



At Knights Enham Schools we provide...

Inclusive and ambitious learning experiences where our school community feels safe and motivated to achieve their best.

‘Together We Achieve’

School Dinner Debt Policy

Approved: April 2025

Date of next review: April 2026



Introduction

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the cases of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. Parents/carers will be advised a copy of this policy is on the school website.

General Principle

School meals must be paid for in advance. If a pupil is to have meals for the duration of the week monies must be received before the start of that week or in exceptional circumstances if the pupil is having an occasional meal, monies must be received on the day of the meal.

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.

Free School Meals Entitlement

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 complete the Free School Meal eligibility form <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals> 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 this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons eg pupils forget their dinner money or are absent on the day it is collected. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

A gentle reminder letter will be sent home after 2 weeks of accumulated arrears £25 (Appendix 1).

A final letter to the parent/carer informing them that no meals will be provided for their child(children) if payment has not been received by a specified date, (ie in accordance with the policy the date when three weeks' arrears (£37.50) have accumulated) (Appendix 2).

No meals to be provided to pupils when arrears exceed two weeks and the parent/carer advised to send in a packed lunch for their child/children and we may report the incident to Children's Services.

Once the final letter deadline has expired the debt will be passed onto the debt recovery team at Hampshire County Council where legal proceeding may begin.



Appendix 1

Date:

Dear [NAME OF PARENT]

RE: [NAME OF CHILD]- Unpaid dinner money

I am disappointed to note that despite several reminders you currently owe the school £[INSERT SUM] in relation to unpaid dinner monies.

If the outstanding sum is not paid at the start of school next Monday (INSERT DATE), I am afraid that [NAME OF CHILD] will not be permitted to have a school lunch and a packed lunch should be provided by you. Failure by you to provide a packed lunch may result in a referral to Children Services.

I am, of course, willing to discuss the possibility of you repaying this debt in instalments. If you would like to do this please make an appointment to see me at the office.

However, should I have not heard from you within the next 14 days, I shall also be taking advice from Hampshire County Council Legal Services on recovering the unpaid sums from you.

If your family circumstances have changed and you think that you may be entitled to free school lunches for [NAME OF CHILD] again, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'D Whitehouse'.

Mr D Whitehouse
Headteacher



Appendix 2

Date:

Dear [NAME OF PARENT]

RE: [NAME OF CHILD] - Unpaid dinner money

I am disappointed to note that despite several reminders you currently owe the school £[INSERT SUM] in relation to unpaid dinner monies.

I note that CHILDS NAME is no longer having school dinners as you are providing a packed lunch. However, the debt for meals previously provided by the school remains outstanding. We therefore require this amount to be repaid by XXXXX

If no payment is received by this date, we will have to take advice from Hampshire County Council Legal Services on recovering the unpaid sums from you.

For your reference, I have enclosed a statement to evidence when the meals were provided. I have also enclosed your online access letter, should you wish to pay online rather than bring the money to school.

If your family circumstances have changed and you think that you may be entitled to free school lunches for [NAME OF CHILD] again, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'D Whitehouse'.

Mr D Whitehouse
Headteacher

Enc