

# St. Andrew's C of E (VA) Primary School

## School Money Debt Recovery Policy

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

The Free School Meals system is there for parents of children of all ages to claim if they are in receipt of certain benefits; information is available from the school office or [Plymouth City Council's website](#).

Also, all pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School Meals.

**Therefore, this policy only relates to pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) whose parents pay for school meals.**

The school wishes to avoid a situation which allows parents to accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they then find difficult to clear.

On rare occasions the school may need to decide whether a child should be refused a meal in school, if parents have not paid. In this case, parents will be contacted and asked to provide a healthy packed lunch. However, the school is no different than any other business and meals taken must be paid for.

Parents should be able to relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to well-known high street restaurants and expect them to be given food without paying. Unfortunately, a small minority of parents expect the school to provide food for their children without paying for it.

It is very time consuming for the school's office staff to continually chase parents for payment - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

The Governors at St Andrew's C of E (VA) Primary School feel that the system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach. We understand that it may seem a very hard stance as there has been a country-wide culture of debt tolerance. However, it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM or UIFSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for. Our *SchoolMoney* online cash collection system highlights debt immediately so keeping track is easy.

The school will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- Reminders in the school's newsletter
- The school website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This will be done at least once each year.

### **Key Information**

1. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
2. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
3. Where a debt has accrued, **after 4 days**, parents will be asked to provide healthy packed lunches from home until the debt has been cleared
4. Parents who do not want their child to have a school meal should provide a healthy packed lunch

### **Debt Recovery policy implementation**

#### **Day 1**

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt:

- Check 1            is there a possibility that payments have not been credited online?  
 Check 2            does this parent normally pay on time - is this just a one off?

#### **Action 1: Reminder**

- Send a debt reminder by text

#### **Day 2**

Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a healthy packed lunch:

- Check 1            is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?  
 Check 2            has this parent made contact?

#### **Action 2: Reminder**

- Send another text reminder

#### **Day 3**

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options:

- Check 1            is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?  
 Check 2            has this parent made contact?

#### **Action 3: School action**

- Office staff contact the parent by telephone
- The Headteacher will send a letter.

**Day 4**

Indicator: The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options:

Check 1            is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 2            has this parent made contact?

**Action 4: bring in outside agencies**

- Involve the School's Parent Support Adviser and /or Education Welfare Officer in liaison with the parent, if relevant.
- Refuse further school meals until the debt has been cleared
- Refer to Plymouth City Council to raise Debtor invoice – which will then follow the Council's debt recovery process.

Reviewed on ..... (date)

Signed.....(Chair of Governors)