Dear parent/ guardian

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your child(ren) despite previous letters sent home on *INSERT DATE* and *INSERT DATE*.

Arrears to date total £_____

In following the school policy on dinner money arrears, a copy of which *is available on the school website*, I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days of the date of this message / email, the debt will be referred to the authority for issue of an LCC Invoice. This would therefore be subject to LCC debt recovery policy.

I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in additional costs and potentially a summons to court.

Until the debt is cleared, you must make alternative arrangements for your child(ren)s lunch as no meals will be provided in school from *INSERT DATE*.

Please make payment immediately by *Cash/Schools Electronic Payment System*. *If you wish to pay by cheque, please make it payable to LCC.*

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school.

Yours Sincerely

Headteacher