

Wilburton CE Primary School

Dinner Money Debt Policy

Written: May 2019

Last Reviewed: June 2023

Next Review: June 2024

1.0 Introduction

The responsibility of ensuring school meal payments are made by parents lies with the school and the school is liable for any debts outstanding. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, the Governors of Wilburton CE Primary School wish to implement one that ensures meals are paid for, whilst being sympathetic to Parents/Carers during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime.

2.0 Procedures

School meals must be paid for within one week of meals being taken. All meals for the period being paid for must be paid via the school's chosen online payment system, or cash/cheque at the school office.

Meals can be paid for on a weekly, half termly or termly basis. If parents choose to pay either half termly or termly and a debt arises at the end of the period it will be the parent's responsibility to work with the school office to locate where the error occurs.

When a child is leaving the school office shall check the balance of the child's account and refund any credit balances and obtain any debt outstanding.

If a pupil has a school meal everyday it will be assumed that on special menu days (e.g. Christmas/Easter lunch, Leavers' Day lunch) that they will take that meal. Parents will need to advise the school office if that is not the case. If a pupil does not have school meals every day the parents will need to confirm that lunch is required.

When adults are invited to lunch, meals must be booked and paid for in cash by the date given (subject to availability). No meals will be provided after this date.

If you think that your child may be eligible to receive free school meals, please refer to the following website www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals.

3.0 Debt procedures

If payment for school meals has not been made within one week of meals being taken, then the following process will be followed:

Step 1: A "debt letter one" will be sent by email to the parents/carers (see Appendix A). This letter requests that the child is provided with a packed lunch until the debt is cleared. The School Office will ensure this is adhered to: if the child arrives at school without a packed lunch the parent/carer will be telephoned asking them to bring this into school. If no packed lunch is brought in, the Headteacher or

Deputy Headteacher will be consulted and the child will be given some simple food. They will not normally be allowed a school meal.

Step 2: For those parents/carers who received “letter one” and have not cleared their debts within 5 school days since letter one was sent, the school will contact the parent/carer to request an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss the outstanding debt.

Step 3: If this meeting is not kept, or a satisfactory solution agreed, the debt will be referred to the governing body, who will make a decision on how to deal with this debt, including but not limited to a claim in the Small Claims Court.

We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child. In the event of a child leaving Wilburton CE Primary School with an outstanding debt, the Governing Body will need to consider pursuing payment by other means, including but not limited to making a claim in the Small Claims Court.

APPENDIX A: Debt Letter One

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: School Meal Payments for

According to our records, it appears that we have not received sufficient money to cover the cost of providing school meals to your child/children.

The outstanding balance on: was £:

I would be grateful if payment could be made online or sent in within the next 5 school days, including monies for the forthcoming week/half term/term if this is relevant. Please make cheques payable to Wilburton CE Primary School. Please arrange for prompt payment of this outstanding debt since the school is unable to provide credit for school meals.

As stated in our school's Dinner Money Debt Policy, the school will not provide lunch for your child/children until payment is received, as the school is liable for any debt that arises. Please ensure that a packed lunch is provided until this debt is cleared, after which school dinners can re-commence. If you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me. If we do not hear from you within the next 5 school days or the outstanding debt is not cleared, the school will contact you to discuss the situation and our next steps to recover the debt.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

David Aston
Head Teacher