

St John's Catholic Primary School



School Debt Policy



"I am the vine, you are the branches"

This school is committed to safe guarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share in this commitment.

Our Mission Statement

'I am the vine, you are the branches'.

This policy relates to contributions for School Dinner, Breakfast Club and Afternoon Fun Club, After School Clubs and the only non-voluntary payments the school presently collects. Where appropriate, this debt collection model will be used for any other monies the school wishes to collect in the future.

Within this policy, the use of the term "parent" shall relate equally to parents, guardians and/or carers.

St John's Catholic Primary school's debt policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the school's Financial Regulations and any other legal requirements.

School Meals

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school meals. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

The responsibility of ensuring school meal payments are made by parents lies with the school. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, the Governors of St John's Catholic Primary School wish to implement one that ensures meals are paid for, whilst aiding parents during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime.

School meals must be paid for in advance of meals being taken. School meals are charged at £2.20 per day (1st January 2019). Parents will be informed of any price increase to school meals, as soon as possible. All meals for the period being paid for must be paid in advance online via Parentmail. Meals may be paid for on a daily, weekly, monthly, half termly or termly basis. If parents choose to pay either half termly or termly and a debt arises at the end of that period it will be the parent's responsibility to provide the office with the information as to where the error occurs.

Children should know which lunch option they will have each day. If choosing school meals their lunch account **must** be in credit.

When a child is leaving it is imperative for the school office to check the balance of the child's account and refund any credit balance and obtain any debt outstanding.

The child may be eligible to receive free school meals, if the parent is in receipt of the following:

- Universal credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- Income support
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance
- Income-related employment and support allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of pension credit
- Child tax credit (provided you're not also entitled to working tax credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working tax credit run-on – paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for working tax credit

Please contact the school office, who can provide you with information and a form to apply for free school meals. The school will encourage parents to make an application for free school meals, whether the child takes school meals or not, as the school will receive additional funding known as Pupil Premium.

Since schools will be invoiced for meals taken, it is essential that sufficient funds are credited for these meals into the central account as if there are insufficient funds then the school will have to cover the shortfall from their budget.

School meal debts, prior to implementation of this policy, must be collected immediately.

Breakfast Club

Children may only attend if the fees have been paid. Breakfast Club may be paid for on a weekly basis and parents are advised through the school bulletin towards the end of each half term the cost of the sessions for the next period. To secure a place, parents must book and pay for the sessions, if the child does not attend the session, no refund will be given.

Places should be booked and paid for at least a week in advance, but allowing for occasions when this isn't possible, places may be booked last minute, subject to availability. However, this facility will only be offered to those parents who do not owe money.

When a child is leaving it is imperative for the school office to check the balance of the child's account and refund any credit balance and obtain any debt outstanding.

If the club is cancelled for an unforeseen reason (eg Staff absence or other matters outside school control) a refund for the lost session(s) will be provided.

School Clubs (Lunchtime and After-School)

Children may only attend if the fees have been paid. School clubs are paid on a weekly or half-termly basis and parents are advised through Parentmail what club is available and the cost. Places are secured as long as payment, for the full period, is received in advance.

If the club is cancelled for an unforeseen reason (eg Staff absence or other matters outside school control) a refund for the lost session(s) will be provided.

The Governing body acknowledge that, on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child.

St. John's Catholic Primary School

Innage Gardens, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

WV16 4HW

Telephone: 01746 762061 Fax:01746 768298

Head Teacher: Mrs J Buzzing BA (Hons)

Email: admin@sjrc.co.uk

Website : www.st-johns@shropshire.sch.uk



January 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meal Payments

Child's Name:

Dinner Money Rate: Daily £2.20

According to our records (name) has school meal arrears. As per our new No Debt Policy, this must be paid immediately. No further school meals will be provided until your child's dinner account is in credit.

I would be grateful if payment could be made via parentmail by date , including monies for any further school meals required. Thank you.

This is a standardised letter that we send out, whenever dinner money is owed, prior to the implementation of the No Debt Policy. I would be grateful if you could arrange for prompt payment of this outstanding debt since the school is unable to provide credit for school meals. Due to the ever increasing debts owing for children's dinners, I must remind all parents that is imperative that payment for meals is made promptly, in advance of the meals being taken.

If payment is not received there is a possibility that the school may not provide lunch for your child/children as the school may be liable for any debt that arises. Schools cannot provide free meals to children who are not entitled to them.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Buzzing
Head Teacher

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January 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meal Payments

Child's Name:

Dinner Money Rate: Daily £2.20

I am writing to advise you that there is an outstanding balance of £..... on (child's name) dinner money account.

It is the policy of St John's Catholic Primary School, that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. As a result of this, I need to advise you that the school will be unable to provide a dinner for (child's name) until this debt is cleared.

A weekly payment plan to pay the debt would be appreciated, i.e. £5 per week, and I would appreciate your co-operation in setting this plan up.

Please ensure (child's name) is provided with a packed lunch until this debt is cleared and then, school dinners can re-commence. Thank you for your assistance.

If you wish to discuss this further, then please do not hesitate to contact me. I enclose a copy of the School's Dinner Money Debt Policy and procedures for your information.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Buzzing
Head Teacher

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January 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meal Payments

Child's Name:

Dinner Money Rate: Daily £2.20

Dear Parent/Carer,

You will recall that I wrote to you a few days ago regarding the outstanding balance on (child's name) dinner money account to the value of £.....

As you know, it is the policy of St John's Catholic Primary School that the school does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. I am disappointed that you have not been able to start a weekly payment plan as suggested in my previous letter, and would request that you telephone the office to make an appointment to see me to discuss this further.

Thank you for your assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs J Buzzing
Head Teacher

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January 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meal Payments

Child's Name:

Dinner Money Rate: Daily £2.20

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am disappointed you have been unable to contact me to make arrangements to recover the outstanding debt of £..... In line with the School's Debt Policy and procedures, a copy of which was sent to you with a previous letter, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to the School Governors.

The School Governors will consider the situation and will contact you in due course over the action they will take, which could include making a claim in the small claims court.

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs J Buzzing
Head Teacher

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January 2019

Dear Parent/Carer,

School Debt Policy

Unfortunately due to an increase in the number of school meals that are regularly not being paid for, the Governing Body of St John's Catholic Primary School, has decided to adopt a **NO DEBT School Policy** as from **1st January 2019 relating to school meals**.

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 any unpaid meals. I am sure everyone will agree that this is unacceptable and we hope that all parents give this policy their full support. As we all know nobody takes their child to a restaurant and expects them to be given food without paying; the same applies to school.

If you believe that you may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, please contact the school office for more details. We will advise you on how to make an application. If you are entitled, then the school will also receive additional funding, this is known as pupil premium.

School lunches must be paid for in advance online using your child's parentmail account.

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

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the office will contact the parent to ask them to come to school with either a packed lunch or for payment to be made immediately via Parentmail for their child(ren).

If the parent fails to pay the debt or provide a packed lunch, the school may have no alternative than to contact Social Services to inform them that parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care in providing food for their children at lunchtime.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are able to help parents manage dinner money better and at the same time monitor children's welfare and ensure that school money is used for children's learning.

Any current outstanding dinner arrears must be paid in full by 1st January 2019. Until paid in full, please provide your child with a packed lunch as school meals will NOT be provided.

The policy is available on the school's website, alternatively if you would like a printed copy please ask at the school office.

Watson, Leonard and Payne Catering fully support us with a policy on zero tolerance regarding school meal arrears.

If you have any concern please do not hesitate to contact myself or the Chair of Governors in writing.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs J Buzzing
Head Teacher

Mr E Beards
Chair of Governors