

SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

For

Wentworth Primary School



APPROVED BY GOVERNORS: October 2022
POLICY TO BE REVIEWED: October 2025

School Meals Policy

This policy has been written to assist the school in adopting a consistent approach to parents who have an outstanding amount the school dinner account, whereby a dinner has been ordered and provided but the school has not received payment. It provides clarity and consistency in managing this situation and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

Occasionally a decision will have to be made as to whether a child should be refused a meal due to the school not receiving payment. The school meal service is available to all children and dinners can be ordered on a daily/weekly basis, but is only available when parents have paid on line using the school payment system (SIMS Agora) or by cash or cheque handed into the school office.

The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals, office staff support and assist all parents to set this system up and therefore all meals would be covered for payment under these circumstances.

A small number of parents expect the school to provide a meal for their child/ren without actually paying for it, however this practice would not be accepted in any other restaurant when ordering meals.

It is not acceptable that office staff have to constantly make telephone calls, send letters or statements to parents requesting for immediate payment to clear their accounts. This has such a negative effect on relationships with some families and can cause embarrassment for the children in questions.

The governors at Wentworth Primary School have decided that the system will be a 'zero tolerance' approach. We understand that it may seem a hard task as historically this has not been the case, parents that have had a 'debt' for dinners in the past see it as being acceptable. However the school can no longer continue with this, parents have to understand that the only **free** meals provided will be to those children who qualify for the FSM entitlement.

All school meals have to be paid for, the on line payment system will automatically track all outstanding amounts on a weekly basis, therefore showing all accounts that are in a debt situation. From this information contact will be made to the parent.

This policy appears on the school website and can be sent out upon request so that all parents are aware of their obligation for paying for school meals.

The letter to parents is attached as Appendix 1.

Key Information

1. All parents have access to this policy when their child starts the school upon request
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 do not want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch or take their child home for lunch.

School Meals policy

When a child's account shows an outstanding amount, (the maximum of one week's dinners) a statement will be issued and sent out to the parent immediately informing them that immediate payment is due the next day that their child is in school.

If the child comes into school without payment for the amount owing and does not have a packed lunch, the parent is to be contacted by telephone immediately. The parent is obliged to pay this amount either on the online system or by bring the cash/cheque into school that day to allow a meal for the child. However, if they are unable to make the payment at that time the parent is liable to bring a packed lunch in and on any other day following until they are able to clear the debt.

If in the event an outstanding amount is not paid in full within an agreed time from when the parents have been notified the Head teacher will send a final letter informing requesting payment prior to seeking legal advice. The school would seek advice from the LA, small claims court and social services.

Dear Parents / Carers

School Meals Policy

We are writing with regards to the updated School meals policy which is now available to see on the school website, copies are in reception or we are able to send copies out to those upon request.

Unfortunately due to an increase in the number of school meals that are regularly not paid for hence accumulating outstanding amounts owing to the school, as from the 1st September the school's policy will be a 'Zero tolerance – No Debt' relating to school meals provided.

If debts are incurred the school budget has to pay for them. This means that the money that should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for any unpaid meals. This is clearly unacceptable and I would ask for all parents' full support.

If you feel that you may qualify for the 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. The office staff are able to help you with this and support you in completing any documentation required.

School lunches must be paid for in advance by using any of the methods of payment outlined below:

- Online at www.simsagora.co.uk
- Send cash or cheque in a marked envelope

If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance the school may grant a debt allowance, each case will be looked at separately, however this debt must be paid the next day and future meals must be paid in advance 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 or provide sandwiches before lunch time.

Finally if the school does not receive payment of any kind the head teacher will send a final letter as stated in the policy and legal proceedings could potentially take place.

Yours sincerely

Mrs D. Dack
Head Teacher