



Dringhouses Primary School

School Meal Payments & Arrears Policy

Signature of Chair of Governors

Signature of Headteacher

Date of Adoption: Autumn 2025

Date of Review: Autumn 2028

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:

Your child may be able to get free school meals if you get any of the following:

- 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 guaranteed 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 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals. Your child may also get free school meals if you get any of these benefits and your child is both:

- younger than the [compulsory age for starting school](#)
- in full-time education

If you do not qualify for most benefits (also known as having 'no recourse to public funds'), your child may still be eligible for free school meals. Ask their school or local authority whether they're eligible.

Check if your child can get free school meals in England and find out how to apply on the local authority's website. <https://www.york.gov.uk/free-school-meals/apply-free-school-meals>

If your child is eligible for free school meals, they'll also qualify for the [Holiday Activity and Food Programme](#). Food vouchers may also be available through the [Household Support Fund](#).

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, 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 uses a secure online payment site which 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 in advance of the meal booking:

- The school office will telephone/text/email 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 when requested:

- If the payment remains outstanding, parents/carers will be contacted by telephone/text/email, reminding them of the arrears and informing them that full payment will be expected by the end of the next 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 next school day.
- If the outstanding amount is not paid by the end of the next school 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 following this notification, unless the arrears are paid and payments for further meals are 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.