



Discovery Schools Academy Trust

February 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

School Meals Debt Policy & Procedure

Discovery Schools academies trust has adopted a clear 'no debt' policy relating to the school meal service which will begin 5th January 2015. All schools in the Trust have always supported parents and carers with dinner money payments, but this has resulted in the trust group currently having a significant school meal debt. This has recently reduced from an incredible £3500 debt due to the effective work of the staff in our DSAT school offices.

Previously the Local Authority would deal with any parent who owes dinner money for their child, but they have stopped doing this for all schools meaning that if debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. So currently, money which should be spent on the children's education to buy books, paper, pencils, paint etc. has to be used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable, it cannot carry on and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

As most parents appreciate, no-one would take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school. If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.

With the introduction of Universal Infant Free School Meals for all Key Stage One children in September 2014 (Reception, Years 1 and 2), the meal cost for this group of children is reimbursed to schools by the Education Funding Agency (EFA). However, if these children incurred a debt prior to the government initiative starting, this will not be paid by the EFA and any outstanding amounts must be paid back to the school immediately.

Therefore, Discovery Schools Academies Trust Governors have agreed to change the School Meal Debt Policy and Procedure and bring it in line with other local schools. Parents and carers must pay in advance for the school meal by paying via ParentPay; this can be paid for weekly, monthly or at the start of each term. Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one meal. However, this debt must be paid by the next day and future meals must be paid in advanced before any meal is provided.

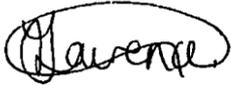
If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the office will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money; otherwise they must provide sandwiches before lunch time.

Should there ever be a situation whereby the payment of the debt is not received by the next day; the Headteacher of the school then has the authority to reserve the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Social Services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are able to help parents manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money in the school budget is for children's learning.

If you have any concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T Lawrence', enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

Miss T Lawrence
Headteacher

School Meals Debt Policy & Procedure - March 2013

Establishing a debt policy

Discovery Schools Academies Trust schools will ensure that parents are aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- The school's newsletter
- The school website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This should be done at least once each year, more often when it is first introduced. All parents should be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school.

Debt policy implementation

Key Information

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
3. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
4. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lu

Level 1

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3: Does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: Send a 'Gentle debt reminder' Appendix A

Level 2

Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly? Check 3: Has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to bring in the money owed or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime.

Level 3

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options,

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3: Has this parent made contact?

Action 3: Send Strong debt letter Appendix B

Level 4

Indicator: The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options,

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded?

Check 3: Has this parent made contact?

Action 4: Notify School Food Support Service

Complete Notification of School Meal Debt Form and send to School Food Support Service immediately.

APPENDIX A

Parent or carer of _____

Address:

Date: _____

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child _____ Class: _____

As at _____ our records show a debt of £_____.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by sending cash or a cheque in a clearly marked envelope into the office.

NOTE: All meals MUST be paid for in advance in accordance with our debt policy (copy enclosed). If you don't wish child(ren) to have a school meal please provide them with a healthy packed lunch. The cost of a school meal is £2.25 per day - £11.25 per week.

Enclosed is a Free School Meals application form for Parents and Guardians, detailing the eligibility criteria and how to apply for free school meals.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Miss T Lawrence
Headteacher

APPENDIX B

Parent or carer of _____

Address:

Date: _____

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child _____ Class: _____
despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call.

As at _____ our records show a debt of £- _____.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by sending cash or a cheque in a clearly marked envelope into the office or by crediting your Parentmail account.

The cost of a school meal is £2.25 per day or £11.25 per week.

Since non-payment for school meals affects the quality of service we offer to the children, we need to ensure that all payments are up-to-date and I am afraid that if the debt is not cleared by the end of this week it will not be possible to provide your child with a school meal. You will need to make your own arrangements

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt and to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunch time.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Miss T Lawrence
Headteacher

