



TEMPLEFIELDS

MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

(TMAT)

School Debt Policy & Procedure

POLICY FIRST ACCEPTED AND RATIFIED BY THE TRUST	1 st April 2019
POLICY TO BE REVIEWED EVERY TWO YEARS OR AS REQUIRED	

Signature:

Andrew Sentance

Date: 1st April 2019

Name:

Andrew Sentance

Chair of Trust

Introduction

This policy relates to contributions for School Meals, Breakfast Club and School Clubs/Music tuition, the only non-voluntary payments the school presently collects. Where appropriate, this debt collection model will be used for any other monies the school wishes to collect in the future. Templefields Multi-Academy Trust Debt Policy will observe the relevant financial regulations and guidance set out in the schools' Financial Regulations and any other legal requirements.

School Meals

This policy has been written to help our schools adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school meals; it will also be applied to other non-voluntary payments as shown in the introductory paragraph. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents/carers clearly understand what is expected of them.

The responsibility of ensuring school meal payments are made by parents/carers lies with the school. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, the Local Governing Bodies of Templefields Multi-Academy Trust wish to implement one that ensures meals are paid for, whilst aiding parents/carers during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime.

As from April 2019, Templefields Multi-Academy Trust will adopt a clear 'no debt' policy relating to the school meal service. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers. Every parent/carer will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

No parent/carer would take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school. If parents/carers believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, they should contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right. The school will encourage parents/carers to make an application for free school meals, whether the child takes school meals or not, as the school will receive additional funding known as Pupil Premium.

Parents/carers must pay in advance for the school meal, using ParentMail/ParentPay. Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for in advance, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a parent/carer genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one meal. However, this debt must be paid the next day and future meals must be paid for in advance, before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents/carers must provide a packed lunch. In the case where one debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the school will phone the parent/carer to ask them to come to school with the money or a packed lunch before lunch time. An exception to our 'no-cash' policy will be made in these circumstances.

If payment of the debt is not received by the next day, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents/carers to recover the debt. Social services may also be informed that these parents/carers are not carrying out the responsibility of care by providing food for their children at lunchtime.

We hope that through implementing this debt policy we will help parents/carers manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all funds allocated for the children's learning is available.

School meal debts, prior to implementation of this policy, must be collected immediately **(see appendix A)**

When a child is leaving the school it is imperative for the school office to check the balance of the child's account and refund any credit balance and obtain any debt outstanding.

Establishing a debt policy

Templefields Multi-Academy Trust will ensure that parents/carers are aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents/carers by email/ParentMail/ParentPay)
- The school newsletter
- The school prospectus
- The school website

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

Debt policy implementation Key Information

1. All parents/carers 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/carers who do not wish 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, FSM child; are dates correct?

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

Check 3 Does this parent/carer normally pay on time; is this just a one off?

Action 1: send a 'Gentle debt reminder' Appendix B

Level 2

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

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

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

Check 3 Has this parent/carer made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact. Someone will phone the parent/carer to ask them to pay the money owed via ParentMail/ParentPay or bring a packed lunch to school before lunchtime.

Level 3

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

Check 1 Is this a UIFSM, 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 strongly worded debt letter Appendix C

Level 4

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

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

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

Check 3 Has this parent made contact?

Action 4: Refer outstanding debt to the school Governors

Send payment plan letters Appendix D

School Clubs, including Breakfast club (Lunchtime, before -school and After-school Clubs and Childcare) and Music tuition

Children may only attend if the fees have been paid in advance. Schools clubs are paid on either half-termly or termly basis and parents/carers are advised via ParentMail/ParentPay which clubs are available and the cost per session. Places are secured as long as payment, for the full period, is received in advance with the consent form.

If the club is cancelled for an unforeseen reason (e.g. Staff absence or other matters outside school control) a refund for the lost session(s) will be made or, if possible, an additional session will be added. Music teachers will normally double up any lost sessions due to their absence where possible. Child absence is not refunded.

The Local Governing Bodies acknowledge that, on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the schools will work hard with the family to agree a solution which in not to the detriment of the child.

If a child does not attend a club, for whatever reason, refunds will not be given.

APPENDIX A

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meal Payments

Child's Name: _____

Dinner Money Rate: Daily £2.10

According to our records [name] has school meal arrears. As per the school's No Debt Policy, this must be paid immediately. No further school meals will be provided until your child's dinner account is in credit.

I would be grateful if payment could be via ParentMail/ParentPay by _____[date], including monies for any further school meals required. Thank you.

This is a standardised letter that we send out, whenever dinner money is owed, prior to the implementation of the No Debt Policy. I would be grateful if you could arrange for prompt payment of this outstanding debt since the school is unable to provide credit for school meals. Due to the ever increasing debts owing for children's dinners, I must remind all parents that it is imperative that payment for meals is made promptly to the school, in advance of meals being taken.

If payment is not received there is a possibility that the school may not provide lunch for your child/children as the school may be liable for any debt that arises. Schools cannot provide free meals to children who are not entitled to them.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

APPENDIX B

Date:

Parent or carer of _____ [Child's Name]

Re: School Meal Payments

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

As at _____ [date] our records show a debt of £ _____

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by logging on to your ParentMail/Parent Pay account and making a payment.

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 £2.10 per day - £10.50 per week.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

APPENDIX C

Date:

Parent or carer of _____ [Child's Name]

Re: School Meal Payments

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child _____[name]Class: [__] despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call.

As at _____ [date] our records show a debt of £_____

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately by logging on to your ParentMail/Parent Pay account and making a payment.

The cost of a school meal is £2.10 per day - £10.50 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. Unfortunately, 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 concerns or questions regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

APPENDIX D

Letter 1

Date: Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meals

I am writing to advise you that there is an outstanding balance of £___on_____[child's name]dinner money account.

It is the policy of Templefields Multi-Academy Trust that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. As a result of this, I need to advise you that the school will be unable to provide a dinner for (child's name) until this debt is cleared.

A weekly payment plan to pay the debt would be acceptable, and I would appreciate your co-operation in setting this up. **Please note that there is a minimum limit of £2.00 per transaction on ParentMail/ParentPay.**

Please ensure..... is provided with a packed lunch until this debt is cleared and then school dinners can re-commence. Thank you for your assistance.

If you wish to discuss this further, then please do not hesitate to contact me. I enclose a copy of the school's Dinner Money Debt Policy and procedures for your information.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Letter 2

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meals

You will recall that I wrote to you a few days ago regarding the outstanding balance on_____[child's name]dinner money account to the value of £ ____

As you know, it is the policy of Templefields Multi-Academy Trust that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. I am disappointed that you have not been able to start a weekly payment plan as suggested in my previous letter, and would request that you telephone the office to make an appointment to see me to discuss this further.

Thank you for your assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Letter 3

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Meals

I am disappointed you have not contacted me to make arrangements to recover the outstanding debt of £_____.

In line with the school's Dinner Money Debt Policy and procedures, a copy of which was sent to you with a previous letter, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to the school Governors. The School Governors will consider the situation and you will be contacted in due course over the action the school intends to take, which could include making a claim in the Small Claims Court.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher