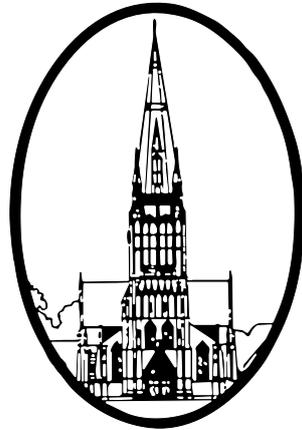


St. Mary's C. of E. Primary School

'Through God's love, we strive to be the best we can be.'



School Meals Debt Policy

Revised: March 2019

Review date: March 2021

Mission Statement and Values

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“Through God’s love, we strive to be the best we can be.”

St Mary’s is an inspiring and creative school which fosters a love of learning as well as developing skills for life. We strive to enhance every child’s moral, spiritual, intellectual, social and physical well-being and celebrate every child’s gifts.

As a faith school we hold **love** at the centre of all we do. This and the following values reflect the ethos of our school.

Respect – ourselves, each other and our environment

Courage – to stand up for what is right, overcome our fears and embrace new challenges

Truth – in the choices we make and our dealings with family, friends, school and community

Hope – that inspires us to look forward in confidence to a better life for all

Introduction

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to registering for Free School Meals, payment of school dinners and debt management by parents whose children take school dinners. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

Occasionally we may have to make a decision to whether a child should be refused a meal in school, if there has been no payment made. However, the school meals service is not different to any other business and the meals must be paid for someone.

Parents should be able to relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying. Yet a minority of parents in the school expect us to provide food for their children without paying for it. The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals, there should be no excuses. If a parent is having difficulty in completing the online Free School Meals application, then parent need to speak to the school office staff who may be able to help with the completion of the form.

You can apply for Free School Meals via the Hackney Learning Trust website;
<https://www.learningtrust.co.uk/content/apply-free-school-meals>.

It is very time consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for money – by letter, phone call or in person. It is also uncomfortable for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on the relationship between school and home of which we want to avoid.

The Governing Body of St Mary's C of E Primary School work hard to ensure the school has everything it needs ensure your child receives and good education and will not tolerate using the school budget to pay for school dinner debt incurrent by parents/carers. The budget is there to provide staff, resources etc.

The school will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parent
- Reminder in the school's newsletter
- The schools website
- Emails

Payment for school meals

- All payments must be paid through Parent Pay
- The school operates a cashless system from school meal payments
- The cost of a school dinner is currently £2.20 per day
- School dinners are payable one week in advance
- Parents may pay for a half-term/term in advance if more convenient either online vis Parent Pay or at a local Pay Point (you will need a payment card for this service, please ask at the office)
- If children are absent their dinner money is credited the following week
- Notification of a change in meal arrangements from packed lunch to school meal. Or vice versa must be received **6 weeks in advance due to the food ordering time scales**
- Once a commitment is made to having school meals, parents will be liable to pay for them until the 6 weeks' notice is given to change

- If a child does not have a packed lunch and is given a school meal, parents must pay for the meal on the same day or the following morning at the latest (except for children registered for Free School Meals)

Free School Meals

Reception class, Year 1, and Year 2

All children starting school in the reception class, Year 1, or Year 2 will get a free meal at school regardless of income. However, even if your child is in one of these year groups we still need you to apply for free meals if you are receiving benefits.

This will allow your school to claim important extra funding that will benefit your child. Schools get extra funding, known as the 'Pupil Premium', for every child registered as eligible for a free school meal if their parents are receiving benefits. Schools use this money for activities such as art therapy, booster classes, educational trips, and after school clubs.

Nursery class, Years 3 to Year 6

Parents of children attending school nursery, Years 3 to 6 in Hackney will have to pay for school meals, unless they are receiving benefits.

Parent or carers who are in receipt of certain benefits may be entitled to Free School Meals. These include:

- Income support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- NASS support
- Guarantee element of State Pension
- Child Tax Credit, provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Working Tax Credit for the four weeks after employment ends
- Universal Credit, provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400

- Asylum seekers can apply for free school meals if they have a NASS number.

Parents need to be aware that;

- St Mary's has a NO DEBT policy relating to school meals and clubs.
- Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for in advance (except those entitled to free school meals).
- We request that all parents give this policy their full support. If debts are incurred, the school has to pay for the meals eaten. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education has to be used for debts incurred by parents.
- The school meal service is no different to any other meal provider. Like you would purchase food for meals at home or McDonalds for example; you have to pay for school meals in advance.
- If a parent genuinely forgets to pay, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. This debt must be paid for the next day and future meals must be paid for in advance before any meal is provided.
- If the debt is not cleared, parents MUST either provide a packed lunch or take their child home for lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received, nor a packed lunch provided, the parent will be phoned to take the child home for lunch or provide a packed lunch, until debt and advance payment of school meals is made.
- If a reasonable arrangement to clear a debt cannot be made, the school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to secure payment.
- If you have a problem with payment of school dinners you must arrange an appointment with a senior member of staff to discuss options for lunch and so that the school can try and support you with particular financial difficulties or personal circumstances preventing payment.

When a school dinner debt is raised on the system we will:

- Send a reminder text for immediate payment.
- Call home to make alternative lunch arrangements with you

If a school dinner debt remains we will:

- Send a letter for immediate payment
- Send reminder letter for immediate payment
- Refer to legal department for collection.

It is your responsibility as a parent/carer to pay for school dinners in advance and although school will try and make contact with you about payment we reserve the right to refer to the legal team at any time.