



'Bringing out the Best in Each and Every Child'

SCHOOL MEALS ARREARS POLICY

MAY 2025

Introduction

This policy relates to 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.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget is liable to cover the cost of this. As a result, money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/guardians. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/guardians give this policy their full support. Parents/guardians can view this policy on the school's website.

General Principle

- School meals must be paid for in advance. School meals are available to pupils at a cost of £2.70 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of a free school meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals (Reception, Year 1 and 2).
- Payment should be made via ParentPay, the schools electronic payment system.

Free School Meals Entitlement

Pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, or if the pupil is confirmed as entitled to free school meals. If parents/guardians believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the County Council on 01524 581148. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/guardians make use of it.

The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where this is officially approved and the school informed by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons, however, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

1. An outstanding dinner money letter will be sent to parents/guardians via email each week of accumulated arrears, requesting immediate payment.
2. When a debt exceeds the negative balance threshold of £40.50 per child (as outlined in the Debt Policy) the first formal written reminder (Appendix A)– an official, dated letter addressed to the debtor which will be written up two weeks after the first informal reminder and will acknowledge that it took place.
3. Second formal written reminder (Appendix B)– this will arrive two weeks after the second reminder, citing the details of both previous reminders and stating that concerted efforts have been made to make the person aware that an outstanding debt is overdue. ***To prevent a debt raising to unmanageable levels, the Headteacher reserves the right to pause paid for services at the same date the second reminder is sent to the debtor.***
4. If unpaid, a final letter (Appendix C) will be sent informing parents/guardian that their child(ren) will no longer be able to have school dinners and will be requested to bring in a packed lunch. This letter will also advise that an LCC Invoice will be issued that would be subject to LCC Debt Recovery Policy (Appendix C).

Once the final letter deadline has expired an LCC Invoice may be issued therefore being subject to LCC Debt Recovery Policy where legal proceedings may commence.

Appendix A

Date XX

Dear XX

SCHOOL MEAL ARREARS – INSERT CHILD’S NAME

Although the school office has previously contacted you via email, your school meal account remains in arrears of over 3 week’s dinner money.

The amount overdue as of today is £XX

If you have difficulty with the payment of these arrears, please contact the School Office on 01253 727664.

If this has been an oversight, please settle the arrears by XX (a week later).

You will appreciate that this situation cannot be allowed to continue. If the arrears are not paid in full by this date, in accordance with the Clifton Primary School Chargeable School Meals Arrears Policy, you may be referred to the Lancashire County Council Legal Team.

Yours sincerely

Melissa Hilleard
Business Support Officer

Appendix B

Date XX

Dear XX

SCHOOL MEALS ARREARS – INSERT CHILD’S NAME

Further to our previous letter, and as no payment has been received, please note that your account is still overdue.

The amount overdue as of today is £XX

Please pay the full amount by XX (week later)

If you are having difficulty with the payment of this debt, please contact me to discuss this further.

If we do not receive payment by the date specified above, this matter will be referred to the Lancashire County Council Legal Team.

To prevent this debt becoming unmanageable, we reserve the right at this stage to withdraw this paid for service.

Yours sincerely

Liam Marshall
Headteacher

Appendix C

Date XX

Dear XX

SCHOOL MEALS ARREARS – INSERT CHILD’S NAME

Further to my letter of XX, your outstanding debt has not been settled.

The amount overdue in respect of school meals is: £XX

In accordance with the Clifton Primary School Chargeable School Meals Arrears Policy, if full payment is not received by **XX (week later)**, and you have not already started to send your child/ren with a packed lunch, you will now need to do this.

This matter will now be referred to the Lancashire County Council Legal Team. If you wish to make a payment and do not have access to Parent Pay, please bring cash or a cheque made payable to Clifton Primary School to the school office as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Liam Marshall
Headteacher