



We aim to inspire happy, **courageous**, independent, curious, creative, life-long learners. So that all can achieve their full potential, striving academically and socially with **humility** and **dignity**.

We believe being anchored in Jesus Christ will guide us with **hope**, **compassion** and **wisdom** in becoming successful members of a global community.

Dinner Money Policy

Reviewed July 2022

Background

Parents/Carers are responsible for providing a lunch for their child(ren), this may be in the form of a paid meal, application of a free meal entitlement or a packed lunch from home.

In writing this policy, the Governors of St. Clement's C of E Academy, Nechells 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.

Payment for School Meals

Parents/Carers must pay for school meals in advance unless their child(ren) have a free school meal entitlement. School will carry applications for free school meals using the Free School Meal Checking Service: www.link2ict.org/fsm

School meals currently cost £2.20 per meal (£11.00 per week). Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

School meal money should be sent into school on a Monday morning to pay for school meals for that current week. School meals are paid for in cash. Payments should be handed to the School Office in an envelope and clearly marked with Child's Name, 'Dinner Money' and the Amount.

If a child is absent from school and meals have been paid for, these will be carried forward as credits and the following weeks payments will be adjusted accordingly. If credits continue to the end of term they will be refunded back to parents in the form of cash.

Free School Meals

If parents/carers believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, please contact the school office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application. When we do the initial home visit for a child's admission parents complete a form so that FSM eligibility can be checked and then automatically updated throughout the child's primary school attendance.

Management of School Meal Debts

The St. Clement's C of E Academy, Nechells Dinner Money Policy has been adopted to ensure a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners.

St. Clement's C of E Academy, Nechells cannot and will not permit any debts outstanding. 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. Every parent/carer will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum.

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 the parent/carer in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

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 should be recorded in writing and a record maintained and monitored.

If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a letter detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school within 7 days. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing. 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 should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

As soon as school are notified that a child is leaving it is imperative for the school office to check the balance of the child's account. Any debt outstanding must be paid in full, and any credit balance will be refunded.

Letters Generated Based on Weekly Debt Report:

A weekly debt report will be generated and reviewed by the School Office. The following process will be put in place dependant on the reports outcomes:

1. Letter 1 (Appendix A) – Generated by Office and Signed by the Office Manager.

Each week debts will be reviewed and a 'debt letter one' will be sent either via the child for all debts on balances over 1 week. This letter requests that money be paid by the end of the following week and reminds of cost of school dinners and the need to pay each week in advance.

2. Letter 2 (Appendix B) – Generated by Office and Signed by the Office Manager

For those debts which received 'letter one' the previous week, have not been cleared and still have debts; 'debt letter two' will be sent via Royal Mail requesting that money be paid by the end of the following week. Also stating that if payment not arranged then this will be referred to the Pastoral Manager/Head Teacher.

3. Phone Call – Made by Pastoral Manager.

For those debts which received 'letter two' the previous week have not been cleared and still have debts, the school will contact the parent by telephone to arrange an appointment to discuss the situation to find a resolution.

4. Letter 3 (Appendix C) – Generated by Office and Signed by the Head Teacher.

For those debts which received a phone call from the Pastoral Manager, have not been cleared / meeting is not kept or a satisfactory situation agreed, the debt will be referred to the Head Teacher and 'debt letter three' will be sent via Royal Mail recorded delivery. This letter advises that parents will be required to send packed lunches for their child(ren) until the debt is cleared.

5. Head Teacher / Governors Decision

For debts, which received 'letter three' the previous week the Head Teacher will raise this with the School Governors who will need to make a decision on how to deal with this debt. If parents do not

contact the school regarding the debt and no payment is paid, additional administration costs may be added to the debt. If this is necessary, the School Governors may seek to reclaim these costs and any outstanding debt through the Small Claims Court.

Further Measures

St. Clement's C of E Academy, Nechells acknowledges that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child. In the event of a child leaving St. Clement's C of E Academy, Nechells with an outstanding debt, the Governing Body will need to consider what further steps to take which may include contacting the child's new school and informing them of concerns.

The school will not allow a child in its care to go without a meal at lunchtime. Children whose parents/carers have debts over three weeks old will be provided with a sandwich, fruit and water. However, it is not the responsibility of the School to provide lunch for pupils. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to provide a meal: either buying a school lunch or sending a packed lunch from home. The school does however, have a duty to safeguard children in its care; if parents/carers do not fulfil this duty of care, this may be viewed as a safeguarding matter, in which case, the school may contact the Children's Advice and Support Services (CASS) for advice.

Conclusion

We hope that by implementing this Debt Policy:

- we are able to ensure parents/carers manage school dinner money effectively;
- we reduce the administration time and costs involved chasing dinner money debts,
- and at the same time ensure that all monies for children's learning is available for that purpose.

Review and consultation

The Governing Body will review this policy at least annually.

Signed:
Position:
Date: