

School Meals Debt Policy

This policy has been written to ensure we adopt a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. It has been written in a clear manner to ensure parents/carers understand what is expected of them.

It is no longer the responsibility of the Local Education Authority to deal with dinner money debt: the responsibility now falls to the school in following up on non-payments. (This is not because the schools are now academies – this is for all schools). The school budget will have to be utilised to fund this procedure.

The Primary First Trust has adopted a NO DEBT policy relating to the provision of school meals.

The School Meals Service is no different to any other business and meals have to be paid by someone. Parents/carers would not take their child to a restaurant and expect a meal free of charge. However, a minority of parents/carers do expect the school to provide a meal for their children without paying for it.

The Free School Meal (FSM) system is available for parents who cannot afford school meals. If you think you may qualify for FSM entitlement, please contact the school office for further details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important you use it if you qualify. Your child will then have a right to a meal each day.

The Primary First Trust believes that a “zero tolerance” approach is the fairest system. We are sure parents will support the school and ensure all the school budget is spent for the benefit of our pupils.

The Primary First Trust will ensure parents are aware of this policy by:

- A copy of the policy in our induction pack when children join the school
- A letter to parents (appendix 1)
- Reminders in our newsletters
- The school website

THE PRIMARY FIRST TRUST

Date 5th July 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: School Meals Policy

Lessness Heath Primary School, from 1 September 2017, will adopt a **NO DEBT** policy relating to school meals. This is to ensure that the school budget is used for the benefit of all our pupils and efficient running of the school. Please read the attached policy for a fuller explanation of this.

The school budget has to be used to clear debt incurred by parents ordering meals for their child and not paying for them. As a consequence money, which should be spent on our children's education, is being used to fund unpaid meals. I am certain that you would agree this is unfair and unacceptable.

If you think you are entitled to Free School Meals, please ask at the school office for a form. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you as much as we can with your application.

School lunches **must be paid for in advance**. Please make your payment online on Sunday evening using the Agora system. Alternatively, you may pay half-termly in advance.

If a parent/carer genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school will contact you (using the contact numbers you have provided to the school office) and grant a one-off debt allowance of one meal. However, this debt **must** be paid the next day and further meals for the week paid in advance.

If the debt is not cleared, then you must provide your child with a packed lunch. Should the debt payment not be received or a packed lunch provided, parents/carers will be contacted and given the option to either come to school with payment, to provide sandwiches or take their child home for lunch.

If payment of the debt is not received, the Primary First Trust may decide to bring legal proceedings to recover the debt. Social Services may also be informed if parents/carers are not providing food for their child at lunchtime.

I would also like to highlight that should your child go home *after* 10am and you have ordered a school meal, this meal will have to be paid for; the number of meals required for that day will have been provided to the caterers and food ordered accordingly. This meal will have to be paid for and a credit for a "missed" meal will not be given.

I am certain that by implementing this debt policy we can help parents manage school dinner money better and, at the same time, ensure that the school budget is used directly for our children's education.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any concerns.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher