



HIGHBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL MEALS & FEES DEBT POLICY

Highbury Primary and Nursery School's mission is:

- To be an inclusive, safe and caring community where each member is equally valued and nurtured to develop their potential.
- To achieve academic excellence by ensuring each pupil performs to the best of their ability.
- To work together as a team with parents and carers within the community to promote respect responsibility for the benefit of all.

POLICY STATEMENT

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

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Schools are invoiced for all meals taken and have to pay staff to run our Nursery, Breakfast and After School Clubs. If there are insufficient funds to cover the costs of meals and services provided to children, schools pay the shortfall from their budget. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent would agree that this is unfair and not sustainable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

School Meals

No parent would take their child to a restaurant eg McDonalds and expect them to be given food without paying for it; the same applies in school.

If parents believe that their family qualifies for Free School Meals please contact the school office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.

- Parents **must pay** in advance for the school lunch
- Children will not be provided with a lunch unless it is paid for (except those that are entitled to a free school meal)
- If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one meal, however this debt must be paid the next day

In cases when payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the Headteacher has instructed that the office will contact the parent and ask them to:-

- Come to school with the money or
- Provide a packed lunch before lunchtime or
- Arrange to take their child home for lunch

The school's meal service will not supply the child with a hot meal. An entry will also be made onto the child's record for failing to provide a lunch. Social Services may also be informed that parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care, by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

If payment of the debt is not received within seven days, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt.

Nursery

Parents must pre-book and pay in advance for all sessions required in the Nursery School. Childcare vouchers are accepted as a form of payment and parents should contact the Nursery School office to ensure arrangements are in place. Please also refer to the Nursery Fees Policy.

Breakfast & After School Clubs

Parents must pre-book and pay in advance for all sessions required in either Breakfast/After School Clubs. In an emergency, parents may phone school on the day and book their child in to an After School Club session. This session should be paid for when the child is collected that day. Childcare vouchers are accepted as a form of payment and parents should contact the Nursery School office to ensure arrangements are in place.

The school reserves the right to refuse access to Nursery, Breakfast & After School Clubs where fees remain unpaid.

Debt Policy Implementation

Level 1

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt

Action: An invoice will be issued with a statement of services owed (Appendix A). The school reserves the right to refuse access to Nursery, Breakfast & After School Clubs where fees remain unpaid. An arrangement for a payment plan can be agreed.

Level 2

Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch

Action: Personal contact - someone will phone the parent to ask them to either bring the money into school or provide a packed lunch before lunchtime. If no contact a letter home will be issued (Appendix B). An arrangement for a payment plan can be agreed.

Level 3

Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options

Action: The Headteacher will send a 'Final Reminder' debt letter with a full statement of dinners taken/sessions taken and monies received. (Appendix C). An arrangement for a payment plan can be agreed.

Level 4

Indicator: The parent consistently fails to comply with any of these options

Action: Involve outside agencies. Debt will be referred to the Local Authority for collection; Social Services may be informed. An arrangement for a payment plan can be agreed.

Throughout this process, the following checks will be made:-

- Is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
- Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
- Has the parent made contact?

Parents who are experiencing difficulty in paying for chargeable services offered by the school eg school meals, Nursery, Breakfast Club and After School Club should inform the school office immediately. In most circumstances a payment plan can be agreed to help parents clear their debt to the school as soon as possible.

KEY INFORMATION

- A copy of the debt policy is available on the school website
- All services provided including school meals, Nursery, Breakfast and After School Club places **must** be paid for in advance
- No child should come to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal or access to Breakfast and After School Club care
- Parents who don't want their child to have a school meal should provide a packed lunch
- Payment plans can be arranged but if a default occurs the debt will be referred

It is very time consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for money - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally can have a negative effect on our relationships with families. The governors at Highbury Primary School understand that a system of 'zero debt tolerance' may seem a hard stance, but hope parents are supportive of the reasons behind this policy.

Approved by the governing body:

Date: 28th February 2017

Review date: February 2020



**Highbury Primary School
Dovercourt Road, Cosham, PO6 2RZ**

Parent/Carer of < Pupil>

DATE
<Date>

INVOICE No.

INVOICE

DATE OF SUPPLY		£
<Date>	DINNER MONEY/ AFTER SCHOOL CLUB FEES/ BREAKFAST CLUB FEES	£.....
	SUB TOTAL	£.....
	VAT 20%	£0.00
	TOTAL	£.....

**PLEASE MAKE YOUR PAYMENT WITHIN THE NEXT 7 DAYS
CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO Highbury Primary School
TELEPHONE NUMBER (02392 375404)**

Appendix B

<Date>

Parent/Carer of <Pupil>

Dear Parent/Carer of <Pupil>

Re: <Pupil>, <Class>

According to our records, it appears that there is a balance outstanding for _____. The amount due for payment is £<Amount>. We would be grateful if you would kindly clear this balance as soon as possible.

For your information, the last payment shown on our system was made on <Date>.

If you have any query or difficulty with payment of this amount, please let us know and we will endeavour to help.

Yours sincerely

School Office

Appendix C

<Date>

Parent/Carer of <Pupil>

Final Reminder

Dear Parent/Carer of <Pupil>

Re: <Pupil>, <Class>

Despite previous reminders there is still a balance outstanding for _____. The amount due for payment is £<Amount>. We would be grateful if you would kindly clear this balance as soon as possible.

For your information, the last payment shown on our system was made on <Date>.

If you have any query or difficulty with payment of this amount, please let us know as we may be able to arrange a payment plan. If we do not hear from you by <Date 7 days>, we will have no choice but to refer this to Portsmouth City Council Debt Recovery Team.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher