



Collection of School Meals Money and School Debts Policy

Date Policy was formally adopted	July 2025
Review Date	July 2026
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Chair's Name	Andrea Beard
Chair's Signature	

Introduction

This policy concerns the collection of school meal money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. This policy will be published on the school website and parents/carers advised of the policy when their children start at Rodings Primary School and through periodic reminders.

General Principle

School meals must be paid for in advance. If a child is to have meals for the duration of the week, monies must be received before the start of that week or as we accept children having an occasional meal, monies must be received on the day of the meal.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on all children's education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers. The governing board see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

Free School Meals Entitlement

Children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 receive Universal Free School Meals.

Children in Key Stage 2 will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to Free School Meals. If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the County Council. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying children it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to children where this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing board has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

A system generated email via Arbor will be sent home on every day a meal is ordered with no payment.

A gentle reminder email will be sent home after 10 accumulated meal arrears (see Appendix 1).

A second email will be sent to the parent/carer if the arrears still haven't been cleared two weeks after the first reminder email. This will state that with

immediate effect no further school meals will be provided for their child(ren) and the debt must be cleared within five working days (see Appendix 2).

A final email will be issued four weeks after the first letter if the arrears have still not been cleared. This informs the parent/carer that once the final five working day deadline has expired the debt will be passed onto a debt recovery agency where legal proceedings may begin (see Appendix 3).

The procedure for collecting arrears will be conducted with sensitivity and with the aim of working with the family if there is genuine reason for the arrears accruing. Families that are experiencing financial difficulty will be offered an appointment with the School Business Manager or the Headteacher to come up with an action plan to resolve the debt.

APPENDIX 1

Date: _____

Gentle Reminder Email

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parent/Carer

According to our records your school meals payments are in arrears. The debt amounts to £_____.

Please settle this amount as soon as possible by topping up your account on your Arbor App or Arbor Parent Portal.

If you are experiencing difficulty in paying this bill, please do not hesitate to contact the school to come up with a mutually agreeable plan to clear this debt.

Our Collection of School Meals Money and School Meals Debt Policy is published on the school website in both the 'Policies' and 'School Meals' sections.

Information on who is eligible for Free School Meals is available at: <http://www.essex.gov.uk/education-schools/schools/pupil-parent-support/pages/healthy-living-school-meals.aspx>. If you would like assistance with this, please contact the school office. Parents should note that Free School Meals are only awarded from the date of application and therefore the outstanding debt to school must still be paid.

If you have any queries, please contact the school office.

Kind regards

Mrs A Paget

School Business Manager

APPENDIX 2

Date: _____

Accumulated School Meal Arrears

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parent/Carer

Following our email dated _____ regarding outstanding school meal money, our records show that this has not been paid.

The amount of arrears is now £_____.

If this debt is not cleared immediately, you must provide a daily packed lunch for your child from this point until the debt is cleared. If the debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with the outstanding arrears or to provide sandwiches before lunch time. Please note, no further school meals will be provided until this debt is cleared. Parents cannot send in payment for specific days unless arrears are cleared.

If you are experiencing difficulty in paying this bill, please do not hesitate to contact the school to come up with a mutually agreeable plan to clear this debt.

This debt needs to be paid within five working days by topping up your account on your Arbor App or Arbor Parent Portal.

If you have any queries or wish to discuss this matter please contact the school office.

Kind regards

Mrs A Paget

School Business Manager

Date: _____

Non Payment of School Meal Arrears.

Child's name: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parent/Carer

Our records show that you have not cleared the school meal money arrears for your child(ren) despite previous emails on _____ and _____ by Mrs Paget.

Arrears to date total £_____

In line with the school policy on school meal arrears, a copy of which is published on the school website, I must inform you that if payment is not received within five working days of the date of this letter, the debt will be referred to a debt recovery agency.

I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to Court.

Please settle this amount as soon as possible by topping up your account on your Arbor App or Arbor Parent Portal. Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Mr C Raray

Headteacher

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Term/Abbreviation	Meaning