



Dinner money policy

CHAT Academies

December 2017

Dinner money policy

All parents / carers must set up an account with our electronic payment system (e.g. *ParentPay*) through which they will be charged for any school activity for which there is a charge. This includes charges associated with school dinners. Office staff will be able to advise and assist parents who may have difficulties in setting up an account. The office will make alternative arrangements to collect payments should the electronic system be unavailable.

Parents **must** ensure that their account is always in credit. We have a strict policy of no debts on accounts.

On the occasions where a refund has been approved, this will be issued back via our electronic payment system (e.g. *ParentPay*).

Regardless of whether they choose that they receive a school dinner or a packed lunch, we encourage all parents / carers to assess if their children are entitled to *Free School Meals* because where they are shown to be eligible, the academy can claim extra government funds that can be spent on additional school resources for our pupils.

An assessment as to whether a child is entitled to a free school meal is usually made when they join the academy. If parents are unsure of their entitlement or if circumstances have changed they need to be re-assessed, the academy office can be contacted and they will be able to advise and assist. All applications for free school meals are treated with the strictest confidence.

As amendments can take up to 5 school days to implement, parents should notify the academy office as soon as practicable if they wish to change their lunch arrangements from school dinner to packed lunch or vice versa regardless of whether they are entitled to a Free School Meal

School dinners

Where a pupil is not entitled to a free school meal, the cost of the meal is charged via our electronic payment system for each day the pupil attends the academy.

Where a child is marked as absent from school on the attendance register, parents will not be charged. This will be recorded as '*attendance cancellation*' on the statement. Pupil absence is recorded in line with our [Attendance policy](#) (available on our website).

The academy office will monitor any accounts that are in debt. Once a debt becomes a concern to the academy office, parents / carers will be contacted via texts / e-mails to remind them that there is overdue payment which must be settled.

If the academy office has not received a satisfactory update or payment after five working days, the matter will be referred to the Head of Business & Administration.

During this period, no further school meals will be provided to the pupil until the debt is cleared. The parent / carer will be expected to provide their child with a packed lunch during this time.

Should a parent / carer send their child to the academy with no packed lunch they will be contacted by the office in order to remind them to bring one in that day. If the parents / carers cannot be contacted or do not provide a lunch, then the pupil will be provided with a basic meal. Failure to provide packed lunch over three or more days will be flagged as a safeguarding issue and will be referred to our safeguarding team.

Packed lunch

The parents / carers whose children usually bring in a packed lunch will be contacted should their child arrive without one and will be reminded they need to arrange to bring one in that day.

Where parents / carers are contacted but are unable to return to the academy with a packed lunch, the office will give them the option of the academy providing their child with a school dinner for that day. The parent / carer will be charged.

Where parents cannot be contacted or do not agree to the alternative of a school dinner for which they will be charged, then the pupil will be provided with a basic meal. The frequency this occurs will be monitored.

Pupils whose parents / carers have chosen to provide them with a packed lunch where they would otherwise be entitled to a Free School Meal will be provided with a school dinner on the occasions where the packed lunch has been forgotten and the parent is unable to be contacted. The frequency this occurs will be monitored as regular Free School Meals may be a suitable alternative.

Safeguarding

Our academies have a statutory duty of care towards its pupils and it should be noted that, where appropriate, families may be referred to our safeguarding team.