



Dringhouses Primary School

School Meal Payments & Arrears Policy

Signature of Chair of Governors

Signature of Headteacher

Date of Adoption: Autumn 2022

Date of Review: Autumn 2025

Reviewing Committee: Resources Committee

Statutory/Non-Statutory****

SCHOOL MEAL PAYMENTS & ARREARS POLICY

This policy recognises the difficulties placed on Dringhouses Primary School in balancing the social welfare of pupils to provide nourishing and healthy hot meals, with the management of the school budget. If school meals arrears 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/carers. This is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

Eligibility for Universal Infant Free School Meals and Benefits-Related Free School Meals

Since September 2014, all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 have been eligible for Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), regardless of their parents' income.

In addition, pupils (including those eligible for UIFSM) may be eligible for benefits-related free school meals (linked to the Pupil Premium) where a parent/carer is in receipt of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income, assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, that does not exceed the prescribed amount for the current financial year.
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- An income-related employment and support allowance
- Universal Credit with a household income of less than the prescribed amount for the current financial year, after tax and not including any other benefits you are in receipt of

Payment for School Meals – Children in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6

Parents/carers of children who take a school meal must pay the relevant cost stated by the school's catering supplier, unless they are registered as being eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

- Dinner money must be paid in advance for the week ahead
For the convenience of parents/carers, we are also happy to accept half-termly or termly payments in advance.
- The school now provides parents with the ability to pay for school meals online. This means that parents/carers can pay whenever it is convenient for them, without having to send the correct change or a cheque into school.
- All parents/carers are asked to register for online payments. This will enable them to pre-order school meals, check their account balance, view their transactions, top up their account and update their details and preferences.
- Online payments are made via a socially inclusive web-based payment system that enables parents/carers to make secure online payments via the following methods:
 - Credit/debit card with the option to securely store card details for faster payment

- Auto top up
 - Bank Transfer
 - PayPoint (for those unable to pay via the above methods, the school can support with this payment method).
- The online payment system is hosted, managed and maintained in a secure and reliable data centre, fully compliant with and certified to ISO/IEC 27001 and Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI-DSS). Online payments are processed via the Secure Trading internet payment gateway. Secure Trading operates one of the most secure and resilient card processing networks in Europe and are Level 1 certified under PCI-DSS.
 - If children are absent, any dinner money paid will be credited to the relevant account.

If payment for school meals is not received on the first school day of the week:

- The dinner money administrator will telephone/text the parents/carers, advising them of the arrears and requesting payment by the end of the school day.
- A school meal will be provided in good faith on this occasion, on the understanding that payment will be made by the end of the day.

If a school meal debt is not paid on the first day:

- If the payment is still outstanding on the second day, parents/carers will be contacted by telephone/text, reminding them of the arrears and informing them that full payment will be expected by the end of the second school day.
- If a school meal has again been ordered, a meal will be provided in good faith, on the understanding that payment for both meals will be made by the end of the day.
- If the outstanding amount is not paid by the end of the second day, parents/carers will be contacted by telephone to advise them that no further school meals will be provided and that the outstanding debt must be paid by the end of the week.
- Parents/carers will be asked to provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch from day three onwards, unless the arrears are paid and payments for further meals are made.

If arrears are not paid by the end of the week:

- If an outstanding payment is not received by the end of the week, a letter will be sent from the headteacher/chair of governors to the parent/carer, formally requesting that the amount outstanding is paid, setting out the payment options, and confirming that no further school meals will be provided until payment is made.

Child Protection Concerns

If a parent repeatedly fails to provide a packed lunch or sufficient monies to cover the cost of school meals, then this could be logged as a concern for the child's welfare. There may then be a referral to social services in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Support for Families

The school understands that emergencies do arise, which may affect a parent/carer's ability to make dinner money payments. The school will support families if we are made aware of any circumstances causing difficulties. These can be discussed in confidence with the headteacher or school business manager.