



NEW MILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL

School Dinner Money Policy

DCC Policy

This policy has been reviewed and has been impact assessed in the light of all other school policies and the Equality Act 2010.

Date Created	Changes	Committee	Date Approved	Min No.
		Finance	10.04.14	F14/196
		Finance	10/03/2022	F22/11
		Resources	09/03/2023	R23/15
		Resources	05/03/2024	R24/16
	Change to price	Resources	26/03/2025	R25/13

Is this policy on the website?	Yes
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Background

The New Mills Primary School Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure that 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 School 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:

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parents/ carers personal circumstances change the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner.

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. EYFS and KS1 receive universal; free school meals through government funding. School meals **must** be paid for in advance. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers.

Payment for School Meals

Please send payment (preferably through Parent Pay) when you book the meals. The school will ensure that all dinner money collected is banked on a weekly basis in accordance 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.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, or if a child's entitlement to free school dinners has ceased, the school will telephone/Class Dojo the parent/carer in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

When a child has failed to produce dinner money the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation e.g., family crisis, financial hardship, etc., details will be recorded, and a record maintained and monitored. If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a Class Dojo message detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer. Payment should be made within 7 days. The same process will be used if a cheque is not honoured by the bank. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage to prevent arrears amassing. Where a child continues to require meals, the school will establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. It is essential that you speak to us if, for any reason, you are unable to make a payment so that a plan can be put in place.

Having these systems in place, should prevent any parent amassing a debt. However, if a debt exceeds £50 and no payment has been made for 4 weeks, then the school will need to take further action. This will involve a formal letter asking for a meeting to discuss payment.

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 Finance Committee following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.