



Policy: School Meal Policy

Member of staff responsible:	Kirsty Macnair
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Review Date:	June 2028

Introduction

This policy forms guidance in the cases of debt arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for dinner money debt, the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result, the school's budget will have to fund outstanding debt, and this directly affects the amount of money available to provide education for all our children. This policy should provide a consistent and fair approach to managing debt and help parents understand what is expected of them.

General Principle

Rossett Acre Primary school provides school meals at a set cost per day, which can change with prior notice to parents of at least a half term. There is no cost to children in Key Stage 1 or those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. **School meals MUST be paid for IN ADVANCE.**

If Parents/Carers choose for their child to have a school dinner on the first Monday of the half term (Or the first day of the half term if this is not a Monday), the child must continue with this choice for the rest of the half term. Should your child wish to change to Packed Lunches, they may do so at the start of the next half term. Parents/Carers MUST pay for the full half term meals in advance on Arbor, and monies should be received by 9.30am on the first Monday of half term (or the first school day if different)

Free School Meals

Since September 2014, all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 have been eligible for Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), regardless of their parent's/carer's income.

Some children (including those eligible for UIFSM) may also be eligible for benefits related Free School Meals (FSM), where a parent is in receipt of the following:

- Universal Credit, (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400 (£616.67 per month) as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- Income Support
- Income-Based Jobseekers' Allowance
- Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit, provided you are also not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual household gross income that does not exceed £16,190 (as assessed by HMRC)
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

Children in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 who choose to have school meals must pay the relevant cost unless they are registered for FSM.

Procedure for collection of arrears

Dinner money arrears are classed as 'arrears' when the following occurs:

- A child requests a school dinner on the first day of the half term (or the first school day if not a Monday) and payment has not been received by 9.30am on that day.
- If a child has an 'occasional meal' (Christmas dinner, themed dinner or one-off meal due to exceptional circumstances) and payment has not been received.

The following procedure takes place to arrange for the collection of arrears.

1. On the first Monday of the half term (or first school day if this is not a Monday) a reminder text (appendix 1) is sent to the parent/carer, reminding them that there are insufficient funds on their Arbor account to meet the cost of lunches that half term. They will be asked to clear any arrears and make payment, in advance, for the forthcoming half term. They will be advised that if payment isn't made their child will require a packed lunch for the remainder of the half term.
2. If insufficient funds have not been received by the following Monday, Letter 1 (appendix 2) will be emailed via Arbor and also sent home with the child.
3. If full payment has not been received by 9.30am the following Monday, a text and letter 2 (appendix 3) will be sent to the parent/carer explaining that no further meals will be provided by the school, and a packed lunch will be required the next day (day/date given on the letter).
4. If parents/carers do not respond, or a satisfactory arrangement for repayment of the debt cannot be reached, the school will refer the debt to the Finance Director at the Red Kite Learning Trust.

If parents contact the school in response to our communication to discuss difficulties paying, an arrangement can be made for repayment by instalments, and dinners can continue to be provided.

Appendix 1

Text message

Your child has requested a school dinner for this half term. There are insufficient funds on your Arbor account and meals must be paid for in advance. Please visit Arbor today to make your payment for the whole half term. If full payment of (*cost for half term*) is not received, your child will require a packed lunch for the rest of the half term.

Appendix 2

School meals arrears letter 1

Dear

According to our records, your child (name), has requested to have school dinners this half term but we have not received payment. A school dinner can only be provided if payment is received IN ADVANCE. The school is not obliged to provide a school dinner to your child when payment is not forthcoming, or where official approval for Free School Meals has not been received. Therefore, if payment is not received (date) will require a packed lunch this half term.

Please use Arbor to make your payment for the full half term or contact the office to pay by cash/cheque.

The school understands that circumstances do arise which may affect a Parent/Carer's ability to make payments. The school is keen to assist and support families if we are made aware of any circumstances causing difficulties.

If you think you may be entitled to Free School Meals, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Miss K Woodcock
Deputy Headteacher

Appendix 3

School Meals arrears letter 2

Dear

Following our letter dated (date) regarding outstanding dinner money, our records show that this has still not been paid and (name) is still having school dinners. As school dinners need to be paid for in advance for the full half term, £xxxx will need to be paid with immediate effect or you will need to provide your child with a packed lunch from (date) for the remainder of the half term.

In accordance with our School Meals Policy, if payment has not been made, or where an authorisation for Free School Meals has not been received, the school is not obliged to provide your child with a school meal. Once the debt has been cleared, then your child is welcome to resume school meals with payment in advance.

If you would like to discuss the matter, please do not hesitate to contact the school. The school is keen to help and support where we can to try and resolve this matter as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Miss K Woodcock
Deputy Headteacher