



## DINNER MONEY ARREARS POLICY

### 1 Introduction

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that procedures are in place for the recovery of outstanding dinner money.

This policy sets out the procedures for dinner money arrears recovery.

### 2 School Meals

Payment for school meals should be made weekly in advance. This would normally be the Monday of the week for which the meals are being paid for.

Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except for those that are entitled to free school meals. If parents/carers believe that their child may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, they should be advised to contact the 'One Stop Shop' or school office. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that parents/carers are encouraged to register for free school meals if they are entitled as this also enables the school to access **Pupil Premium** funding.

Any arrears of dinner money that arise must be pursued by the school on a weekly basis.

On the first day of non-payment, a member of school staff will attempt to contact the parent/carer in person or by telephone to discuss the debt and requesting payment on the following day.

If dinner monies remain outstanding at the beginning of the second week, a reminder letter should be issued to the parent/carers.

If dinner monies remain outstanding at the beginning of the third week, a final warning letter must be issued to the parents/carers. This letter will remind the parents/carers of the previous reminder letter and the current amount outstanding. The letter will also inform the parents/carers that if the debt remains unpaid, the school will refuse to provide a school meal for the child and the parent/carers **will need to provide the child with a healthy packed lunch or be taken home for lunch** and requests contact with the school to discuss any problems in making the outstanding payment.

If dinner monies remain outstanding at the beginning of the fourth week, a notification of withdrawal of school meals letter must be issued to the parents/carers. This letter will give the parents/carers a final opportunity to clear the outstanding debt. The letter will inform the parents/carers that if the debt is not cleared in full, the child will not be provided with a meal with effect from the following Monday. The parents/carers will be advised makes alternative arrangements for the child's lunch.

Arrangements can be made to clear any dinner money debt by instalments, however, the amount should be acceptable to both the school and the parents/carers.

Social services may also be informed that these parents/carers are not carrying out the 'responsibility of care' by failing to provide food for their child at lunchtime. It is not the responsibility of the school to provide lunch for pupils, it is the responsibility of the parents/carers to provide a meal, either a school lunch, packed lunch or to take the child home.

This debt management policy in respect of dinner monies includes the refusal to provide a school meal when the parents/carers have not paid or made contact with the school and payment has been outstanding for 4 weeks. This policy is intended to keep debts to a minimum and thereby avoid the cost of a referral to solicitors for legal action or debt collection agency, or to write-off the debt if there is no realistic prospect of debt recovery being successful. This course of action would not be cost-effective with the amounts concerned.

At each meeting of the Finance Committee of the Governing Body, the Headteacher is required to inform the Governors of any outstanding dinner money debt.

### **3. Conclusion**

We hope that by implementing this policy, we are able to help parents/carers manage school dinner money effectively, reduce the administration time and costs involved chasing dinner money and general debts and at the same time ensure that money which should be spent on the children's education is not used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers.