



Blackwell Primary School

Dinner Money and Debt Policy

Review Date	Changes Required	Name & Position	Approved by & date:	Next review due
12.02.2019		Rachel Boswell - Headteacher		12.02.2022
18.06.2019	Change to dinner pricing	Stuart White – Office Manager		18.06.2022
16.03.2021	Changes made to dinner pricing and minor administrative details (ParentPay and communication methods)	Stuart White – School Business Manager		16.03.2024
16.09.2022	Changes made to dinner pricing	F Pickering – Office administrator		16.09.2025
02.12.2024	Changes made to dinner pricing	A.Flint- Office Admin		02.12.2027

Background

The Blackwell Primary School Dinner Money and Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt the responsibility now 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.

Provision of School Meals

The Schools Meals Service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for by someone. Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. Anyone who may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents/carers who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a School meal each day.

Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website:

<https://caya-apps.derbyshire.gov.uk/Synergy/SynergyWeb/Enquiries/Citizen/FreeSchoolMeals.aspx>

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £3.25 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals **must** be paid for in advance using the ParentPay system. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

Payment for School Meals

Please pay via the ParentPay system. Dinner monies paid via this system are automatically paid to Derbyshire County Council. All monies and financial transactions will be undertaken in line with the School's Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by audit.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of School meal debt the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Although, this may seem harsh to some

parents it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not a small number.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, the school will telephone the parent/carer in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, the parent/carer will be contacted initially via ParentHub or email to be told how much is owed requesting payment directly to the school within 7 days. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require meals, the School must establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

When the debt exceeds £30 for a child or family a formal message must be sent to the parent/carer informing them to provide their child/children with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears. If the child/children is/are not provided with the requested packed lunch and the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the School will provide a sandwich and a drink only.

If the debt exceeds £60 for a family and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the school should inform the local Safeguarding Team and formally write to the parent/carer, explaining that the School is not obliged to provide a school dinner where advance payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

At each meeting of the Governing Body/Finance Committee, the Head Teacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt. The aim of the School's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to the School's solicitors. The School does however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

All Write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Governing Body/Finance Committee following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years (in line with audit recommendations) or sooner if required changes are identified.