

LARKSPUR COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL



SCHOOL MEAL DEBT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

April 2023

Review April 2025

Policy

Larkspur Community Primary School has a clear '**no debt**' policy relating to the school meal service.

Gateshead Council offers Means Tested Free School Meals for those who meet the criteria. More information and the online application form is available at <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/7433/Free-school-meals>. Parents will be notified whether or not their application is successful. School will only be notified if your application is successful.

The government fund universal infant free school meals (UFSM) to all pupils in reception, year 1, and year 2. More information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals-uifsm-2023-to-2024>.

For children who do not receive means tested or universal free school meals, a cost of £2.70 per meal is chargeable on the day or in advance. This should be paid in cash to the school office in a clearly marked envelope. Meals will not be provided without payment in advance except in exceptional circumstances and any debt must be cleared as soon as possible and before any further meals will be provided.

In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the office will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money, provide a packed lunch or take their child home for lunch.

Should there ever be a situation whereby the payment of the debt is not received by the end of the Monday following the week the debt was incurred, the Head Teacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Social Services may also be informed that parents/carers are not carrying out the responsibility of care by providing food for their children at lunchtime.

Procedure

Larkspur School will ensure that parents are aware of this updated policy in the following ways via an email to parents/carers and on the school website.

Key Information

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
3. Children should not be sent to school without a packed lunch, entitlement to a free school meal or payment for a school meal in cash.
4. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch or collect them for a home dinner.

Level 1

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

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

Action 1: Contact the parent by telephone - Appendix A

Level 2

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

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3: Has this parent made contact?

Contact the parent by telephone - Appendix B

Level 3

Indicator: Outstanding debt is not cleared by the Monday after the week the debt was incurred.

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3: Has this parent made contact?

Action 3: Send letter Appendix C

Level 4

Indicator: Outstanding debt is not cleared within 2 weeks.

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3: Has this parent made contact?

Action 3: Send letter Appendix D

Appendix A

Telephone script:

Hello, <child's name> has come to school without a packed lunch but does not have any dinner money. Please can you ensure their dinner money is paid by the end of today or provide a packed lunch before 12pm? Going forward, please can you ensure dinner money is always paid for in advance.

Appendix B

Telephone script:

Hello, as you know <child's name> received a school meal on <date> which has still not been paid for and they have come to school today without a packed lunch and no dinner money. Unfortunately, as you have already taken a lunch without making payment we cannot provide any further lunches until this money is paid. Please can you either provide the outstanding payment before 12pm or bring a packed lunch before 12pm or collect your child for a home dinner at 12pm and return them by 1pm? Please can you pay the outstanding balance as soon as possible.

Appendix C

Letter:

Dear Parent/Carer

As previously discussed with you, <child's name> received a school meal on <date> and you have not made payment for this.

Larkspur Community Primary School operates a no-debt policy relating to the school meals service. Until payment is received no further school meals will be provided.

Please make the outstanding payment immediately. If payment is not received within 2 weeks of the debt being incurred, we will take further action to recover the funds.

If you are unable to make this payment please contact us to discuss this further with a Family Support Worker.

If you think you may be entitled to means tested free school meals, further information and the application form is available here <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/7433/Free-school-meals>.

Thank you for your support in resolving this matter.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Liddle
Head Teacher

Appendix D

Letter:

Dear Parent/Carer

As previously discussed with you and addressed in a letter sent on <date of letter appendix c>, you have outstanding dinner money that has not been paid.

<child's name> received a school meal without payment on <date>.

Larkspur Community Primary School operates a no-debt policy relating to the school meals service. Until payment is received no further school meals will be provided.

Please attend a meeting with the head teacher and family support worker on <meeting date> to discuss when you will be able to clear the debt.

Thank you for your support in resolving this matter.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Liddle
Head Teacher