

# School Meals Debt Policy

**St Thomas' CE J & I School has adopted a 'no debt' policy regarding payment for school meals.**

**Aims:** To reduce the level of school meals debt.

## **Objectives:**

- To take prompt action to ensure that school meals debts do not build up
- To have a clear threshold beyond which debts will not be allowed to increase
- To ensure that parents are made aware of the policy
- To ensure a fair and consistent approach to dealing with dinner money payments.

All debts incurred are paid from the school budget. This means that money allocated for learning resources are relocated for payment of debts around school meals.

## **The Procedure:**

Parents/carers pay for meals **in advance** on Evolve.

Parents/carers who do not want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch.

## **Non-Payment:**

If a child has not paid for a meal the school will make a decision about next steps. We appreciate that sometimes it can be easy to forget to pay for lunches and for that reason we will allow parents a maximum of **£11.50** leeway. If the parent/carer does not pay once the debt reaches **£11.50** they will be responsible for providing their child with a packed lunch. This will prevent parents incurring large debts and should help families to budget for their child's dinner money.

In the instance of a debt payment not being received and a packed lunch not being provided, a member of the Office Team will text or phone the parent/carer to ask them to come to the school with a packed lunch.

Parents/carers will be contacted by text or telephone in the first instance to remind them of their debt. If the debt continues, a stronger worded letter will be sent. Failure to clear the debt despite reminders may result in recovery via a solicitor.

**Free School Meals:**

If a parent or carer believes that their child may be entitled to free school meals then additional information on this statutory right can be obtained from the school office. Only eligible pupils will qualify and the school will be happy to assist parents and carers with the necessary application form if required.

The school website will contain information regarding this policy and also user friendly guidance on how to claim free school meals.

If a parent or carer is notified by Wigan Benefits Department that their child is no longer eligible for Free School Meals, then they are required to notify the school immediately to prevent incurring a school meal debt.

**Establishing a Debt Policy:**

St Thomas' CE J & I School will notify parents/carers of this policy through the following ways:

- Letters to parents
- The school website

Notification will occur at least once each year and more frequently following its implementation. New parents coming to the school will be given a copy of the policy as part of the induction process. All parents will be signposted towards the school website where a copy of this policy is available.

**A report on significant outstanding debts, as per SOFA, will be presented to the Full Governing Body once per term for governors to evaluate and decide upon appropriate action.**

Last updated: 9<sup>th</sup> August 2022

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