



Caring and Sharing

# School Meal Debt Policy

Version : 1

<b>Effective Date:</b>	<b>SEPTEMBER 2024</b>
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## Background

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

Howden Junior School provides school meals for the children of the school. This service is self funding and run like a business. It is therefore vital to the viability of maintaining this service that parents of children taking school meals follow the school's process of payment for school dinners. This policy sets out the process the school will take if payment is not made in accordance with the normal school meal payment process.

This policy does not apply to parents of children eligible for free school meals.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that payment for school dinners is paid by parents in advance. Non-payment results in wasted administrative time and the misuse of school budget (intended for educational purposes) by covering any debt.

## School Process Payment of School Meals

School lunches must be paid for **in advance** using any of the methods of payment outlined below:

- Online at [ParentPay.com](https://www.parentpay.com)
- Cash payments in a named and dated envelope

## Responsibility

Parents:

- All school lunches must be paid for in advance
- No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
- Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch

School:

- All parents will be provided with a copy of this policy when their child joins the school. The letter to parents is attached as Appendix 1.
- To follow the School Meals Debt Policy consistently.

- The school reserves the right in exceptional circumstances to make the decision about whether a child should be refused a meal in school if the policy has been exhausted.

### **Debt Policy Process - school action**

#### **Level 1**

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt

Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1:

- Send a 'Gentle debt reminder' – Text reminder.

#### **Level 2**

Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being 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 credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

- School to phone the parent to ask them to either bring the money into school or bring sandwiches in before 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 credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send strong debt letter

- The head teacher will send a final letter.

#### **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 credited?

Check 3 has this parent made contact?

#### **Action 4: bring in outside agencies**

- LA to advise, social services

### **Policy Implementation**

The school will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents informing them of the new policy

- Reminders in the school's newsletter
- Policy posted on the school website All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.

## Appendix 1

Dear Parents / Carers

### School Meals Policy

We pride ourselves here at Howden Junior School on providing fresh, healthy school meals to over 60% of children.

This service is self-funding and run like a business. Unfortunately, due to an increase in the number of school meals that are not being paid for, as from April 2017, Howden Junior School will adopt a School Meals Debt Policy relating to the 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 everybody will agree that this is unacceptable and we hope that all parents give this policy their full support.

If you believe that you may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right. **It is important that you use it if you qualify.** We will help you all we can with your application.

School lunches must be paid for in advance using any of the methods of payment outlined below:

- Online at [ParentPay.com](https://www.parentpay.com) - Our preferred option
- Cash payments in a named and dated envelope.

If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one week. However, this debt must be paid next day and future meals must be paid in advance before any 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 phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money or provide sandwiches before lunch time.

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

If you have any concerns, please don't hesitate in contacting me.

Yours faithfully

**Mr L Quinn-Hill**

**Executive Leader / Executive Headteacher**

**Howden Church of England Infant School (Interim) and Howden Junior School**