

Coten End Primary School
Dinner Money Debt Policy

Introduction

It is a parental responsibility to ensure that a child is provided with a meal at school either a packed lunch or a school meal.

Parents are responsible for ensuring school meals are paid for and the school has a responsibility to ensure that money is not owing for school meals.

The school cannot and will not permit any debts outstanding. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum.

In writing this policy, the Governors of Coten End Primary School wish to implement one that ensures meals are paid for, whilst aiding Parents/Carers during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime.

Procedures

School meals **must** be paid for in advance of meals being taken through the school's online payment system, currently ParentPay.

Meals may be paid for on a weekly, half termly, termly or regular top up basis.

As soon as school are notified that a child is leaving it is imperative for the school office to check the balance of the child's account. Any debt outstanding must be paid in full, and any credit balance will be refunded.

Qualifying for free school meals

Your child may be eligible to receive free school meals, to find out more please contact the following service for further advice and guidance:

Telephone: (01926) 359189,

Email: freemeals@warwickshire.gov.uk

Warwickshire County Council have an online eligibility checker at:

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

Families who receive the following are eligible for Free School Meals:

- Income support
- Income-based job seeker's allowance (JSA)
- Income-related employment and support allowance (ESA)
- Guarantee element of state pension credit
- Universal credit
- Both income-based and contribution-based JSA/ESA if you receive the same amount for both. You should also qualify if you receive both but the Income-based amount is greater, but not if the contribution-based amount is greater
- Families who are awarded Child Tax Credit and have an annual income, as assessed by HMRC, not in excess of £16,190 are also eligible to claim free school meals providing there is no entitlement to Working Tax Credit (unless in respect of a 4-week 'run-on').

The online checking system only confirms or denies your eligibility to claim free school meals: it does not give Warwickshire County Council any other information.

If you are currently in receipt of either Universal Credit or the 4-week run on of Working Tax Credit the system will not automatically be able to determine your eligibility, therefore you will need to send proof that you are in receipt of these benefits to the Free School Meals office once you have completed and saved your application.

When your eligibility has been confirmed and your application processed, you will be sent an email confirming eligibility. The school will also receive notification of your child's application.

The online checking system will continuously check your eligibility status and inform you and the school of any changes.

Debt procedures

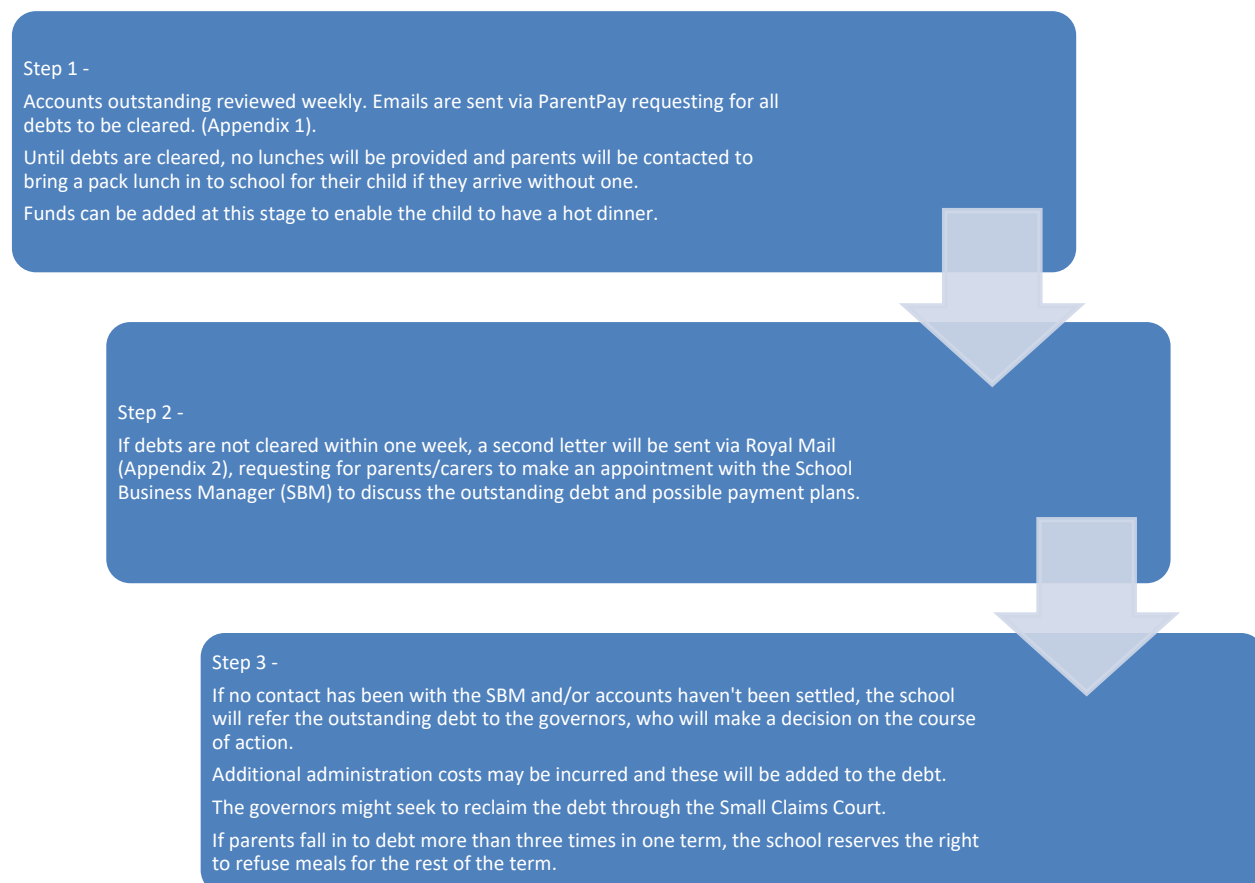
The school uses an online payment system, currently ParentPay, to collect payment for school meals and also for parents to book meals in advance.

When parents log in they will be able to see the funds available and will be able to top up their child's account so that no debt occurs.

It is the school's intention to ensure that meals are paid for in a timely fashion thus avoiding the creation of debt.

If, however debts occur, in collecting any outstanding debts, a step-by-step process will be followed.

The time lapse between the steps will normally be 5 school days. However, this may vary depending on factors such as the time period within a term.



If any monies are outstanding at the end of the academic year, the school reserve the right to charge an administration fee for time taken to recoup this outstanding debt, as well as claiming the money owed through the Small Claims Court.

We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child. However, families have a responsibility to engage with the school to discuss the issue and seek a resolution.

In the event of a child leaving Coten End Primary School with an outstanding debt, the Governing Body will need to consider what further steps to take which may include contacting the child's new school and informing them of concerns.

Reviewed January 2024	Katrina George
Next review January 2025	

Appendix 1

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 for Child/Class your outstanding balance is _____.

Please arrange for this to be paid immediately by using ParentPay, our secure online payment system. You can use the login previously provided. Please visit www.parentpay.com

Your username and password are:

User Name Password

You can check your account balance at any time by logging into your ParentPay account.

Please provide your child with a packed lunch until the outstanding debt is cleared.

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

Finance Administrator/Headteacher

Appendix B



Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Dinners

You will recall that I wrote to you a few days ago regarding the outstanding balance on _____ dinner money account.

The balance as at _____ is £_____.

As you know, it is the policy of Warwickshire County Council that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children.

I am disappointed that you have not paid the monies owing via ParentPay as requested in my previous letter, and would request that you telephone the office to make an appointment to see me to discuss this further.

Thank you for your assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Liz Coles
School Business Manager