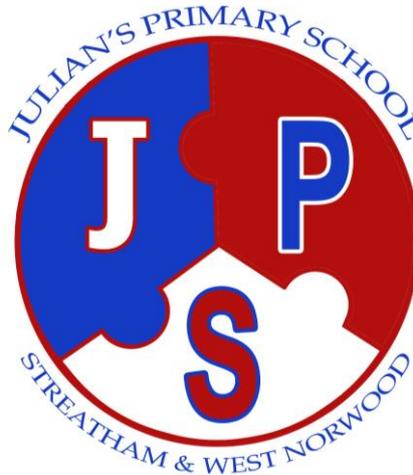

JULIAN'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

School Debt Policy & Procedure



Alison Møller
Executive Headteacher
January 2017

Approved by Governing Body (Signed by Chair)

..... 3rd February 2017

Policy due for review: February 2018

Introduction

This policy relates to contributions for School Meals, Breakfast Club and School Clubs, the only non-voluntary payments the school presently collects. Where appropriate, this debt collection model will be used for any other monies the school wishes to collect in the future.

Julian's Primary School's debt policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the school's Financial Regulations and any other legal requirements.

School Meals

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school meals. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents/carers clearly understand what is expected of them.

The responsibility of ensuring school meal payments are made by parents/carers lies with the school. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, the Governors of Julian's Primary School wish to implement one that ensures meals are paid for, whilst aiding parents/carers during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime.

As from April 2017, Julian's Primary School will adopt a clear 'no debt' policy relating to the school meal service. 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/carer 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. The school will encourage parents/carers to make an application for free school meals, whether the child takes school meals or not, as the school will receive additional funding known as Pupil Premium.

Parents/Carers must pay in advance for the school meal, using Parent Pay. Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a parent/carer genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However this debt must be paid the 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 provide a packed lunch. In a case where one debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the school will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money or a packed lunch before lunch time.

If payment of the debt is not received by the next day, the Executive Headteacher 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 providing food for their children at lunchtime.

We hope that through implementing this debt policy we will help parents/carers manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available.

School meal debts, prior to implementation of this policy, must be collected immediately (**see appendix A**)

When a child is leaving Julian's it is imperative for the school office to check the balance of the child's account and refund any credit balance and obtain any debt outstanding.

Establishing a debt policy

Julian's will ensure that parents/carers are aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents/carers (a paper copy via your child's bookbag and by email)
- The school newsletter
- The school brochure
- The school website

This will ensure that all parents/carers receive the same message in a consistent way. This should be communicated at least once each year, more often when it is first introduced. All parents should be provided with a copy of the policy when their child first joins the school.

Debt policy implementation

Key Information

1. All parents/carers 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. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
4. Parents/Carers who don't want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch

Level 1

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

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

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

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

Action 1: send a 'Gentle debt reminder' Appendix B

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 recorded correctly?

Check 3 Has this parent/carer made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

Someone will phone the parent/carer to ask them to bring in the money owed or bring a packed lunch to school before lunchtime.

Level 3

Indicator: The parent/carer 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 recorded correctly?

Check 3 Has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send strong debt letter Appendix C

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 recorded?

Check 3 Has this parent made contact?

Action 4: Refer outstanding debt to the school Governors

Send payment plan letters Appendix D

School Clubs, excluding Breakfast club (Lunchtime, Pre-school and After-school)

Children may only attend if the fees have been paid. Schools clubs are paid on either half-termly or termly basis and parents/carers are advised by letter (via their child's bookbag) or leaflet what clubs are available and the cost per session. Places are secured as long as payment, for the full period, is received in advance with the consent form.

If the club is cancelled for an unforeseen reason (e.g. Staff absence or other matters outside school control) a refund for the lost session(s) will be made.

The Governing Body acknowledge that, on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which in not to the detriment of the child.

If a child does not attend a club for whatever reason no refunds will be given.

Breakfast Club

Children can attend breakfast club from 8:30am at a cost of £1 per session. This does not need to be booked in advance or paid for in advance. Children must bring £1 on the day.

APPENDIX A

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meal Payments

Child's Name: _____

Dinner Money Rate: Daily £2.00

According to our records (name) has school meal arrears. As per the school's No Debt Policy, this must be paid immediately. No further school meals will be provided until your child's dinner account is in credit.

I would be grateful if payment could be sent in by _____ [date], including monies for any further school meals required. Thank you.

This is a standardised letter that we send out, whenever dinner money is owed, prior to the implementation of the No Debt Policy. I would be grateful if you could arrange for prompt payment of this outstanding debt since the school is unable to provide credit for school meals. Due to the ever increasing debts owing for children's dinners, I must remind all parents that it is imperative that payment for meals is made promptly to the school, in advance of meals being taken.

If payment is not received there is a possibility that the school may not provide lunch for your child/children as the school may be liable for any debt that arises. Schools cannot provide free meals to children who are not entitled to them.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Møller
Executive Headteacher

APPENDIX B

Date:

Parent or carer of _____ [Child's Name]

Re: School Meal Payments

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child _____

Class: __

As at _____ [date] our records show a debt of £_____

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by logging on to your Parent Pay account and making a payment.

NOTE: All meals **MUST** be paid for in advance in accordance with our debt policy (copy enclosed). If you don't wish for your child(ren) to have a school meal please provide them with a healthy packed lunch.

The cost of a school meal is £2.00 per day - £10.00 per week.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Alison Møller
Executive Headteacher

APPENDIX C

Date:

Parent or carer of _____ [Child's Name]

Re: School Meal Payments

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child _____ [name]
Class: [__] despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call.

As at _____ [date] our records show a debt of £_____

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by logging on to your Parent Pay account and making a payment.

The cost of a school meal is £2.00 per day - £10.00 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 unfortunately, 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 proceedings 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 concerns or questions regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Alison Møller
Executive Headteacher

APPENDIX D

Letter 1

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meals

I am writing to advise you that there is an outstanding balance of £____ on _____ [child's name] dinner money account.

It is the policy of Julian's Primary School, that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. As a result of this, I need to advise you that the school will be unable to provide a dinner for (child's name) until this debt is cleared.

A weekly payment plan to pay the debt would be acceptable, i.e. £x per week, and I would appreciate your co-operation in setting this plan up.

Please ensure..... is provided with a packed lunch until this debt is cleared and then school dinners can re-commence. Thank you for your assistance.

If you wish to discuss this further, then please do not hesitate to contact me. I enclose a copy of the school's Dinner Money Debt Policy and procedures for your information.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Møller
Executive Headteacher

Letter 2

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meals

You will recall that I wrote to you a few days ago regarding the outstanding balance on _____ [child's name] dinner money account to the value of £ _____

As you know, it is the policy of Julian's Primary School that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. I am disappointed that you have not been able to start a weekly payment plan as suggested in my previous letter, and would request that you telephone the office to make an appointment to see me to discuss this further.

Thank you for your assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Møller
Executive Headteacher

Letter 3

Date: Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meals

I am disappointed you have not contacted me to make arrangements to recover the outstanding debt of £ _____. In line with the school's Dinner Money Debt Policy and procedures, a copy of which was sent to you with a previous letter, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to the school Governors.

The School Governors will consider the situation and you will be contacted in due course over the action the school intends to take, which could include making a claim in the small claims court.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Møller
Executive Headteacher