

GOBOWEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL MEALS PAYMENT AND SCHOOL MEALS DEBT POLICY

Introduction

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the cases of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. Parents/carers will be advised a copy of this policy is on the school website.

General Principle

School meals must be paid for in advance. If a pupil is to have meals for the duration of the week monies must be received before the start of that week or in exceptional circumstances if the pupil is having an occasional meal, monies must be received on the day of the meal.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents / carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents / carers give this policy their full support.

Free School Meals Entitlement

Pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to free school meals. If parents/carers believe that their child (children) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should visit <https://shropshire.gov.uk/free-school-meals/>. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons e.g. pupils forget their dinner money or parents forgot to send a packed lunch. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate.

The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

Step 1: A reminder letter will be sent home after 1 week of accumulated arrears (FIRST LETTER).

Step 2: The parent/carer will be informed in writing when two weeks' arrears have accumulated and advised to make immediate payment (SECOND LETTER).

Step 3: A final letter to the parent/carer informing them that no meals will be provided for their child (children) if payment has not been received by a specified date. (FINAL LETTER)

No meals to be provided to pupils when arrears exceed two weeks and the parent/carer has been advised to send in a packed lunch for their child/children.

Step 4: Once the final letter deadline has expired the debt will be passed onto a debt recovery team where legal proceeding may begin.

FIRST LETTER

Dear Parent/ Carer

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

According to our records it appears that there is dinner money outstanding for your child as to today.

The amount due for payment is £ _____

We would be grateful if you would kindly clear this balance straightaway.

Please pay via the School Money app (*amount outstanding will be in the payments tab, please add it to your basket to enable payment*) or payment by cash can be made at the school office.

If you have any queries or if you are having difficulty with payment of this amount, please let us know immediately and we will endeavour to help.

For your information, the last payment shown on our system was made on _____.

Our school budget is intended to support children's learning, and we cannot use it to cover debt owed to the school.

Thank you for your help and understanding.

Yours sincerely

Mr R Walsh
Headteacher

SECOND LETTER

Dear Parent/ Carer

Child's name:

We have written to you previously regarding _____'s outstanding dinner money and according to our records, we still have not received any payment.

The amount due for payment is £_____ and as per our School Meal Payment Policy unless we receive payment on Monday morning, your child will need to bring a packed lunch until the debt has been cleared.

For your information, the last payment shown on our system was made on _____

In a case where a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with the money, pay via School Monay app or provide sandwiches before lunchtime.

If by _____ you either have not paid off the incurred debt, we will invite you to a meeting to explore options to help you pay the amount above. If you do not attend this meeting or if we do not reach a satisfactory result together, we will seek legal advice on recovering the debt.

Our school budget is intended to support children's learning, and we cannot use it to cover debt owed to the school.

If you have any queries and/ or wish to discuss this matter please contact the school office.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Ronan Walsh

Headteacher

FINAL LETTER

Dear Parent/ Carer

Child's name:

I am writing to you following [insert dates of any letters sent or meetings had concerning the debt].

Your outstanding debt is _____ .

In following the school policy on dinner money arrears, a copy of which you were informed is available on the school's website; I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days of the date of this letter, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to our advisers to see what legal action we can pursue to recover it. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in making a claim in the small claims court.

To prevent this from happening, please contact the school office immediately to discuss steps you can take to repay the debt.

Yours sincerely,

Ronan Walsh

Headteacher