



Multi Academy Trust

***Dinner Money
Policy***

***White Cliffs Primary College
for the Arts***

Signed by Mrs U Mills, Chairman of the Academy Board:	
Policy adopted and ratified:	19 th May 2017
Policy review date:	31 st May 2020

This policy has been compiled recognising the difficulties placed on school in balancing the social welfare of pupils with the responsibility of managing the School Budget.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers. Every parent/carer will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

No parents/carers would take their child to a café or restaurant and expect to be given food without paying; this same principal 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 with your application.

With immediate effect, the Trust will adopt a strict NO DEBT policy relating to school meals. Money owed affects the schools' overall budgets and must be settled promptly.

The cost of school dinners are payable at least WEEKLY in advance; parents/carers are expected to pay on a Monday each week in a labelled envelope with the name and class of the child and the amount enclosed and given to their child's class teacher.

In the case of absence on a Monday, payment is due on the first day back to school.

Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a child forgets their packed lunch, or a parent/carer genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However, this debt must be paid later that day or by the morning of the following day and future meals must be paid in advance before any other meal is provided.

Any required return of paid monies due to absence will be credited to the child's account for the following week.

If the above guidance is not adhered to by the parent or carer, then the (DRIP) will come into force:

Debt Recovery Initial Procedure



Step 1 – Initial Debt Notification

Within the first 3 days
of non-payment

If a child has received three days of school meals and has incurred a debt of £6 or more without any attempt at payment, the Initial Reminder Letter (see Appendix A) will be sent on the afternoon of the 3rd day.

The parent will need to contact the College **within 3 working days** to either clear the debt or inform the College of how the parent/carer will clear the debt. After 3 days if there has been no response, the child may not be permitted to order a school meal. The parent/carer will be required to provide a packed lunch OR pay the debt in full at the College Office before 12pm.

If there is still no contact from the parent or carer, the College may take steps to arrange for the child to be fed separately and subsequently charge the parent or carer for this meal.

Step 2 – Outstanding Debt Letter

Within the 4 to 6 days
of non-payment

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a healthy packed lunch from that point onwards until the debt is settled in full. The school is not obliged to provide a school dinner where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received; we will therefore act promptly to address any issues at an early stage in order to prevent arrears from accumulating. The **outstanding Debt Letter will be sent out on the fourth day** of non-payment, unless payment is made or a discussion with the parent/carer has taken place about settling the debt before 12pm that day. This letter may also be emailed and a text notification that “An important Letter has been sent” should go to the parent/carer.

If parents fail to send their child to school with a packed lunch OR full payment of all outstanding debts along with advance payment of dinner money for the next week, other arrangements will be made to feed the child separately which will be subsequently charged to the parent or carer.

Step 3 –Letter Requesting Meeting

Within 7 days
of non-payment

If a parent/ carer repeatedly fails to provide a packed lunch or sufficient monies to cover the costs of school dinners by the sixth day, Social Services may be informed that parents/carers are not carrying out their legal responsibility of care by not providing food for their child at lunchtime.

A meeting is arranged with the parent or carer and the Senior Leadership Team and concerned parties to discuss the matter face to face.

From this point, purchasing for school meals for that child will need to be monthly in advance.

Failure to address the debt **within 7 working days** will result in debt recovery procedures and may include consultation with Social Services and other welfare agencies along with the Federation Finance representatives.

Appendix A - Reminder Letter



Date:

Dear (insert parent/carer name here)

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for (insert name of child here) on the following occasion(s) last week:

(insert dates here)

As at (insert today's date here) your account is showing a debt of £??????.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately either through our online payment system using your registered School Gateway account or by sending in the outstanding amount directly to the office **within the next 3 working days.**

If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact the school **within the next 3 working days** to make an appointment to discuss a suitable payment arrangement to clear these arrears.

You may be eligible for financial assistance with dinners via Kent County Council Free School Meals. **If you need any support with submitting an application, please contact the main College office.**

If you have any queries regarding this amount owed, please contact the school office upon receipt of this letter.

Yours Sincerely

Office Administrator

Appendix B - Outstanding Debt Letter



Date:

Dear (insert parent/carer name here)

Our records show that despite previous telephone calls and a written reminder, you have not paid dinner money for (insert name of child here)

As at (insert today's date here) your account is showing a debt of £??????.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. Further school meals will not be provided from this point for your child(ren) until this debt is cleared and you should make suitable alternative lunch arrangements (i.e. provide a packed lunch) until the matter has been resolved.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt. **It is your responsibility, as a parent, to provide a meal for your child every day.** You must either pay for a school dinner or send your child in with a packed lunch.

Failure to provide a meal for your child at school is not acceptable and may lead to the matter being referred to the proper authorities: may include debt recovery agencies and Social Services.

In any event, you should make contact with the College office to **inform us of your actions within the next 3 working days.** If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours Sincerely

Principal – White Cliffs Primary College for the Arts, Dover

Appendix C Final letter requesting meeting



Date:

Dear (insert parent/carer name here)

Our records show that despite previous reminders and actions to resolve the situation, you have not paid dinner money for (insert name of child here)

As at (insert today's date here) your account is showing a debt of £??????.

Your presence is now required at the College to address this matter and a meeting has been arranged for you to attend at the College in order to discuss this serious situation face to face.

You should report to the College office at (insert a time) on (insert a date)

If you are unable to make this appointment, please contact the office **immediately** to reschedule.

Yours Sincerely

Principal – White Cliffs Primary College for the Arts, Dover

Appendix D Dinner Money Arrears Repayment Agreement



Name of Child: _____

Name of Parent/Carer: _____

Class: _____ Amount Owed: _____

Weekly Payment: £ _____ plus £ _____ to clear the above arrears.

Date of Commencement of first payment: _____

I, agree to make the above weekly payments to provide my child with a daily school meal and to clear the outstanding dinner money debt from the above date.

Parent/Carer: _____ Date: _____

Witnessed by (signatures):

Head Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Office Manager: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Pupil Support: _____ Date: _____