REAY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Reay school policies support our aims

- *offer a breadth of experiences to all children inside and outside school*
- *reach the highest standards across the curriculum*
- *build self esteem*
- *develop social and emotional intelligence*
- *demonstrate a quality of leadership which embodies inclusion and respect*
-

MEALS AND OTHER DEBT POLICY

This policy has been written to help the school to adopt a consistent approach to debt. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

There should be no debts incurred for school journey or after school clubs as attendance is dependent upon payment requested for the appropriate period being received in full prior to participation.

There have been many discussions around whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. However the school meals service is no different than any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone.

Parents can easily relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to eat out and expect them to be given food without paying, yet a minority of parents expect free food in school. The Free School Meals (FSM) system is there for parents/carers who cannot afford school meals.

The system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach. It may seem a very hard stance in a school where there is a culture of debt tolerance and where we appreciate that may parents and carers strive hard to make ends meet. Although this will be tough to implement it will become easy to maintain once parents understand that the school can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for.

The school is invoiced for meals taken, and it is essential that sufficient funds are credited for these meals into the school's bank account, either by parents paying online or through the cash and cheque deposit process. If there are insufficient funds then schools will be asked to cover the shortfall from their own budget.

Establishing a debt policy

Schools should first discuss this policy with staff and agree its debt policy with governors. Once agreed, schools should make parents aware of this policy. This could be by including it in one or more of the following:

- A letter to parents;
- The school's newsletter;
- The school brochure and
- The school website.

This will ensure that all parents/carers get the same message in a consistent way.

Debt policy implementation

Key Information:

1. All parents/carers 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 parent/carer should send their child/ren to school without money in their account and expect the child/ren to be given a meal;
4. Parents/carers who don't want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take them home for lunch. If parent/carer takes a child home for lunch they must do so within the allotted lunch time and return the child promptly for afternoon classes;

The process of recovery for outstanding amounts will be as follows:

Level 1 (Friday morning)
Indicator: A child's account goes into debt
Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 does this parent/carer normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: send a 'Gentle debt reminder' - Appendix 1

Level 2 (over £20 debt)
Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch provided
Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Send a letter 'over £20 debt' – Appendix 2

Action 3 – Personal contact

- Text message: sent to remind parent/carer to pay or bring in a packed lunch
- Telephone call: call to parent/carer to ask them to either bring money or pay online or bring in packed lunch to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child/ren home at lunchtime.

Action 4 - The Headteacher will send a final letter offering an option to pay and have a meeting

Action 5 – potential for case in the small claims court if debt has not been settled

This policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher and reported to the Resources committee in 3-year-cycle, or earlier if necessary. Any changes and or amendments will be reported to the Full Governing Body (FGB).

Date agreed by ~~FGB~~/Resources Committee/~~Headteacher~~ **May 2019**	**Signature of ~~Chair of FGB/Chair of Resources Committee~~/Headteacher**
Date agreed for review **May 2022**	**Frequency of Review** ~~Annual / Bi-annual /~~ **Three-year cycle**
Responsibility for Review Resources Committee /Headteacher	

Appendix 1

HEADED PAPER

Date

Parents/carers of _____

Dear

Re: School Meal Payments for (child's name),

You are currently in arrears with regard to **(child's name)** dinner money. The arrears position currently stands at **£ xxxx.**

Please can you settle the outstanding amount as soon as possible.

Dinner money accounts should always be in credit and should not go in to debit.

If there is any reason why your child might be entitled to free meals, or if you disagree with the figures you have been given, then please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

p.p Mrs Caroline Andrews
Headteacher

Appendix 2

HEADED PAPER

Date

Parents/carers of:

Dear XXXX,

Re: School Meal Payments for (child's name),

You are currently in arrears with regard to **(child's name)** dinner money. The arrears position currently stands at **£ xxx.**

Please can you settle the outstanding amount as soon as possible.

Until the above debt is settled in full you will need to provide a packed lunch for your child.

Dinner money accounts should always be in credit and should not go in to debit.

If there is any reason why (child's name) might be entitled to free school meals, or if you disagree with the figures you have been given, then please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

p.p Mrs Caroline Andrews
Head Teacher