



Caring and Sharing

School Meal Debt Policy

Version : 1

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Date Due for Review:	SEPTEMBER 2026
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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 [Arbor.com](https://www.arbor.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:

- A copy of the School Meal Debt policy is available on the school website.
- 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'.

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