



# WINCHMORE SCHOOL

## Debt Policy

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## Debt Policy

### School Meals Debt Policy for Parents

As from **28 June 2010, Winchmore School** ("the School") has adopted a strict NO DEBT policy relating to the provision of school meal. This will in effect mean all money for school meals will need to be paid in advance.

If debts are incurred, then the School will need to consider how the debt can be managed which may mean money which should be spent on its child(ren)'s education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and the School requests that all parents give this policy their full support.

Parent/s must pay in advance for school meals using the payment methods outlined below:

- Credit/Debit Cards Online using ParentPay
- Pay Point Cards (Ask in the office about PayPoint payments)

If parent/s believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals then please contact the School office for further information. The allowance for Free School Meal is a statutory entitlement and should be claimed if a parent(s) child(ren) qualifies. In order to qualify, parent(s) will be required to complete an application form and provide any evidence which may be requested. Free school meal entitlement will only apply from the date the evidence has been received and the application has been approved. It cannot be backdated. The School will support parent(s) with the application.

**Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for in advance or the child(ren) is/are entitled to a free school meal.**

If a parent(s) genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the School may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However this debt must be paid immediately using the above payment method together with a sum for future meals otherwise the School will be unable to provide further meals.

If there are insufficient funds on a child(ren)'s account, then parent(s) will be required to provide a packed lunch for their child(ren). If there is insufficient credit on a child(ren)'s account and a packed lunch has not been provided, the School will contact the parent(s) to ask them what arrangements they have been made to provide their child(ren) with food.

If payment of the debt is not received by **the next school day**, the School reserves the right to begin debt management proceedings against the parent/s to recover the debt. The Local Authority's Children's Services may also be informed that the parent/s are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their child(ren) at lunchtime.

**Where there are genuine cases of hardship, on application to the Headteacher or by School identification, arrangements will be assessed and made on an individual basis.**

The School hope that by implementing this debt policy the school is able to help parent(s) manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available.

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate in contacting **the Head Teacher**.

## **Winchmore School Debt Recovery Policy**

1. The School will actively pursue the collection of money owed to it. If the child(ren) is/are not an adult, the parent(s) of the child(ren) is/are jointly and severally liable for the charge.
  
2. The School Business Manager is required to ensure that:
  - all invoices outstanding are accurately recorded and maintained.
  - there is documentary evidence of all the steps undertaken by the School to recover the debt. This includes recording the dates that invoices and statements were sent, and/or telephone calls and letters that have been made and sent respectively to debtors.
  - for all outstanding debts, a final statement (stamped final notice) is issued to all person(s) liable for the charge. This statement must state "further action will be taken if this account remains outstanding after a period of no less than **one day**."
  
3. The Governing Body must:
  - consider the arrangements for debt recovery
  - recommend the maximum level of debt which any family would be able to incur.
  - approve the school undertaking legal action.
  - include in the minutes of the Governing Body their approval to pursue any outstanding debt.
  - ensure the anonymity of the families involved is preserved at all times.
  
4. Pursuance of Debt  
The School should:
  - not pass onto the debtor any costs incurred in pursuing the outstanding debt
  - give the debtor appropriate notification and time to pay the outstanding charge
  - send the debtor as a minimum a final statement, which states that this is the final notice and that further action will be taken.
  
5. Waiving of Debt  
The Headteacher can waive or reduce the debt, where it is believed the debtor is experiencing financial hardship.  
  
A debt may be written off by resolution of the Governing Body on the recommendation of the Headteacher or delegated person.  
  
A recommendation to write off a debt can be made when all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted, and where it is not cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action.

6. Any action related to an outstanding debt or the waiving/reducing of a debt should be dealt with confidentially between the debtor and the Headteacher.