


Capel-le-Ferne Primary School	
School Dinner Money Policy	
Date agreed by Governors	28.11.2024
Date of next review	November 2026
Further information about policy	This policy should be reviewed every 2 years or following changes to legislation that may impact the policy.
<p>"Learning today for life tomorrow"</p> <p>Our Values: Independence, Creativity, Confidence, Respect</p>	
	

Background

The Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of money for school meals. As this responsibility now falls on the school, The School Dinner Money Policy has been adopted to ensure a consistent and fair approach to all families paying for school meals. Our approach is based on the principal of not allowing any parent or carer to build-up debt. Allowing debt to build can increase stress on individuals and families and directly impacts the schools budget for resources for all pupils as our School budget directly funds any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered.

Provision of School Meals

Our School Meals provider is an independent business and meals they provide have to be paid for. Free School Meals are available for anyone who qualifies and we are committed to supporting families who may be entitled to this. The school office can be contacted in confidence in person or by email or telephone and can help with further information or to talk through any specific circumstances that may be affecting ability to pay for school meals

Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can also be found on Kent County Council's website:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/free-school-meals>

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parents/ carers personal circumstances change the parent/carers must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.50 per day or free to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement.

School meals should be paid for in advance. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

Payment for School Meals

Payment can be made by cash, cheque or online. Online payment should be made through the School Gateway App. Please speak to the school office if any support with this is needed.

Where sending cash or cheque, please send payment to the school in a sealed envelope clearly marked with your child's name and class number, and amount enclosed. This payment should be handed by your child to their class teacher at registration time or by your own agreement. The School will ensure that all dinner money collected is

banked in a timely manner in accordance with the School's Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by audit.

Management of School Meal Debts

In line with our no debt principal, we will take the following approach where payment for a school meal has not been made.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, or if a child's entitlement to free school dinners has ceased, the School will telephone/text the parent/carer in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

The school will allow a meal to be provided where there is a temporary situation. e.g. Lost or forgotten dinner money, temporary hardship etc. Details will be recorded in writing and the outstanding payment should be made to the school at the earliest opportunity.

Where a child continues to require meals without payment, the school will try to establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing circumstances affecting their ability to pay. The school will provide information to the parent/carer and support them to apply for free school meals or arrange for them to speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

Where meals have been provided to the value of £25 for a child or a family, a formal letter will be sent to the parent/carer informing them that they are required to provide their child/children with a packed lunch. If the child/children is/are not provided with a packed lunch, payment has not been made and the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the School will provide a sandwich and a drink only (Appendix letter 1).

The school will make every effort to work with families and we encourage all parents or carers to contact us in confidence as soon as possible if their circumstances are impacting their ability to pay for school meals.

Where the school's action proves unsuccessful in securing the payment of outstanding dinner money, the school will formally write to the parent/carer, explaining that the School is not obliged to provide a school dinner where advance payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received (Appendix letter 2). And will inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

School will periodically report to the Governing Body details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt. This will be in line with other financial reporting. The aim of the School's dinner money policy is to minimise the risk of parents and carers building debt and the school incurring costly referral to debt recovery companies.

The School does reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

All Write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Governing Body following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Example – Letter 1

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)
(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the School's financial records you have not paid dinner money for your child (pupil name) in Class: xx. As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt of £xx.

In order that the school's budget is not used to clear your outstanding balance for schools meals please provide a packed lunch for your child and make arrangements for the outstanding amount to be paid immediately. Once you have cleared the current balance, if you wish your child to receive a school meal I should be grateful if you could make payment in advance and ensure that you keep your account in credit. The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Kent County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/free-school-meals>

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

Anthony Richards

Head Teacher



Appendix – Letter 2

Parent or carer of (Pupil
Name) (Address Line 1)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding school meal debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx in Class xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week.

I would ask that you please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately and ensure your child is provided with a packed lunch. If you wish your child to have a school meal in future please take steps to ensure your account is in credit and remains so.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/free-school-meals>

Since the School 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 the service provided to all pupils is maintained.

The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and 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, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Richards

Headteacher