



Stebbing Primary School School Meals Arrears

Created/updated October 2023

Due for review October 2026

Ratified by the Governing Body October 2023

(This DFE recommends this policy is reviewed annually)

Introduction

This policy concerns 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.

Rationale

School meals must be paid for in advance. If a child is to have meals for the duration of the week monies must be received before the start of that week or as we accept children having an occasional meal, monies must be received on the day of the meal. The current cost of a lunch is £2.40. Meals should be paid for via our online payment system. Details of how to set up accounts for new children can be obtained from the office. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on all children's education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

Free School Meal Entitlement

Children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 receive Universal Free School Meals. Children in Key Stage 2 will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to Free School Meals. If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the Essex County Council. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying children it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to children where this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons e.g. children forget their money or parents forget to top up their child's account online. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing board has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

Stage 1. Online parent pay system send automated messages when the account is running low or in arrears.

Stage 2. Should the arrears reach £24 (the cost of 10 meals) then a letter requesting immediate payment will be sent to parents/carers.

Stage 3. If no contact is made or payment received then daily contact will be made.

Stage 4. If no contact is made or payment received then a meeting will be arranged with the Headteacher to arrange a payment plan and no further meals will be offered until this has happened.

The procedure for collecting arrears will be conducted with sensitivity and with the aim of working with the family if there is genuine reason for the arrears accruing.