



# Woolden Hill Primary School

Achieving Success, Creating Futures Together

## School Meals Debt Policy & Procedure

Discovery Schools Academies Trust has adopted a clear 'no debt' policy relating to the school meal service which will begin on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015. All schools in the Trust have always supported parents and carers with dinner money payments, but this has resulted in the trust group currently having a significant school meal debt.

Previously the Local Authority would deal with any parent who owes dinner money for their child, but they have stopped doing this for all schools meaning that if debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. So currently the money which should be spent on the children's education to buy books, paper, pencils, paint etc. has to be used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable, it cannot carry on and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

As most parents appreciate no-one would take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school. If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact the 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.

With the introduction of Universal Infant Free School Meals for all Key Stage One children in September 2015 (Reception, Years 1 and 2) the meal cost for this group of children is reimbursed to schools by the Education Funding Agency (EFA). However, if these children incurred a debt prior to the government initiative starting, this will not be paid by the EFA and any outstanding amounts must be paid back to the school immediately.

Therefore, Discovery Schools Academies Trust Governors have agreed to change the School Meal debt Policy and Procedure and bring it in line with other local schools. Parent/carers must pay in advance for the school meal by paying into their child's Parentmail account online or by cheque, clearly stating their child's name, class and the word DINNER on the reverse. This should be placed in a labelled envelope and given to the school office. Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However this debt must be paid next day and future meals must be paid in advanced before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the office will phone the parent to ask them to come to school with the money. Otherwise they must provide sandwiches before lunch time.

Should there ever be a situation whereby the payment of the debt is not received by the next day; the headteacher of the school then has the authority to reserve the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Social Services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

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

If you have any concerns please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Sadler, Headteacher

## School Meals Debt Policy & Procedure – October 2016

### Establishing a debt policy

Discovery Schools Academies Trust schools will ensure that parents are aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- The school's newsletter
- The school website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This should be done at least once each year, more often when it is first introduced. All parents should be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school.

### Debt policy implementation

#### Key Information

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
3. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
4. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch.

#### Level 1

Indicator: A child's record shows a debt

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3: Does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

**Action 1: Send a 'Gentle debt reminder' Appendix A**

#### Level 2

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

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3: Has this parent made contact?

**Action 2: Personal contact**

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to bring in the money owed or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime.

#### Level 3

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

Check 1: Is this a UIFSM or FSM child, are dates correct?

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded correctly?

Check 3: Has this parent made contact?

**Action 3: Send Strong debt letter Appendix B**

**APPENDIX A**

Parent or carer of \_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

As at \_\_\_\_\_ our records show a debt of £- \_\_\_\_\_.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by sending cash or a cheque in a clearly marked envelope into the office.

NOTE: All meals MUST be paid for in advance in accordance with our debt policy (copy enclosed). If you don't wish for your child(ren) to have a school meal please provide them with a healthy packed lunch. The cost of a school meal is £2.20 per day - £11.00 per week.

Enclosed is a Free School Meals application form for Parents and Guardians, detailing the eligibility criteria and how to apply for free school meals.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Sadler, Headteacher



**Discovery Schools**  
Academy Trust

Director of Schools: **Mr Paul Stone**  
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**APPENDIX B**

Parent or carer of \_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_  
despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call.

As at \_\_\_\_\_ our records show a debt of £- \_\_\_\_\_.

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by sending cash or a cheque in a clearly marked envelope into the office or by crediting your Parentmail account.

The cost of a school meal is £2.20 per day or £11.00 per week.

Since non-payment for school meals affects the quality of service we offer to the children, we need to ensure that all payments are up-to-date and I am afraid that if the debt is not cleared by the end of this week it will not be possible to provide your child with a school meal. You will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt and to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunch time.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Sadler, Headteacher



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