



Swalwell Primary School

School Meals Payment policy

Academic Year	Headteacher	DHT & Assistant Headteachers	School Business Manager	Chair of Governing body
2022-23	Mrs R. Hocking	Mr R Warren, Mrs S. Leaver & Mrs K. McCall	Mrs E Elliott	Mrs L. Gray

Review Date	Changes made	By whom	Date shared
22.10.2019	22.10.2019	Mrs R. Hocking	At Finance CMT Meeting 06.11.2019
November 22	8 th November 22	Mrs E Elliott	Resources Meeting 9 th November 22

The policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. The aim of the policy is to have a clear procedure for staff and parents.

The following will be at the centre of our policy.

- **Always keep the child's needs central.**
- **Start a dialogue as soon as possible.**
- **Assign a designated member of staff.**
- **Do not rely on letters, texts and emails.**
- **Recognition that DMD (dinner money debt) could be symptomatic of deeper problems.**
- **Ensure that families who are eligible for free school meals have an easy way to sign up.**

Swalwell Primary staff will work with families to ensure non-payment of school meals is kept to a minimum. We will request parents accept support offered in relation to non-payment of school meals including working with staff, keeping school informed of circumstances within the home and providing children with a packed lunch if necessary to stop debt accruing. The money for non-payment of meals must be paid for out of the school budget and this impacts directly on the education of the children.

Payments need to be made in advance for meals. Please use our online Parentmail option. This allows you to pay for meals in advance and will send notifications when your balance is low. If you are having problems, we accept cash or cheques (made out to Gateshead County Council) although this costs school to process and we will always advise online payment first as it is the most secure option for all.

All KS1 children (Reception, Year 1 and 2) are entitled to Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) with funding provided by the government. Nursery children must pay for meals as they are not entitled to a UFSM until they are in Reception. When children move to KS2 (Years 3-6) they must pay for their meals unless you qualify for FSM through a means tested system.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals (FSM), please contact the school office for further information. We cannot back date claims, so it is important that if you think you are entitled you check with staff and make a claim. If you qualify and move to free school meals the outstanding balance still needs to be paid to school.

Remember that Free School Meals (FSM) are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.

Additional information and an application form can be found on the Gateshead Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

[Free school meals - Gateshead Council](#)

Apply by contacting school or the Benefits Service, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH. Telephone 0191 433 3729.

The procedure below will be followed from November 2022 and only applies to children in Nursery and KS2.

1. Start a dialogue as soon as possible.

Action when amount will reach £20

- Letter advising parent that they owe £20 and must provide a packed lunch for their child/ren. **(Appendix 1)**
- If payment is made to clear the debt school meals can resume for the child/ren.
- School can apply discretion depending on circumstances, please inform us if yours change.

2. Recognition that DMD (dinner money debt) could be symptomatic of deeper problems. (At this point the child should be on packed lunches provided by home)

Further Action by school if payment has not been made

A letter will be sent to parents if no payments are received. The letter will again ask for payment and signpost families to relevant support agencies. **(Appendix 2)**

A meeting will be arranged between the Head Teacher and parents to discuss the outstanding payments. **(Appendix 3)**

School will endeavour to recover all payments owed for school meals and there will be no time limit in the recovery of debt.

If debts are incurred, then the money is taken from the school budget. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable, and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

Appendix 1

DATE
NAME
ADDRESS

Student: NAME

Dear NAME,

There is an outstanding dinner money balance of £AMOUNT as of DATE.

As from Monday DATE your child needs to be provided with a packed lunch from home until the remaining balance is paid in full. This can be paid via Parentmail, a cheque to school or cash (we incur a charge for cash and cheques so prefer payments via Parentmail which is also more secure.) If you have any queries relating to the balance owed, we are happy to provide a breakdown of all dinners taken and payments received.

No matter how you pay, you can check the account balance anytime by logging into your Parentmail account. You can see what meals have been taken and when. The cost of a school meal is £2.40 per day - £12 per week. Nursery meals cost £1.40 per day- £7 per week.

Yours sincerely,

Eileen Elliott
School Business Manager

If you would like further help and support, please contact school and/ or the agencies below.

www.stepchange.org

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

www.nationaldebtline.org

Gateshead Council Benefit advice 0191 433 3677/3675 or

benefitswelfareadvice@gateshead.gov.uk or you can call in person at the

Gateshead Civic Centre on Regent Street, NE8 1HH. Monday – Friday 9am-4.30pm.

Appendix 2

DATE
NAME
ADDRESS

Student: NAME

Dear NAME,

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child NAME Class: XX despite a previous written reminder.

We have already agreed with you that NAME is to bring a packed lunch from home until the remaining balance is paid in full.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately or further action will be taken.

Yours sincerely,

Eileen Elliott
School Business Manager

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Appendix 3

DATE
NAME
ADDRESS

Student: NAME

Dear NAME,

I would like to meet with you to discuss the outstanding school meals payments owed for NAME. The amount now stands at £AMOUNT.

The meeting will discuss options open to you in relation to how we can proceed to support you in this matter.

I can meet on DATE at TIME if this is suitable.

Please contact the office as soon as possible on 0191 433 4000 to agree or amend the date and time.

Yours faithfully,

Head Teacher

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