



Pauntley C of E Primary School

Debt Policy

School Mission Statement **Stepping out boldly with God**

'Jesus said, follow me.' Matthew 9.9

Pauntley is an inclusive and caring school of choice. We are child-focussed, with core values to enable us all to follow Jesus's example and so flourish and contribute to the local community and the world God loves.

Introduction

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school lunches or have outstanding monies for any non-voluntary contributions. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents and carers clearly understand what is expected of them.

School Meals

There will occasionally be the decision to be made about whether a child should be refused a meal in school if payment has not been made. However, lunches provided in our school must be paid by someone and is no different than any other food industry business. The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals.

It is very time consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for money - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

The Governors therefore feel, that a system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach.

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

- A letter to parents
- Reminders in the school's newsletter
- The school 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 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 parent having a debt for school meals, after school clubs and breakfast club 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 club 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

To pay for school lunches, breakfast club, trips etc use ParentPay online payment system, www.parentpay.com

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.

Lunches should be paid for in advance.

Children may 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 one week (5 days) leeway. If parents do not pay once your debt reaches the five days/1 week parents will be responsible for providing their child(ren) with a packed lunch. This will prevent parents or carers incurring large debts. However, consistent failure to keep accounts in credit may lead to services being stopped.

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 ParentPay 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 school will invite the parents in to offer support or signpost them to other professionals.

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.

Level 1 Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

Is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action: 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.

Has this parent made contact?

Action: 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.

Level 3 Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options

Has this parent made contact?

Action: 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.

Has this parent made contact?

Action: Start proceeding to recover the debt from a small claims court as advised by LA legal team.

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: 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 the Gloucestershire County

Council 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.

Policy used in conjunction with Charging Policy, Pupil Premium Policy