

# MILFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

## SCHOOL DINNER POLICY



<u>Date</u>	<u>Changes made</u>

### ***Vision Statement***

'Milford Primary is a community orientated school, centred around the children as individuals. We are committed to helping children work towards their potential as life long learners who care, share, respect and learn in a stimulating environment.'

### **March 2014**

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Milford Primary School Debt 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 Education 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.

## 2. Provision of School Meals

- 2.1 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. The names of children in receipt of Free School Meals is confidential matter – no other child or lunchtime member of staff is aware of which children are in receipt of Free School Meals.
- 2.2 Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website:  
[http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your\\_child\\_at\\_school/meals/school\\_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals)
- 2.3 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.

## 3. Cost of School Meals

- 3.1 School meals are available to children at a cost of £1.95 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals **must** be 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.

## 4. Payment for School Meals

- 4.1 Parents are requested to send payment (preferably in cheque format made payable to **Derbyshire County Council**) on a Monday morning in a sealed envelope clearly marked with their child's name and class. This payment should be handed by the child to their class teacher at registration time. The School must ensure that all dinner money collected is banked in a timely manner in accordance with the School's Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by audit.

## 5. Management of School Meal Debts

- 5.1 To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of School meal debt the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Although, this may seem harsh to

some parents it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not a small number.

- 5.2 If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, or if a child's entitlement to free school dinners has ceased, the School will telephone/text the parent/carer to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.
- 5.3 When a child has failed to produce dinner money the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation. e.g. Lost or forgotten dinner money, temporary hardship etc. However details are recorded in writing and a record maintained and monitored.
- 5.4 If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a letter/text detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school within 7 days. The same process will be used if a cheque is not honoured by the bank. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.
- 5.5 Where a child continues to require meals, the School must establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer will be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.
- 5.6 When the debt exceeds £10 for a child a formal letter will be sent to the parent/carer informing them to provide their child/children with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears. If the child is not provided with the requested packed lunch and the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the School will provide a sandwich and a drink only (*Example letter 1*).
- 5.7 If the parent/carer continues to send the child into school without a packed lunch and does not pay what is owed, the Headteacher will formally write to the parent/carer to explain that the School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts (*Example letter 2*).
- 5.8 If money is still owed and the parent/carer is not making alternative provision by supplying a packed lunch, the local Safeguarding Team will be informed of the situation. (*Example letter 3*).
- 5.9 At all stages, the School will encourage all parties to discuss the situation to work out a way forward.

## **6. Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts**

- 6.1 At each meeting of the Governing Body/Resources Committee, the Head Teacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt. The aim of the School's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to the School's solicitors. As mentioned in 5.7, the School does however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time. This will normally occur when a parent is two weeks, or more, in arrears, and

may make the parent/carer liable for the additional costs involved in such proceedings.

- 6.2 All write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Governing Body/Finance Committee following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Date **26<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

Signed (Chair of Governors) G Taylor

Review **Spring 2015**

### **Example – Letter 1**

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)  
(Address Line 1)  
(Address Line 2)  
(Address Line 3)  
(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

#### **School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)**

According to the School's financial records you have not paid dinner money for your child (pupil name) in Class: xx. As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt of £xx. Because of the size of the arrears, we can no longer provide a school meal for your child, and you should make arrangements to provide them with a packed lunch each day.

In order that the school's budget is not used to clear your child's debt please make arrangements for the outstanding dinner money debt to be paid immediately. Once you have cleared the current debt, your child's account will need to be kept in credit. The current cost of a school meal is £1.95 per day or £9.75 per week.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

[http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your\\_child\\_at\\_school/meals/school\\_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals)

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## **Example – Letter 2 (Non payment but providing a packed lunch)**

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)  
(Address Line 1)  
(Address Line 2)  
(Address Line 3)  
(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

### **School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)**

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding school meal debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx in Class xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of a school meal is £1.95 per day or £9.75 per week.

I have previously advised you of the school meal debt in my letter of xx/xx/xx. I would ask that you please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately and take steps to ensure your account is kept in credit in the future.

Since the School has to fund all school meal debts from its budget it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and to inform the local authority that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

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If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## **Example – Letter 3 (Non payment and lack of provision of packed lunch)**

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)  
(Address Line 1)  
(Address Line 2)  
(Address Line 3)  
(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

### **School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)**

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding school meal debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondences and messages the debt for your child xx in Class xx is still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt. The current cost of a school meal is £1.95 per day or £9.75 per week.

I have previously advised you of the school meal debt in my letter of xx/xx/xx. I would ask that you please make arrangements to clear this debt immediately and take steps to ensure your account is kept in credit in the future.

Since the School has to fund all school meal debts from its budget it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and to inform the local authority that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

[http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your\\_child\\_at\\_school/meals/school\\_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your_child_at_school/meals/school_meals/default.asp?VD=freeschoolmeals)

You have also been requested to provide a packed lunch for your child, but you have failed to do so. I am obliged to contact the local Safeguarding Team because you are not making provision for your child to have a meal at lunchtime.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher