



Allendale Primary School

Policy regarding Non Payment of Monies in relation to Food provision. (School lunches and breakfast club)

The aim of this policy is to:

- make sure all children are fed at lunchtime
- ensure all school meals are paid for
- avoid parents amassing debts
- provide a consistent approach to debt recovery

Background:

School lunches are provided from the schools budget. If outstanding debts are allowed to be incurred, then it is the schools budget that has to pay for them. This then reduces the amount of money that could be available and spent on the children's education. Parents can pay for school meals in advance using cash or cheque on the first day of the school week. (Parents can also pay in advance half termly or termly if they choose to budget in this way or register for direct debit through the Live Kitchen).

If you are entitled to Free School Meals your child will be given a school lunch free of charge (or a packed lunch if out on a visit) - please contact the school office for appropriate procedures if you believe your child may qualify for Free School Meals.

The schools meal service is no different to any other business arrangement and the meals must be paid for by someone. Parents can easily relate to the situation whereby they cannot take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given a meal without payment. Free School meals are only there for those who qualify for them. It necessarily follows that those who wish to claim free school meals, will be required to present relevant documentary evidence to the school, so that entitlement can be confirmed. It is the responsibility of the person claiming free school meals, to alert the school to any change in their benefits or circumstances. Therefore there should be no excuses for non-payment. Children in Reception, Y1 and Y2 are automatically entitled to free school meals through the universal offer.

Debt Recovery Procedures:

The School is responsible for its own budget and this is managed by the Head Teacher and the Governing Body working together. Therefore efficient budget monitoring procedures are in place to ensure that the school recovers any outstanding debts. The school intends to maintain a strict approach to managing their school meals policy. The process to be adopted will be staged and each element is outlined in turn below:

STAGE 1

First day of no dinner money

If a child has no dinner money they will be provided with a school meal and office staff will record this accordingly. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school will grant a debt allowance of 1 week. However this debt must be paid the next school week and future meals must be paid for in advance, before any meal is provided. Parents will receive a letter in the format below, confirming that no dinner money was produced for that particular week. This will be sent home with your child.

Allendale Primary School

Date:

Class:

Dear Parent / Guardian

School Lunch Money

I note from our records that school lunch money for your child (Name) has not been received this week.

Therefore your account is showing a debt of £ 10.50.

I would be grateful if you could send £21.00 in to school with your child on Monday to cover the cost of these meals and advance payment for next week.

Weekly instalments of £10.50 should then be paid each Monday morning in advance either by cash or cheque made payable to the school.

In future, there is the option to register with the live kitchen to pay via direct debit.

Thank you.

Mrs Alison Hawkins
Head Teacher

Continued Non- Payment

The Head Teacher will contact the parents informally inviting them into school to discuss any financial difficulties the family may be experiencing. Where the Head Teacher considers they have sufficient evidence, an individual debt repayment plan may be considered. This is at the Head Teachers discretion in all instances.

STAGE 2

Further Continued Non- Payment

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case whereby a requested debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the Head Teacher or an allocated member of staff, will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with money or sandwiches.

Parents will be required to settle their outstanding debt immediately.

If parents continue to send their children to school without payment for a school lunch, but with an expectation that a lunch will be provided, the following letter will be issued and posted to the home address, as well as being placed in their child's book bag:

Allendale Primary School

Date:

To the Parent / Guardian of:

Class:

Dear Parent/Guardian

School Meal Money Outstanding

I note from our records that various payments remain outstanding for (insert child's name). It is important that our accounts balance and are reconciled. I have therefore detailed below the various amounts outstanding and I would be grateful if you could arrange payment by (insert date). Please provide (child's name) with a Packed Lunch from (insert date) until the account is brought up to date. Please note that should the account fall back in to deficit I will be asking you to provide packed lunches for (child's name) until the end of the academic year.

- Insert details of amounts owed.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have difficulty in paying the total amount due. If payment is not received and you fail to contact me to discuss this by (insert date one week from now) I will be left with no alternative other to pass on your details to Northumberland County Council's Legal Department.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Alison Hawkins
Head Teacher

STAGE 3

Further non-payment

If non-payment still continues then the school will send out the following letter to the relevant parent / carer. At this point in time the school will give serious consideration as to whether a referral needs to be made to other services within Northumberland County Council.

Allendale Primary School

Date:

To the Parent / Guardian of:

Class:

Dear Parent/Guardian

School Meal Money Outstanding

Following my later dated (insert date) (copy attached), I note that the amounts owed by yourselves to date, regarding your child (name) are (insert amounts) and remain outstanding.

This is unacceptable and as from today you must provide a packed lunch for your child. School will be unable to provide your child a school lunch until all outstanding debts are paid.

Please also be aware that I am considering contacting the Legal Department at Northumberland County Council and the Education Welfare Officer regarding this matter.

You also need to be aware that failing to provide a lunch for your child may be perceived as not meeting their basic needs and could lead to Children's Services being informed.

As a matter of urgency, I would be grateful if you could please make an appointment to discuss the contents of this letter with either myself or a member of school staff accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Alison Hawkins
Head Teacher

If at this point, the parent chooses to settle any outstanding debts, they will be informed in writing that if in the future their child should require a school lunch this must be paid for in advance.

STAGE 4

Further non-payment

At this stage the school will be left with no option other than to make referrals as they deem appropriate. A repeated failure by a parent or carer to ensure their child receives a school meal, could result in social services involvement under the category of neglect. If a child were to attend school and be injured as a direct result of such neglect, then the school would not accept any liability. If the school has any concerns about a child's ability to participate in activities whilst on or off site, then they will reserve the right to withdraw the child from such activities as a safety precaution. A continued failure to comply or engage with the school will result in the following letter being sent out to parents / carers.

Allendale Primary School

Date:

To the Parent / Guardian of:

Class:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Outstanding School Meal Debt

Unfortunately you have refused to engage with me despite the letters sent to you on (insert date) I take the view that I have been left with no option other than to contact Children's Services today. I intend to inform them that school cannot provide a free school lunch for your child and that you are failing to provide a Packed Lunch as requested. Therefore your child will be present at school from 8.50am until 3.00pm without sustenance. This is an unacceptable situation and I believe potentially puts children at risk. You should be aware that if your child were to injure themselves due to lack of food, any negligence could be inferred from you failing in your duties as Parent / Carer. The school will not accept any liability in such cases.

I am disappointed that you choose not to engage with me as we value the relationships we have with parents. I don't believe that this is in (child's name) best interests and would ask you to consider their well being.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Alison Hawkins
Head Teacher

Breakfast Club

If a parent is involved in debt recovery procedures, then their child will only be eligible to attend Breakfast Club once payment is received in advance.

Policy Availability

A copy of this policy will be made available as follows:

- A letter to parents
- The schools Newsletter.
- The schools Website.

The school reserves the right to amend this policy on a regular basis to ensure its fair application to all pupils and parents / carers alike. If any parents are in doubt about the contents of this policy they should contact the school immediately.

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Dated: March 2015

(Head Teacher)