

## **Bromsgrove Schools PFI Meal's Arrears Policy & Recovery Process**

This Policy has been compiled recognising the difficulties placed on schools in balancing the social welfare of students with the management of the school budgets.

This policy is fair and just, it sets out a clear procedure for families. By introducing a zero tolerance debt policy, we aim to reduce the risk to parents incurring large debts that they will struggle to pay and minimise the amount of staff time taken in chasing up outstanding payments.

The catering contractor is responsible for managing payments and arrears for school meals these are processed through the main school budget.

Where debts are incurred, the school budget has to pay for them; this means that money that should be spent on children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable, and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

**School Meals** - The school has a statutory duty to provide free school meals to those who are eligible.

**Parents, please note:** it is your responsibility to apply for free school meals and to ensure that the Local Authority/School is kept up to date with your circumstances.

### **How we will operate this policy:**

- **First trigger point** - debt at  $\geq$  - £4.50 [Primary/Middle/High]
  - Action – Catering Staff - Speak to students directly at the Served [Middle/High only]. Catering Contractor to log in to ParentPay and send quick email to relevant account holder [All schools].
- **Second trigger point** - debt at  $\geq$  - £13.50 [Primary/Middle/High]
  - Action – Catering Contractor to log in to ParentPay & send a second reminder email to account holder [All schools] Inform school representative(s) of the building debt asking if they could call the student's Parent(s)/Guardian to put money on account as soon as possible.
- **Third trigger point** – If the ParentPay Account is not topped up within 72 hours and debt has increased further.
  - Action – Catering contractor will inform the school representative(s) asking they again call the student's Parent(s)/Guardian – The Parent(s)/Guardian now needs to send their child with a packed lunch until a point account is topped up and debt is cleared.
- **Fourth trigger Point** – If payment of the debt is not received by the stated date, and the student does not have a packed lunch.

- Action – Student can only have a “Sandwich and a piece of fruit”. Catering Managers Email the Facility Manager and or Deputy Facility Manager informing of the Student’s name and current debt value £. – Facility manager escalates with Bromsgrove Schools SPV & WCC.
- School representative will contact parents directly to discuss the circumstances, the school reserves the right to recover the debt through legal proceedings and report the matter to Social Services as part of its Safeguarding Policy.

**Further Action to Recover the Debt:**

The Contractor will invoice Worcestershire County Council (WCC) the outstanding current debt 15 working days before the end of the school term, WCC will recover the debt from the individual school.

This policy has been written to help the schools 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.

There will occasionally be the decision to be made about whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. The school meals service is no different than any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone.

Parents should be able to relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to a fast-food restaurant e.g. McDonalds and expect them to be given food without paying. Yet a minority of parents in schools expect the school to provide food for their children without paying for it.

The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals, there should be no excuses. 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 nutritious school meal (Lunch) each day.

Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Worcestershire County Council Website:

Many Worcestershire residents are currently struggling with rising living costs that’s why it’s important to know what help and support is available to you further information can be found on the Worcestershire County Council Website: