

Compassion

Courage

Cooperation



School Meals Debt Policy

We strive to support all members of our community to feel valued, nurtured and empowered as they embark upon their journey to become the very best that God intended. Throughout their voyage of discovery with us, we ensure all children are provided with a rich curriculum, experiences which promote school based valour and a strong moral purpose underpinned by our Christian values; preparing them to become compassionate citizens within our rural community and the wider world.

‘On a voyage of discovery: learning and growing together in the light of God.’

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Revision History

Date	By	Description	Review date
Jan 2022	C Frost	Update	Jan 2023
Sep 2023	G Hawkins	Update	Sept 2024

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Wittersham Church of England Primary School

School Meals Debt Policy

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.

Free School Meals

Currently all children in EYFS, Year 1 and Year 2 are able to receive a free school meal, under the universal free school meals system.

In addition to this, free school meals are available if parents meet the following criteria:

- 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)
- 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.

If you meet any of the criteria listed above, you may apply for free school meals here:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/free-school-meals>

Payment for School Meals

Our school meals are provided within the school. A school meal costs £2.50 per day or £12.50 per week.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of School meal debt, the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Our school money system highlights debt immediately, so keeping track will be easy.

If a parent genuinely forgets to pay, the school may grant a debt allowance of 5 school days. However, this debt must be paid immediately and future meals must be paid in advance before any meal is provided.

If a debt is not cleared, parents/carers must provide a packed lunch. If the child is not provided with the requested packed lunch and the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the School will provide access to the salad bar, a piece of fruit and a drink of water.

Debt Policy Implementation

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: Contact the parents via telephone as 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: Send a 'Gentle debt reminder' email/letter see APPENDIX A for example

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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 reminder email/ letter - see APPENDIX B for example 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: Contact outside agencies.

- If payment of the debt is not received, the Head Teacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents/carers to recover the debt.
- Social Services may also be informed that these parents/carers are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their child at lunchtime.

Appendix A - Gentle Debt reminder

Dear Parent / Carer of

This is a reminder that, according to our records, you have arrears on your child's dinner money account. Our records show that as at XXXXX your debt is XXXXX for school meals taken on XXXXX.

In order for your child to continue to receive school dinners, it is important to keep your account in credit at all times. Please arrange for the amount stated above to be paid within 5 school days.

Since the School has to fund all school meal debts from its budget it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. Payments may be made via cash, cheque or BACS.

BACS Details

Payee Name: Wittersham CEP School

Account Number: 56174381

Sort Code: 60-60-08

Payment Reference

Please create a payment reference using your surname and a short description of what you are making payment for.

i.e. Smith/Dinners

Once you have set up your payment please advise us by email to finance@wittersham.kent.sch.uk

Please include on your email the date of payment/amount/reference number so that we may easily match your payments to you.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynda Crabtree

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Finance Officer

Appendix B-Strong Debt Reminder

Dear Parent / Carer of

This is a reminder that, according to our records, you have arrears on your child's dinner money account. Our records show that as at XXXX your debt is XXX. Your debt has already been outstanding for more than 5 days. We would therefore ask you to make immediate payment.

Payments may be made via cash, cheque or BACS.

BACS Details

Payee Name: Wittersham CEP School

Account Number: 56174381

Sort Code: 60-60-08

Payment Reference

Please create a payment reference using your surname and a short description of what you are making payment for. i.e. Smith/Dinners

Once you have set up your payment please advise us by email to finance@wittersham.kent.sch.uk including the date of payment/amount/reference number so that we may easily match your payments to you.

Since the School has to fund all school meal debts from its budget it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and in some cases will inform the local authority that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

If you are unable to clear your arrears please provide your child with packed lunches until your account has been settled. If this continues to be unpaid, the school office will contact you to discuss any queries and arrange a payment schedule.

Similarly, if you think your child may be entitled to receive Free School Meals, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

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Mr George Hawkins

Head Teacher

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