



Kings Road Bad Debt Policy

Author	Pauline Grady
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When this policy was ratified by governors	

Kings Road Primary School has adopted a clear no debt policy relating to school meals and school trips etc.

If debts are incurred the school budget is used to pay for them. This means that money, which should be spent on the children's education, is used to pay for debts incurred. We request that all parents/carers and staff give this policy their full support.

It is time consuming for office staff to chase for outstanding payments for dinner monies owing via telephone calls, text messages, letters, or in person. It also can be embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally have a negative effect on the relationships with staff and families.

The Free School Meal (FSM) system is available for all parents/carers who are in receipt of certain state benefits. If, a parent/carer think they may qualify for FSM entitlement, they should contact the school office for further details or contact the Free School Meals Team in Trafford. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that parents use it if they qualify to make sure that their child receives a free school meal each day.

The Governing Board of Kings Road Primary School believe that a 'zero-tolerance' approach is the fairest system. We understand that it may seem a very hard stance to take as there has been a culture of debt tolerance. However, going forward, we are sure that all parents/carers and staff will support the school to ensure all the school budget is spent to benefit of all our pupils.

We will ensure that parents are aware of this policy by:

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

Payment for School Meals

Parents/carers and staff must pay **in advance** for school lunch by Evolve – please speak to office staff if there are any issues with on-line payment.

Nobody will be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for except pupils that are entitled to 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 following morning and future meals must be paid in advance before any further meal is provided.

If a debts are not cleared parents/carers must provide a packed lunch until such time that the debt be cleared. In a case where a debt payment not received, nor a packed lunch provided, the School Office will phone the parent/carer to ask them to come to school with the money or packed lunch before lunchtime.

Unpaid accounts – Where there is an unpaid account the parents/carers will receive a phone call from the office to remind them, detailing how much is outstanding. If payment is not received a letter will be sent. (Appendix 2).

If payment still not received, a further letter will be sent detailing the consequences of non-payment and a final date by which payment must be made. (Appendix 3).

The school will work closely with parents/carers and staff in working out a form of payment plan to help resolve the situation.

Consequences of Non-Payment for Services

If debt is not cleared, the Head Teacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings. Social Services maybe informed that these parents/carers are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their child at lunchtimes. It is **not** the responsibility of the school to provide lunch for pupils; it is the responsibility of the parents/carers to provide a meal, either a school lunch or a packed lunch.

Conclusion

We hope that by implementing this Bad Debt policy we are able to help parents/carers and staff manage their school debts effectively, reduce administration time and costs involved chasing debts and at the same time ensure that school budgets are used correctly for the education of its pupils.

Office Procedural Guide for Bad Debts Policy

At each level of escalation, the following checks must be made:

Check 1: If pupil is the child FSM, are the dates correct?

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

Check 3: Has the person/parent made contact?

Level 1 Indicator: An account goes into debt.

Checks 1 – 3.

Does this parent/carer normally pay on time or is this just a one-off?

Action for Level 1: Phone call from Office Manager first, then if required letter from Head Teacher - Appendix 2

Level 2 Indicator: A dinner/pack lunch is requested again, without debt being paid or non-payment of school trip etc.

Checks 1 – 3.

Action for Level 2: Personal contact

Someone from the office will phone the parents/carers to ask them to either bring money or sandwiches to school before lunchtime.

Level 3 Indicator: Non-compliance with any of these options.

Checks 1 – 3.

Action for Level 3: Send a Second Letter, Appendix 3

The Head Teacher will send a final letter.

Level 4 Indicator: The parents/carers who consistently do not comply with any of these options.

Checks 1 – 3.

Action for Level 4:

Matter to Be Referred to Legal Services for Debt Collection & Social Services where appropriate

Appendix 1- Initial letter to parents on introduction of policy

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: School Meals Debt Policy

Unfortunately, due to an increase of school meals not been paid for on a regular occurrence from 1 September 2019, Kings Road Primary School, has adopted a no debt policy relating to school meals and school activities. This is to ensure that the school budget is used for the benefit of all our pupils and efficient running of the school.

The school budget to date has been used to clear debt incurred by parents ordering meals for their child without payment and not paying for trips\activities. As a consequence, money, which should be spent on children's education, is being used to fund unpaid debts which I am sure you would agree is unfair and unacceptable.

For a fuller explanation regarding the schools position on bad debts, please read the policy which is located on our website www.kingsroadschool.com.

Please ensure that payments for school meals, trips or any other activity is paid via parent pay. If you have any issues or concerns please do not hesitate to contact the office who would be more than happy to support you.

I am certain that by implementing this debt policy, we can help parents/carers manage any outstanding payments better and, at the same time, ensure that the school budget is used directly for our pupil's education.

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

Yours sincerely,

Darren Morgan
Headteacher

Appendix 2- First Letter (School Meals)

Parent or Carer of (Pupil Name)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

According to our records there is an outstanding debt for your child (pupil name) in Class: xx. As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt of £xx.

To prevent using the school's budget to clear your child's debt, please arrange for the outstanding dinner money/trip debt to be paid immediately. Once you have cleared the current debt, I should be grateful if you could ensure that you keep your account in credit. The current cost of a school meal is £2.40 per day or £12.00 per week.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

**Darren Morgan
Headteacher**

Second Letter

Parent or carer of Xxxxx Xxxxxxx

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

I am very concerned at the current level of debt outstanding on your account.

Despite previous correspondence and numerous messages the debt for xx in Class xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt.

School currently has to fund all school meal debts from its budget. It is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of service provided to all pupils is maintained. I am sure that you appreciate the school operates on a limited budget. Therefore, to enable us to provide for the welfare of all children coupled with excellent facilities to the highest standards possible, strict financial control is essential.

This situation of continued debt cannot therefore be allowed to continue. I would ask you to please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately and take steps to ensure your account is kept in credit in the future.

Unfortunately, if the debt is not cleared by xx/xx/xx a school meal will no longer be provided for your child and you must make your own arrangements for your child's lunch. We are happy to discuss arrangements for a payment plan if this would be helpful.

I very much regret that if you do not take steps to resolve the position without delay then the school will have no alternative but to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt together with all costs involved. In addition we will be obliged to inform the local authority that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, the method of payment or require information regarding the procedure for the payment of school meals then please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

**Darren Morgan
Head Teacher**