



# Granby Junior School Dinner Money Policy

Version History		
Version	Date	Detail
1.0		Approved by Governors

## **Background**

The **Granby Junior 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.

## **Provision of School Meals**

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 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)

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 for a school dinner.

## **Cost of School Meals**

School meals are available to children at a cost of **£2.10** per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals **must** be paid for either in advance or by the end of each week. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

## **Payment for School Meals**

Payment can be made preferably on line through the School Money system now known as Eduspot. The first priority contact for each child will be sent a message at the end of each week with the log in details. Payment can also be made securely by debit/credit card at the school reception or by telephone.

There is still the option to pay by cash or cheque. This should be put in an envelope and clearly marked with the child's name and class. Each class has a dinner money pot which is collected by a member of the office staff during morning registration. Cheques should be made payable to Granby Junior School.

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.

### **Management of School Meal Debts**

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.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch the School will telephone/text the parent/carer in the first instance to establish if they can either bring the packed lunch or if they agree to make payment the next day a school meal can be provided. If eligibility for free school meals has ceased, a telephone call or text will be made to the parent/carer to advise them that they need to provide their child with a packed lunch or send payment for a school meal.

A message will be sent on a regular basis via School Money to inform the parent/carer of any dinner arrears. If the arrears exceed £10 a text message will be sent to the parent/carer requesting urgent payment. If this is not successful a further message will be sent to advise that no further meals will be provided until the arrears are paid in full. The parent/carer will be expected to provide a packed lunch the following day.

Where a child is not provided with a packed lunch and still requires a school meal, the School will telephone the parent/carer to discuss the arrears and 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.

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 should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

If arrears continue to not be paid a formal letter will be sent to the parent/carer informing them of the amount owing (*Example letter 1*). The letter will remind the parent/carer of the cost of a meal and provide information about free school meals.

If the debt still remains unpaid a 2<sup>nd</sup> letter will be sent (*Example letter 2*). The parent/carer will be given a final date for payment. The parent/carer will be reminded of the School's duty to inform Social Services if a child is not being provided with a suitable meal.

Where a debt exceeds £30 for a family and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the School will arrange for the parent/carer to be invoiced through Derbyshire County Council. If after reminders the debt still remains unpaid, it will be referred to the Legal services to pursue.

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

At each meeting of the Governing Body/Finance 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. 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.

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.

## 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.

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 I should be grateful if you could ensure that you keep your account in credit. The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x 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

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 **(pupil name)** current school meal debt. Regrettably, despite previous correspondences and messages the **£xx** debt for remains unpaid. The current cost of a school meal is £2 per day or £10 per week.

I would kindly 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. The School has to fund all school meal debts from its budget and so it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained.

I note from our records that the school dinner money account has been in in breach of the maximum permitted £10 arrears for some time. I'm sure that you will appreciate that school is a very busy place and my staff could better utilise the time which they currently have to use to keep chasing outstanding dinner arrears for meals taken by your child.

If payment is not made by **(date)** the school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt. If you choose not to send your child with a packed lunch the school has a duty to the child's welfare to provide them with a basic sandwich meal until the situation is resolved but are obliged to inform Social Services that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunchtime.

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.

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