

DINNER MONEY ARREARS POLICY

DATE OF REVIEW: May 2024

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: Summer 2026

TO BE REVIEWED BY:
Resources Committee



Hatherleigh School's Dinner Money Arrears Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

The Schools Meals Service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for by someone. Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. Anyone who may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents/carers who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a School meal each day. Information on the entitlement to free school meals and a link can be found on the school's website: If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parents/carers personal circumstances change the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner. Children in Years Foundation, Y1 and Y2 are eligible for a free meal under the Universal Infant Free School Meal scheme.

School meals are available to children at a cost per day (please contact the school office for the current school meal cost) or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement/Universal Infant Free School Meals. School meals must be booked and paid for in advance. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

The administration team will check on a weekly basis as to whether there is any outstanding debt. If there is a message will be sent via the School Gateway asking parents to clear that debt. A further check is made one week later. If the debt is still outstanding the parent will be contacted by telephone and asked to provide a packed lunch for the child until the debt is cleared.

Where a pupil continues to require meals and no payment is made, the matter should be referred to the Headteacher who should consider the individual circumstances of the pupil and parents. If, in the opinion of the Headteacher, failure to provide a meal could have serious consequences for that pupil, a meal should be provided and details recorded in writing and maintained as a record.

If, taking account of the circumstances, the Headteacher decides to allow a meal to be served, the costs and responsibilities to recover the money rests with the school.