



WISDOM~TRUST~FRIENDSHIP

Birch C of E (VA) Primary School
School Hill
Birch
COLCHESTER
Essex
CO2 0LZ

Debt Recovery Policy

The Governing Body has resolved to ensure that all children receive a meal at lunch time whilst recognising the school budget should not be used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers.

Date policy adopted: February 2026

Due for review: February 2027

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1.0 Introduction

This policy concerns the collection of school meals and extended day money and the approach to be taken in cases of debts arising when parent/carers fail to pay for these services. Parents/carers will be signposted to this policy on the school website.

All pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key stage 1 are now entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School meals

2.0 General Principle

School meals and extended day sessions must be paid for in advance. If a pupil is to have meals for the duration of the week, or be sent to breakfast and/or after school club during the week, monies must be received in advance of, or during that week. If the school is to accept pupils having an occasional meal, or ad hoc booking to breakfast or after school club monies must be received during that week.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

3:0 Free School Meals

KS2 pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to free school meals. If parents/carers believe that their child/children may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, they should contact the school or complete an online application form on the Essex.gov.uk website. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where entitlement has been verified.

4:0 Procedure for Collection of Arrears – School Meals

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy were arrears arise.

A gentle reminder email message will be sent home after one week accumulated arrears. (Appendix 1).

The parent/carer will be sent a second reminder email where two weeks' arrears has accumulated and advised to make immediate payment. (Appendix 2)

Once four weeks of arrears have been accumulated a phone call will be made to the parent/carer informing them that no meals will be provided for their children/children if payment isn't immediately forthcoming.

Any parent/guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

No meals are to be provided to pupils when arrears exceed four weeks. Once the final letter deadline has expired the Governing Body will decide whether legal proceedings should begin.

5:0 Procedure for Collection of Arrears – Extended Day

Arrears for extended day cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

Bookings must be paid for in advance or on the day in exceptional circumstances. If more than one week of arrears have accumulated a phone call will be made to the parent/carer advising them to make immediate payment.

If payment is not forthcoming after two weeks a letter will be sent to the parent/carer informing them that the place will be taken away if the account is not settled immediately. (Appendix 3)

Once the final letter deadline has expired the Governing Body will decide whether legal proceedings should begin.

In the event of a child's/children's space being withdrawn, and a subsequent bad debt being written off, should the parent/carer request to have a space in extended day at a future point all outstanding balances must be repaid before a space is offered.

APPENDIX 1

Parent/Carer
Address

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to remind you that according to our records, you have arrears on your dinner money account.

Our records show that your outstanding balance is £for your Child/Children's meal.

Please credit your Scopay account immediately.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or if you have difficulty making payment please contact the school office to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

APPENDIX 2

Parent/Carer
Address

Dear Parent/Carer

Pupil: Class:

I am writing to remind you that according to our records, you have arrears on your child's dinner money account. In order for your child to continue to receive school lunches it is important to keep your account in credit.

Our records show that your outstanding balance is £for your Child/Children's meal.

Please credit your Scopay account immediately.

Non-payment for school meals affects the quality of service we are able to offer to the children therefore we need to ensure that all accounts are up-to-date. Once the debt is cleared please ensure the account remains in credit.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or if you have difficulty making payment please contact the school office to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

APPENDIX 3

Parent/Carer
Address

Dear Parent/Carer

OUTSTANDING BALANCE REMINDER

Our records show that you have still not paid breakfast club /after school fees for your child
..... Class:

As at .././20.. your account is showing an outstanding balance of -£.....

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. Failure to bring your account up to date will result in your child's place at breakfast club / after school club being withdrawn and the school having to proceed with its debt recovery procedures.

Should you require a space in future you will be required to settle any outstanding fees prior to a place being granted to your child.

You can make payment by logging into Scopay.

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

Yours sincerely

Headteacher