



The Wythenshawe Catholic Academy Trust

DINNER MONEY POLICY



St Paul's Catholic High School

St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School

St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

SS John Fisher and Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Document Record	
Title	Dinner Money Policy
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Purpose	To ensure a fair and consistent approach is taken in dealing with debts or arrears incurred by parents/carers whose children are provided with school dinners.
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Schools within the Wythenshawe Catholic Academy Trust:

- St Paul's Catholic High School
- St Anthony's Catholic Primary School
- St John Fisher and St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
- St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School

This policy will be published on the school's website and will be referred to in the school's brochure.

All parents/carers will be provided with a copy of this policy when their child joins the school.

Parents/carers will be reminded annually about this policy by means of the school's newsletter.

Parents of children in primary schools who will be due to join Key Stage 2 will be reminded during the transition period by letter.

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1. Introduction

- i. The Wythenshawe Catholic Academy Trust (referred to hereafter as the Trust) has adopted this policy in order to provide clear information for both schools and parents/carers on the provision of school meals within its schools.
- ii. This policy provides clarity and consistency in the management of income and any arrears that may be incurred by parents. The policy is also designed to help parents/carers clearly understand what is expected of them.
- iii. The Trust is committed to addressing any issues promptly at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing. The Trust wishes to avoid a situation which allows parents/carers to accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they will then find difficult to clear.
- iv. The Trust can only offer Free School Meals (FSM) to children whose parents/carers qualify for free school meal entitlement due to income or eligibility or children entitled to free school meals under the 'Universal Infant Free School Meals Scheme (UIFSM). Every other meal must be paid for.
- v. The Trust reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.
- vi. The Trust aims to avoid the education budget being used to service school meal parental debt.

2. Scope of the policy

- i. This policy applies to all schools within the Trust, currently consisting of St Paul's Catholic High School, St Anthony's Catholic Primary School, St John Fisher and St Thomas More Catholic Primary School and St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School.
- ii. This policy applies to parents, carers and guardians of children attending schools within the Trust.

3. Provision of School Meals

- i. School meals are available to all children currently 2018/19 at a cost of £2.25 per day or £11.25 per week. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new changes taking effect.
- ii. Children in nursery classes and other year groups will not be charged for school meals if they are in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement (FSM).
- iii. Children in Key Stage 1 will not be charged for school meals if they are entitled to free school meals under the 'Universal Infant Free School Meals Scheme (UIFSM).

- iv. Parents/carers who do not want their child to have a school meal should provide a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take their child home for lunch.
- v. The school office must be given two weeks notification of any changes in meal arrangements. Children are required to keep to either school meals or a packed lunch for half a term.

4. Universal Infant Free School Meals

- i. From September 2014 the Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a Universal Infant Free School Meals scheme (UIFSM) for all children in Key Stage 1 (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2). This means that regardless of income or eligibility, children in those year groups will be entitled to have a free school meal made available to them.
- ii. If a child is in an infant class, parents and carers will still need to claim for free school meals if they qualify so that their child is counted for extra money for their school (the pupil premium). This means that the school also benefits for extra funding which is used to raise attainment of children and enables the school to provide many additional support mechanisms such as learning mentors and intervention and booster classes.
- iii. Children who qualify for free school meals could also be entitled to a substantial reduction in the cost of some residential visits and activities such as music tuition.

5. Free School Meals

- i. Free school meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents/carers who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a school meal each day.
- ii. Families not affected by the universal infant free school meal scheme may be entitled to free school meals for their children if the parents/carers are in receipt of certain benefits:
 - Income support
 - Income based job seekers allowance
 - Income related employment and support allowance
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
 - Child Tax Credit (provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,105). This income will apply until April 2018
 - Working Tax Credit run-on paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - Universal Credit
- iii. To apply for free school meals parents/carers who live in the City of Manchester (the area covered by Manchester City Council) whose child attends one of the schools in the Trust should contact Manchester

City Council. Parents/carers who live outside the City of Manchester need to contact their local council.

- iv. Application forms to apply for free school meals are available from the school office. Please be aware that all applications for free school meals are treated with the strictest confidence.

6. Payment for School Meals

- i. School meals must be paid for in advance.
- ii. Parents/carers are expected to pay on Monday morning each week or may pay for longer periods up to a term in advance if more convenient.
- iii. Parents/carers may pay by cash in a labelled envelope (provided by the school upon request).
- iv. Cashless payment systems will be introduced in the near future.
- v. If children are absent, their dinner money will be credited for the following week.
- vi. Refunds may only be given, for credits at the end of a term, or if a child is leaving their school to attend another.
- vii. If a child forgets their packed lunch and is given a school meal, parents/carers must pay for that meal the following morning (excluding children who are in receipt of FSM or UIFSM).

7. Policy for collection of outstanding money

- i. As from January 2016 the Trust has adopted a strict 'no debt' policy relating to school meal arrears.
- ii. Each school within the Trust is ultimately responsible for the recovery of dinner money arrears or debts and pursue instances of non-payment through the appropriate means.
- iii. In cases where a payment is not received a note will be sent to the parent/carer detailing how much is owed and requesting payment directly to the school within seven days.
- iv. If a child continues to have a school meal which has not been paid for, a letter will be sent to the parent/carer advising they must provide either a packed lunch or take the child home at lunchtime. The school will establish whether the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under the circumstances the parent/carer may be invited to apply for free school meals or speak to the Headteacher in confidence.
- v. If a reasonable arrangement to clear a debt cannot be made, the school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to secure payment. If the parent/carer does not comply with any of the above options then the Headteacher will be required to send a final letter advising of the need to bring legal proceedings to recover the debt.

- vi. In certain circumstances or in cases where the school has serious concerns, the Local Authority may be informed that parents/carers are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their child at lunchtime.

APPENDIX A Letter to parents/carers advising of Dinner Money Policy

Dear Parents/carers

Following a review of payment procedures for school dinners, the school have concerns regarding a small number of parents/carers who are have accrued arrears. The attached policy and guidelines have been formally adopted by the Governing Body to address this situation.

The Governors would like to stress that this process will only apply to a minority of parents/carers as many of our families do ensure that their child's school meal account remains in credit. It has been necessary for the Governors to implement this policy as on previous occasions, unnecessary amounts of money from the school budget had to be reallocated from other areas of spending on children's educational needs, in order to clear these debts.

The school is aware that many families may be experiencing financial hardship, and we would ask parents/carers who are in this situation to contact the school as they may be eligible for free school meals, and the school can offer assistance in the application process. We would stress that all enquiries in relation to this matter are treated in the strictest confidence.

Did you know that by registering for free school meals (FSM) your child not only has the opportunity to enjoy a free school meal but they could also be entitled to a substantial reduction in the cost of some residential visits and music tuition?

The school also benefits from additional funding for all pupils who are registered for free school meals or who have been registered in the past six years. This funding is given to schools to raise the attainment of children and enables us to provide many additional support mechanisms such as a learning mentor and intervention and booster classes along with financial support for educational visit and activities.

Parent/carers who pay for their child's school meal should send the cash or cheque in a marked envelope to the school office.

We hope that you understand and appreciate the necessity for this policy to be implemented and we would like to thank all those parents/carers who continue to support the school through ensuring payments are made on time for school meals.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX B Letter to parent/carer advising of outstanding money

DATE

Dear NAME OF PARENT/CARER

Dinner Money Balance

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child:

NAME

Class

As at DATE your account is showing arrears of **£-2.25**

As you are aware all school meals must be paid for in advance and we must therefore ask you to clear the outstanding balance and top up your child's account before any further meals are taken.

You have to pay in cash or by cheque in a marked envelope delivered to the school office.

The cost of a school meal is £2.25 per day - £11.25 per week.

Please note, unfortunately we are unable to provide any further school meals until the arrears have been cleared and you will need to provide either a packed lunch or take the child home at lunchtime.

If you believe you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with the application process.

We look forward to receiving your payment, however if you have any concerns or wish to discuss these arrears in confidence, please do not hesitate to contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

APPENDIX C Final Letter to parent/carer advising of outstanding debt

DATE

Dear NAME OF PARENT/CARER

Further to my letter of DATE regarding your school meal account being in arrears, unfortunately our records show arrears remain outstanding.

As at DATE your account is showing a debt of **£-2.25** for: -

Child's Name

Class

As you are aware all school meals must be paid for in advance by cash or cheque and we must therefore ask you to clear the outstanding balance and top up your child's account before any further meals are taken.

As indicated in our previous letter, it will now NOT be possible to provide your child with a school meal. You will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

Since non-payment for school meals affects the quality of service we offer to the children, we need to ensure that all payments are up-to-date and **unfortunately if the debt is not cleared within seven days we will have no option but to refer the debt for recovery.**

If you need help with this, or you are suffering financial hardship, we may be able to assist, such as enquiring if you qualify for Free School Meals. Please contact the office to arrange a confidential appointment to discuss this further.

If we have serious concerns that you are not carrying out your responsibility of care by not providing food for your child at lunchtime, we may inform Social Services at the Local Authority.

Finally, if you have any queries regarding these arrears, please do not hesitate to contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher