

School Meals Debt Policy

As from January 2015 Parkhill Junior School has adopted a clear 'no debt' policy regarding payment for school meals.

Objective: To significantly reduce the level of school meals debt.

Key Principles:

- To take prompt action to ensure that school meals debts do not build up.
- To have a clear threshold beyond which debts will not be allowed to increase.
- To ensure that parents are made aware of the policy.
- To ensure a fair and consistent approach to dealing with dinner money payments (2 warning letters followed by a third letter stipulating that their children will not be given a school lunch until the debt is cleared).

If debts are incurred then the school has to use its budget to pay for them. This means that money, which should be spent on children's education, is used to pay for debts incurred by parents and guardians not paying for children's meals. Parent and guardians will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that they give this policy their full support.

The Procedure:

Parents must pay for meals in advance using cash or a cheque in a named envelope or by using the online or over the phone payment system. To pay online please register for ISS online payment by logging on to:

www.feedinghungryminds.co.uk/online-payments

Payments made over the phone or online have a minimum transaction value of £10. This may help a number of parents and schools where access to a PC is limited or where a parent has built up a large amount of debt and is unable to pay it all off in one go. Please call **0844 5835757** to make a payment over the phone.

*Cheques for payment of school meals in advance need to be made payable to **London Borough of Redbridge**. Cheques for arrears need to be made payable to **Parkhill Junior School**.*

Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

Children will not be given a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those who are entitled to free school meals. We appreciate that sometimes it can be easy to forget to pay for lunches and for that reason we will allow parents a maximum of £10 leeway. If

you do not pay once your debt reaches £10 you will be responsible for providing your child with a packed lunch. This will prevent parents or guardians incurring large debts and should help to budget your child's dinner money.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In the instance of a debt payment not being received and a packed lunch not being provided, a member of the Administration Team will phone the parent or guardian to ask them to come to the school with either the money for a lunch or a packed lunch. If payment of the debt is still not received after what the school deem to be a reasonable amount of time, then the Headteacher reserves the right to inform Social Services that parents or guardians are not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

This policy intends to provide clear guidelines to assist parents and guardians by providing greater clarity regarding the payment of school dinner money and school dinner money debt. It is hoped that this will help the school to maximise the amount of money available to spend on children's learning.

Free School Meals:

If a parent or guardian believes that their child may be entitled to free school meals then additional information on this statutory right can be obtained from the school office. Only eligible pupils will qualify and the school will be happy to assist parents and guardians with the necessary application form if required. If a parent or guardian is notified by the London Borough of Redbridge that their child is no longer eligible for Free School Meals, then they are required to notify the school immediately to prevent incurring a school meal debt.

Establishing a Debt Policy:

Parkhill Junior School will notify parents of this policy through the following ways:

- A letter sent home
- The school's newsletter
- The school website

Notification will occur at least once each year and more frequently following its implementation. All parents will be provided with a copy of this policy when their child first joins the school.

Level 1

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: send a '**Gentle debt reminder**'

Level 2

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

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly? Check 3

has this parent made contact?

Action 2: **Personal contact**

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to bring in the money owed or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home at lunchtime.

Level 3

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options, Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly? Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: **send Strong debt letter and child to bring in pack lunch**

Level 4

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options, Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly? Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: **Start proceeding to recover the debt from a small claims court.**

***Reviewed and approved by the Headteacher and Full Governing Body in
November 2014
Next review – October 2018***