



Limes Farm Junior School Meals Payment Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to make clear how payment is made for school meals and to ensure a consistent and fair approach to any debt accrued by parents/carers whose children take school meals. The Local Education Authority is not accountable for the administration of dinner money debt. The responsibility falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

AIMS

- To outline the school's procedures, in alignment with government guidance, regarding the payment of school meals and the collection of debt accrued by non-payment.
- To work with parents to provide a flexible and fair approach to the payment of school meals
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of school staff, parents and pupils

PROVISION OF SCHOOL MEALS

At Limes Farm Junior School, meals are prepared in the school kitchen by staff employed by Harrisons catering service. The available meals follow a menu developed by Harrisons' nutrition team. A menu is available on our school website.

All children in Reception, year 1 and year 2 are entitled to a universal free school meal.

From year 3 to year 6, there is a cost for school meals- As from September 2020 the cost is £2.08 per day.

Families are eligible to apply for Free School Meals if they meet any of the criteria set below. We strongly encourage families to apply for Free School Meals as registering for free meals could also raise an extra **£1,320** for the school, to fund valuable support like extra tuition, additional teaching staff or after school activities. This additional money is available from central government for every child who is in receipt of Free School Meals.

HOW TO APPLY FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS- Children in Y3, Y4, Y5 and Y6

Your child may be eligible for free school meals if you are receiving any of the following:

- Income Support

Date Policy written: September 2020

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (not Working Tax Credit), with an annual income below £16,190
- Pension Guarantee Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance, income related
- Support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999
- Working Tax Credit run-on, paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit, with a household income of £7,400 or less (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Your application will be refused if you're not receiving any of the listed benefits. Please consider this before applying. You can apply for free school meals online following the link: https://essex-self.achieveservice.com/service/Free_School_Meals_application

Your application will be processed within 15 working days, but it can take longer if you apply in August or September. Families and the school will be contacted if your child is entitled to Free School Meal.

PAYMENT OF SCHOOL MEALS

In order to assist with the efficient ordering and planning of school meals, please pay for meals in advance, on a daily, weekly, monthly or termly basis. The payment of school meals can be completed through our online payment system using Parent Pay.

If a child's school meal has been paid for in advance but they are absent, the cost of the meal will be credited against future payment.

Should a child arrive at school without payment or a packed lunch, the School will telephone home in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

If a child's entitlement to free school dinners has expired, the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or make a payment for school meals via Parent Pay.

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL MEAL DEBT

The school understands that there may be unforeseen circumstances that result in school meal payment arrears, however in order to apply this policy fairly and transparently the following procedure will be adopted for all non-payment:

Week 1

If your child has a school meal that has not been paid for we will text you the amount owing as a reminder to pay it on the following Monday.

Week 2

If payment has not been received by the end of the week we will send a standard letter, see appendix 1.

Week 3

If payment is not received by the end of the week we will send another letter outlining the school's intention to pursue the debt through the small claims court. See appendix 2

Week 4

The debt will be pursued through the small claims court.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties please contact the headteacher as soon as possible in order that we can work together to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

MONITORING SCHOOL MEALS DEBT

The headteacher will provide the Governing Body with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt six times a year at the Resources sub-committee meeting of the Governing Body. It is the Governing Body's responsibility to ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently in order that the school budget is used to provide for children's learning and not to pay costs incurred by non-payment of school dinners.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Full Governing Body.

Appendix 1

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)
(Address Line 1) (Address Line 2)
(Address Line 3)
(Post Code)
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 school meals 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 £x per day or £x per week.

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

Head Teacher

Appendix 2

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)
(Address Line 1) (Address Line 2)
(Address Line 3)
(Post Code)
Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

Following on from our letter dated....., 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 now showing a debt of £xx.

In order that the school's budget is not used to clear your school meals debt please make arrangements for the outstanding dinner money debt to be paid immediately.

If your outstanding balance is not paid by Friday.....then the school will follow the enclosed School Meals Payment Policy and pursue your debt through the smalls claims court.

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 £x per day or £x per week.

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

Head Teacher