



Ashlands Primary School

Payment of School Meal Balances Policy.

"Where every child has the chance to shine"

This policy embodies our Ethos Statement – Safe Children at Ashlands

1. School Meals

Parents are requested to pay in advance for school meals. The cost of meals is reviewed annually, and the current cost of a school meal is on the school website. Parents invited to pay for their child's meals electronically. Cash payments are not accepted.

The Finance Officer will send weekly reminders to parents when the school meal balance falls below the value of one school meal. This is a reminder to top-up the child's school meal account.

- Where no top-up is received and the child continues to receive a school meal, the account will continue to fall into arrears. In this event, we will contact the parent and request they make an urgent payment. If the account remains in arrears, the Headteacher / Business Manager will take appropriate action to collect the sums due. The following procedure will be followed:
- The school office will contact the parent via email requesting them to bring the account back into credit. As part of this email the parent will be invited to contact the office to make an appointment to discuss a payment plan.
- If there is no response within 7 days the email will be resent as a reminder and if there is no response again a telephone call will be made.
- If the school office has been unable to make contact with the parent, the Business Manager will write to the parent repeating the offer of meeting. At this point it will be stressed that if no contact is made within 7 days then school may have to stop the child having a school dinner. This is the 'last resort' position after school has made repeated efforts to contact the parent to reach a workable solution. In this instance the teacher will check that the child has a packed lunch when they arrive at school and if they do not, the school office will ring the parent and ask that they bring one into school before 12.00pm.
- The Headteacher will make the final decision about withdrawing school meals for any child.

If parents are having difficulty making a payment at any time, we recommend that they contact the school office and arrange a meeting as soon as possible. At this meeting we will endeavour to agree a payment plan that will clear the outstanding debt whilst not accruing further debt. Options will include:

- Arrangements to be made to pay in full.
- Helping the parent make a free school meals application; if they believe they might be eligible.

- Reduce further debt occurring by asking that the child brings a packed lunch.
- Arrange a payment plan which a parent can manage i.e. an agreed amount to be paid at set times.

2. Debt Recovery.

Where the parent does not respond to the above forms of communication school will have no alternative but to refer the matter to our legal services advisors for debt recovery.

We will support our parents by giving them contact details for organisations that can help with budgeting and debt advice such as Citizen's Advice Bureau or Little Lane Children's Centre. We will also try to ensure the agreed payment commitments are manageable for the family.

3. Refunds.

On rare occasions it may be necessary to make a refund. If there are other amounts owing to school for the child, or for siblings, any refund will be used to offset that debt. If no other balances are outstanding a refund may be given electronically, upon application to the School Office.

Approval / Review:

Approved by Governors: December 2022

Review period: Annually

Next Review: December 2023