

**THE QUEENSWELL FEDERATION**

**DINNER MONEY DEBT POLICY**

**Policy Written by: Spencer Clayton**

**Date Written: May 2023**

**Date for Review: May 2025**



The Queenswell Federation has adopted a strict NO DEBT policy relating to the school meal service. Currently, children in Key Stage 2 and the Nursery have to pay for dinners unless they are in receipt of Free School Meals.

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

No parent would take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school. If parents/ carers believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.

Parents/ carers must pay in advance for the school lunch by sending cash or a cheque in a named envelope or by using our cashless system.

Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However, this debt must be paid next day and future meals must be paid for in advance before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents/ carers must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the Head Of School or designated staff will phone the parent/ carer to ask them to come to school with the money or ask them to pay online immediately. Otherwise they must provide food from home before lunch time or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

If payment of the debt is not received by the next day, the Head Of School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents/ carers to recover the debt. Social services may also be informed that these parents/ carers are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime, as this could be an indicator of neglect.

A member of staff is designated to deal with dinner money debts and payments, supported by other members of the administration team and finance support services.

**Equalities**

At The Queenswell Federation, we believe it is the right of all pupils, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, physical ability or linguistic, cultural or home background to have access to high quality

learning experiences in a stimulating and supportive environment. We will always welcome and celebrate diversity and challenge any form of stereotype or prejudice. We believe that it is the right of parents, carers and children to be included in all aspects of school life, have access to school information and participate in all activities.

## PROCEDURE FOR DINNER MONEY DEBTS

### **Level 1**

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

### **Action 1: send a 'Gentle debt reminder' Appendix 1**

### **Level 2**

Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

### **Action 2: Personal contact**

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to either bring money or pay online or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home at lunchtime.

### **Level 3**

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options,

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

### **Action 3: send Strong debt letter Appendix 2**

The Head Of School will send a final letter.

### **Level 4**

Indicator: The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options,

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

### **Action 4: bring in outside agencies**

LA to advise, small claims court, social services

APPENDIX 1

Dear parent/ carer of xxxxxxxx

Date

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child xxxxxxxx in class xxx

As at xxxxxx your account is showing a debt of **£xxxx**

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. Once the debt is cleared please ensure the account is always in credit. Please send in money to school in a marked envelope.

The cost of a school meal is £xxx per day - £xxx per week.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Head Of School

APPENDIX 2

Dear parent/ carer of xxxxxxxxx

Date

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child xxxxxx in class xxx despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call

As at xxxxxx your account is showing a debt of **£xxx**

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. Please send in money to school in a marked envelope.

The cost of a school meal is £xxx per day - £xxx per week.

Since non-payment for school meals affects the quality of service we offer to the children, we need to ensure that all payments are up-to-date and I am afraid that if the debt is not cleared by the end of this week it will not be possible to provide your child with a school meal. You will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceeding to recover the debt and to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunch time.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Head Of School