



School Meal Provisions and Debt Management Policy

Policy written by S. Gore – School Business Manager

Policy Written: August 2021

Accepted by Governors: *J. Carter* signed (chair)
J. M. Dermott signed (Head)

Shared with parents: September 2021

**By living out our Catholic faith
TOGETHER
we ENCOURAGE
and ACHIEVE
"I have called you by name"**

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Statement of intent

Atherton Sacred Heart Primary School is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils, regardless of financial circumstances, and has established the following policy and procedures to ensure that no child is discriminated against.

The governing board is responsible for ensuring that school meal provisions are accessible to all pupils and that procedures are in place for the recovery of any outstanding debt.

This policy has been adopted to ensure that there is a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents whose children eat school meals. The responsibility falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment.

The school budget will be directly affected by any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered, thereby directly affecting all pupils in school. We are confident that every parent will agree that this is unacceptable, and we encourage that all parents give this policy their full support.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014
- DfE (2018) 'Charging for school activities'
- DfE (2020) 'Governance handbook'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints and Compliments Policy
- Debt Management Policy
- School Food Policy

2. Charging for school meals

School meals are available to pupils at a cost of £2.38 per meal or at no cost to those in receipt of FSM entitlement – see details of FSM entitlement [below](#).

Payment for school meals are made at the **beginning of the week** that the meals are required and can be made weekly, fortnightly, monthly or when the account nears zero. Payment can be made using **ParentPay or cash to the school office**.

3. Free school meals (FSM)

There is a statutory right to FSM for families who meet nationally set criteria. It is important that all parents who qualify take up their entitlement so that their child can receive a school meal each day.

Parents who receive one or more of the following support payments are entitled to receive FSM (assuming the parent does not receive working tax credit):

- Universal Credit
- Income support
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance
- Income-related employment and support allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of pension credit
- Child tax credit (provided they are not also entitled to working tax credit and have an annual gross income of no more than the current threshold)
- Working tax credit run-on – paid for four weeks after they stop qualifying for working tax credit

As of 1 April 2018, all existing FSM claimants will receive FSM whilst Universal Credit is rolled out. This will apply even if their earnings rise above the new threshold during that time. In addition, any pupil who is eligible for FSM after 1 April 2018 is protected against losing FSM during the Universal Credit rollout period.

Once Universal Credit is fully rolled out, any existing claimants that no longer meet the eligibility criteria at that point (because they are earning above the threshold or are no longer a recipient of Universal Credit) will continue to receive FSM until the end of their current phase of education. The Universal Credit rollout is currently expected to be completed in March 2022.

A pupil is only eligible to receive FSM when a claim for FSM has been made on their behalf and their eligibility has been verified by the school.

The responsibility for checking the eligibility of applicants for FSM rests with the school; however, the school may choose to work with the LA to carry out these checks via their eligibility checking system.

The school and LA, where appropriate, should record the date on which they receive the initial application for FSM from a parent. Eligibility checks are carried out promptly to ensure that the most accurate and up-to-date information is being utilised.

4. Management of school meal debts

Where there is an outstanding payment yet to be received and the acceptable credit period has been surpassed, a payment reminder will be created outlining the value and reason for the debt, as well as the debtor's identity.

Upon creating the invoice and stipulating a date on which it must be paid by, the school acknowledges that the debt has been set up via letter or email.

Stages for the management of debt:

Stage 1 (Debt approaching £11.90 – 1 week of meals)

Initial verbal/email reminder – e.g. informal correspondence via telephone notifying the person of debt (date and time should be officially recorded).

Stage 2: (Debt over £11.90 – 1 week of meals)

First formal written reminder – an official, dated letter addressed to the debtor is written up after the first informal reminder and acknowledges that it took place. If payment is not made **within 1 day** of the letter being issued, a reduced menu will be offered.

Stage 3: (Debt over £23.80 – 2 week of meals)

Second formal written reminder – this is sent one week after the second reminder, citing the details of both previous reminders and stating that concerted efforts have been made to make the person aware that an outstanding debt is overdue. **At this point, a packed lunch will be need to be provided from home – no further meals will be served.**

If these reminders are not responded to, another letter is sent to the debtor advising them that the case has been referred to the school's legal advisors and governing board. These parties agree on a timeframe for a repayment or, if necessary, a payment plan for separate instalments.

The school expects that the debt should be repaid as soon as possible, particularly after repeated reminders; however, this can be negotiated at the discretion of the governing board.

If there is a case where the debtor is deemed to be refusing to pay without sufficient reason, the school will consider involving the school's legal services to resolve the issue and recuperate owed funds.

5. Exceptional circumstances and remissions

The school ensures that parents of pupils are aware of the help the school can extend to those in financial difficulty. Parents who may be eligible for remissions are those in receipt of any of the benefits outlined in [section 3](#) of this policy.

In a case where there is, or it is suspected that there is, an overdue debt from a family who may qualify for remissions, details of the different types of bursaries available should be sent to the debtor in question.

The governing board may decide to waive or reduce the outstanding debt in these circumstances but is not guaranteed. This is considered and agreed on a case by case basis and will not be used to evaluate other future cases.

6. Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the governing board and headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2022.

Appendix A: Reminder letter



Atherton Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Lodge Lane, Atherton, Manchester. M46 9BN

Headteacher: Mr I McDermott

enquiries@admin.athertonsacredheart.wigan.sch.uk

01942 883429

FAO Parent / Carer of:

Date:

What do I need to do?

Bring the outstanding amount owing for school meals up to date.

You have £ outstanding for school meals, which needs to be cleared **within 1 day** of date of this letter.

Why am I receiving this letter?

We contacted you on .../...../..... to inform you that the amount owing was approaching more than £11.90 (1 week of meals).

What happens next?

If payment is not made within 1 day of the date of this letter, a reduced lunchtime menu will be offered. This will include the offer of a sandwich.

If the debt is not paid, the issue will be escalated to the Headteacher. Please pay by ParentPay or Cash to the School Office.

Where do I go if I need help?

If you have any queries or difficulties with the payment of this amount, please contact school immediately and we will endeavour to help.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

School Business Manager

Appendix B: Final reminder letter



Atherton Sacred Heart RC Primary School

Lodge Lane, Atherton, Manchester. M46 9BN

Headteacher: Mr I McDermott

enquiries@admin.athertonsacredheart.wigan.sch.uk

01942 883429

FAO Parent / Carer of:

Date:

What do I need to do?

Bring the outstanding amount owing for school meals up to date urgently.

You have £ outstanding for school meals, which needs to be cleared **within 1 day** of date of this letter, as per our School Meals Provisions and Debt Management Policy.

Why am I receiving this letter?

We have written to you previously regarding your this on/...../..... and/...../.....

Our records indicate that no payments have been received.

What happens next?

Your child will need to bring a packed lunch until the outstanding amount is cleared.

If the debt is not paid within this time, the issue will be escalated to the governing board.

Where do I go if I need help?

If you have any queries or difficulties with the payment of this amount, please let school know and we will endeavour to help.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mr McDermott

Mr I McDermott

Headteacher