



# **SOUTH GROVE PRIMARY**

## **DEBT POLICY**

<b>Date Governors Agreed</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> June 2018</b>
<b>Date to be Reviewed</b>	<b>June 2019</b>
<b>Signed by Headteacher</b>	
<b>Signed by Chair of Governors</b>	

SOUTH GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Debt Policy

### Aims

South Grove Primary is 'Empowered to explore, inspired to learn'. Pupils are encouraged to do this by striving 'to be the best that we can be'. We therefore aim to:

- ❖ Educate our pupils to become independent learner;
- ❖ Provide a stimulating, challenging and caring environment;
- ❖ Share an enriched curriculum which ensures continuity, progression and opportunities for all out pupils;
- ❖ Engage pupils actively in all stages of the learning process;
- ❖ Work with families to prepare pupils for life within our community and the wider community;
- ❖ Motivate and inspire out pupils to realise their full potential;
- ❖ Ensure the safety and enjoyment in learning of all out pupils.

These aims are achieved through all school policies and schemes of work. It is realised through effective working partnerships between staff, pupils, parents, governors, other schools, the Local Authority and the wider community.

From May 2017, South Grove Primary School has amended their strict NO DEBT policy relating to the school meal service and Breakfast Club.

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

**No parent would take their child to a café or restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying;** the same applies at school. If parents believe their child might be entitled to Free School Meals, you can apply online by filling in a claim form for Free School Meals on the council website at [www.walthamforest.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals) or by calling 020 8496 3000 and selecting the free school meals option. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that parents use it if they qualify. We will advise parents how to apply if necessary.

From 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017, parent/s must pay in advance for school meals and Breakfast Club by ParentPay on-line or with a barcode at pay points in various shops. (A barcode is available from the school office).

From the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017, children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for in advance on a Monday, except those that are entitled to Free School Meals and those children that qualify for UIFSM (Universal Infant Free School Meals) in Reception, Year 1 & Year 2. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of a day. However, this debt must be paid that day or by the next day and evidence shown that it has been paid.

If the debt for school dinners and Breakfast Club is not cleared and paid for in advance, the school office will telephone the parents and ask them to bring in a packed lunch or to collect them for home dinners. It is the parents responsibility to make sure that dinner and & Breakfast Club money is paid regularly and in advance.

If the debt becomes more than a week, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against the parents to recover the debt. Childrens' Social Care (Social Services) may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

If any parent experiences difficulties with paying for school dinner or Breakfast Club, they should come to the school office where you will be able to speak to someone. Failure to communicate with the school will result in your children not receiving a school meal.

We hope that by implementing this School Meals and Breakfast Club Debt Policy we are able to **help parents manage their school dinner money and Breakfast Club better and at the same time, ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available for the school to spend on the children.**

## **Debt Policy Implementation Flowchart**

### **Key Information**

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school (Appendix 1)

2. From 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 all school lunches and breakfast club must be paid in advance
3. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal or attend breakfast club
4. Parents who do not want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take them home for lunch. Parents with breakfast club arrears should make alternative arrangements until the account is in credit.

## **SCHOOL MEALS**

### **Level 1**

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

*Check 1: is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?*

*Check 2: is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?*

*Check 3: does the parent normally pay on time? Is this just a one off?*

### **Action 1 – Send letter 1 (Appendix 2)**

### **Level 2**

Indicator: a child comes to school, again, without the debt paid or a packed lunch

*Check 1: is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?*

*Check 2: is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?*

*Check 3: has this parent made contact?*

### **Action 2 – Personal Contact**

*Office Staff will telephone the parent to pay the money owed or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home at lunchtime.*

### **Level 3**

Indicator: the parent does not comply with any of these options

*Check 1: is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?*

*Check 2: is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?*

*Check 3: has this parent made contact?*

### **Action 3 – send final Reminder Letter 2 (Appendix 3)**

### **Level 4**

Indicator: the parent consistently does not comply with any of these options

*Check 1: is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?*

*Check 2: is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?*

*Check 3: has this parent made contact?*

### **Action 4 – Notify Local Authority of Debt**

## **BREAKFAST CLUB**

### **Level 1**

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

Check 1: *is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?*

Check 2: *is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?*

Check 3: *does the parent normally pay on time? Is this just a one off?*

### **Action 1 – Send letter 1 (Appendix 2) and a text**

### **Level 2**

Indicator: a child comes to school, again, without the debt paid

Check 1: *is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?*

Check 2: *is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?*

Check 3: *has this parent made contact?*

### **Action 2 – Personal Contact**

Office Staff will telephone the parent to pay the money owed and request for the payment to be made immediately.

### **Level 3**

Indicator: the parent does not comply with any of these options

Check 1: *is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?*

Check 2: *is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?*

Check 3: *has this parent made contact?*

### **Action 3 – send final Reminder Letter 2 (Appendix 3)**

Office Staff will telephone the parent to pay the money owed and request for the payment to be made immediately and request that alternative arrangements are made until the account is in credit.

### **Level 4**

Indicator: the parent consistently does not comply with any of these options

Check 1: *is this a FSM child? Are dates correct?*

Check 2: *is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?*

Check 3: *has this parent made contact?*

### **Action 4 – Notify Local Authority of Debt**

Complete and send, immediately, 'Notification of School Meal/ Breakfast Club Debt Form (Appendix 4)

This policy will be reviewed in June 2019 or as required.

Appendix 1 – **Version of the Policy in letter form for the parents**

Appendix 2 – **Letter 1 to Debtors – Reminder**

Appendix 3 – **Letter 2 to Debtors – Final Reminder**

Appendix 4 – **Notification of School Meal / Breakfast Club Debt Form**

#### **Appendix 1 - Version of the Policy in letter form for the parents**

Date:

Dear parents/Carers

As from May 2017, South Grove Primary School has adopted a strict NO DEBT policy relating to the school meal service and Breakfast Club.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means **that money which should be spent on children's education** is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support. **In the past, some dinner debts at the school have risen up above £70 on a regular basis. The school cannot sustain this.**

**No parent would take their child to a café or restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying;** the same applies at school. If you believe your child might be entitled to Free School Meals and you have not yet claimed, please contact the school office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will advise parents how to apply if necessary.

If your child is not entitled to a Free School Meal and they are to have a school dinner, you must pay in advance for the meal by paying via ParentPay on-line, or with a barcode at pay points located in various shops.

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 parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of a day. However, this debt must be paid the next day and future meals must be paid for in advance before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take your child home for lunch. In a case where a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the school office will telephone you and ask you to come to the school with sandwiches before lunchtime or arrange to take your child home for lunch and return him/her by 12.50pm or 1.20pm.

If the debt becomes more than a week, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against the parents to recover the debt. Childrens' Social Care (Social Services) may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

We hope that by implementing this School Meals Debt Policy we are able to **help parents manage their school dinner money better and at the same time. Ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available for the school to spend on the children.**

Although this letter may seem abrupt, we apologise for this, but the school is unable to sustain such debts. We appreciate that the content of this letter does not apply to 99% of our parents who pay regularly.

Yours sincerely

Julie Maltwood  
Headteacher

## **Appendix 2 – Example letter 1 to Debtors (Reminder)**

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money or your breakfast club money for your child  
.....

As at                      our records show a debt of £

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by paying via ParentPay on-line or with a barcode at pay points in various shops.

NOTE: All meals and breakfast club must be paid for in advance in accordance with our debt policy (copy enclosed). If you don't wish for your child(ren) to have a school meal, please provide him/her with a packed lunch or arrange to take him/her home for lunch.

The cost of a school meal is £2.16 a day - £10.80 per week.

Breakfast Club is £3.50 a day - £17.50 per week

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Julie Maltwood  
Headteacher

### **Appendix 3 – Example letter 1 to Debtors (Final Reminder)**

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money or made a breakfast club payment for your child ..... in class ..... despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call.

As at ..... our records show a debt of £

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by paying via ParentPay on-line or with a barcode at pay points in various shops.

The cost of a school meal is £2.16 a day - £10.80 per week.

Breakfast Club is £3.50 a day - £17.50 per week

Since non-payment for school meals or breakfast club affects the quality of service we offer to all of the children in the school, we need to ensure that all payments are up-to-date and I am afraid that if the debt is not cleared by ..... it will not be possible to provide your child with a school meal or for your child(ren) to attend breakfast club. You will need to make arrangements for a school meal for your child or you will need to make suitable childcare arrangements for your child.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt and to inform children's Social Care (Social Services) of our concerns that you are not providing suitable childcare or a meal for your child at lunchtimes.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Julie Maltwood  
Headteacher

**Appendix 4 – Notification of School Meal / Breakfast Club Debt Form**

<b>To: The Local Authority</b> <b>Town Hall, Forest Road, Walthamstow, E17</b>
<b>Child's Name</b> .....

Value of Debt £.....	Number of Meals .....
Comments	Number of breakfast club sessions.....
	Signed) ..... (Headteacher