



Dronfield Junior School

Dinner Money Policy

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Committee:	Finance
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Version History		
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1.0	22/02/2017	Approved by Governors

The Dronfield Junior School Dinner Money Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to any debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt, the responsibility now falls on schools to pursue all instances of non-payment. As a result, the school budget is required to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered, thereby directly impacting the amount of money available to provide education to all pupils.

The School Meals service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for. In some circumstances Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria. Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp

Please note: If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires, or where the parents' / carers' personal circumstances change, the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for provision of a school dinner.

Payment for School Meals

School Meals are available to children at a cost of £2 per day. Payment should be made (preferably by cheque made payable to Derbyshire County Council) at the start of each term or on a weekly basis, at the start of each week. Payment should be in a sealed envelope, clearly marked with your child's name, class and the amount enclosed. This payment should be handed by your child to their class teacher at registration time or to the School Office Staff.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure the School's budget is not adversely affected by the incurred cost of School meal debt, the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Although this may seem harsh to some parents, it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, or if a child's entitlement to free school dinners has ceased, the School will initially telephone/text the parent/carer to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

Where a child has failed to produce dinner money, the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation e.g. lost or forgotten dinner money, temporary hardship etc. Such events will be recorded in writing and a record maintained and monitored.

In the event of a child taking a school meal which has not been paid for, a letter/text detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school **within 7 days**. The same will apply if a cheque is not honoured by the bank. Prompt action should be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent further arrears.

Where a child continues to require meals, the School will establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or whether the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances, the parent/carer will be invited to apply for free school meals, or to discuss the matter, in confidence with the Head Teacher.

Where the debt exceeds £20 for a child or children from the same family, a formal letter (see Appendix A) will be sent to the parent/carer informing them to provide their child/children with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears. If the child/children is/are not provided with the requested packed lunch, and the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the School will provide a sandwich and a drink only.

If the debt exceeds £30 for a child / children and/or action in securing dinner money arrears, the school proves unsuccessful, the School will inform the local Safeguarding Team and will formally write to the parent/carer, explaining that the School is no longer obliged to provide a school dinner if advance payment is not forthcoming, or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received.

The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meals debts and to inform the Local Authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time. (See Appendix B)

Monitoring School Meal Debts

The aim of this policy is to minimize the opportunity for debt balances to build up. At each meeting of the School's Finance Committee, the Headteacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money debt which is causing concern.

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Facsimile 01246 291226

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Headteacher
Mrs N J Thomson

Dronfield Junior School
School Lane
Dronfield
Derbyshire
S18 1RY

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the School's financial records you have not paid dinner money for your child (pupil name) in Class: xx. As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt of £xx.

In order that the school's budget is not used to clear your child's debt please make arrangements for the outstanding dinner money debt to be paid immediately. Once you have cleared the current debt I should be grateful if you could ensure that you keep your account in credit. The current cost of a school meal is £2 per day or £10 per week.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals 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 Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

N J Thomson
Headteacher

Telephone 01246 413145
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Headteacher
Mrs N J Thomson

Dronfield Junior School
School Lane
Dronfield
Derbyshire
S18 1RY

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding school meal debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx in Class xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of a school meal is £2 per day or £10 per week.

I would ask that you please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately and take steps to ensure your account is kept in credit in the future.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals 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 Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals

Since the School has to fund all school meal debts from its budget it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. Unfortunately, if the debt is not cleared by xxxxx a school meal will no longer be provided to your child and you must make your own arrangements for your child's lunch. The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and to inform the local authority that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

N J Thomson
Headteacher