

## Dinner Money Policy

### Introduction

With effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017 Alverton school has adopted a NO DEBT policy relating to the provision of school meals and extended services (After school club/guitar lessons)

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. I am sure that every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

The school is invoiced for meals and music lessons and we have to pay staff to run our Ab Fab Club, so it is essential that sufficient funds are available. If there are insufficient funds from those who use these services then school has to cover the shortfall from its budget -- the budget that is given to us to spend on the children's education.

I am sure you would not take your child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school. Schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for Free School Meals entitlement. Every other meal and service for which there is a charge must be paid for. Please contact the office if you think your child may be entitled to FSM.

It is very time consuming for the office staff to continually chase dinner money – by letter, phone call or in person. It can also be highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on the relationships with staff and families.

**The same principles apply to the other services provided by the school, and we reserve the right to stop music lessons or refuse access to Breakfast and After School care or other services where fees remain unpaid.**

### Did you know?

The total amount of dinner money currently owed at Alverton CP School is staggering. It amounts to over £4000. This is money that should be used for **YOUR** children/s education. This is why we have been left no option but to introduce this debt policy, and we hope that parents will support us with this.

### School Dinners:

**The cost of a school dinner is currently £2.10 per day, £10.50 per week, and AS OF 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2017 WILL BE PAYABLE IN ADVANCE. Parents are expected to pay on a Monday each week or pay each half-term in advance if more convenient.**

This is common practise in a vast majority of schools in the area, and countrywide, as dinner money arrears are becoming an ever increasing problem. Currently EYFS and KS1 children are in receipt of Universal Free School Meals – so this does not apply to them.

Parents can pay by cash in a named sealed envelope or by cheque, made payable to Alverton CP School. If a child is absent and dinner money has already been paid then their account will be credited.

If a child forgets their packed lunch during the week and is given a school meal, parents must pay for that meal on the same day or the following morning at the latest (with the exception of children on Free School Meals) Parents will be reminded of this via text message or phone call on the day.

### Debt Recovery for School Meals.

Following the North Yorkshire County Council Guidelines there will now be 4 stages in our school meal arrears procedure:

*Please note: Such measures will be taken even after a child no longer attends the school if they have left not having paid all money owed.*

### **Stage 1**

If a child incurs debts for unpaid dinner money, the school will inform the parent/s midweek via letter/text message or telephone to let them know the debt that has accumulated. Parent/s will be asked to pay the debt within the next week.

If you need to discuss any problems with the school regarding the debt then please come to school and discuss this immediately.

Copies of all letters will be saved as electronic copies should the matter have to be referred to the Welfare Team at Jesmond House, Harrogate.

### **Stage 2**

If the parent/s does not pay the debt and a total of £10.50 per child is owed (equivalent to one weeks dinner money), a further letter/text message will be sent by office staff. This will ask parent/s to pay the debt by a specified date and ask them to either:

\*provide a packed lunch from home for the child, or

\*collect their child and take them home for lunch each day

If the parent/s still does not pay the debt by the specified date, a meeting will be held in school to discuss how the debt can be paid and actions to be taken.

If there is an outstanding dinner money balance of £10.50 per child and children come to school with no packed lunch, and attempts to contact parents to bring money/packed lunch into school prove unsuccessful, children will not be permitted to request special food orders, for example Jacket Potatoes/Baguettes etc. They will be given the lunch that is on the menu.

If there is an outstanding dinner money balance of more than £21 per child, the Head Teacher / Deputy Head will contact the parent/s to ask them to bring the money to school, bring a packed lunch or take their child home for dinner, if this attempt is unsuccessful then children will be given a basic school meal.

This will consist of: A standard sandwich and fruit.

This ensures that children do not go hungry, but also ensures that parent/s understand the severity of the situation and realise that the school will not accept debts to accumulate.

In extreme circumstances the school reserves the right to contact Social Services and inform them that parents are not carrying out their legal responsibility of care by not providing food for their child at lunchtime.

### **Stage 3: Referral to the Welfare Team at Jesmond House, Harrogate.**

If debts escalate and amount to more than £50 these will automatically be referred to the Welfare Team at Harrogate. A County Council invoice will be issued and any necessary debt recovery action instigated.

### **Stage 4: North Yorkshire County Council Debt Recovery**

If the parent/s does not comply with any of these options, the Head Teacher will send a final letter explaining that the school will begin proceedings against the parent to recover the debt.

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.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are able to help parents manage payments better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,  
R. Linsley  
Head Teacher