



**CORNWALL EDUCATION**  
LEARNING TRUST

## **CELT School Meals & Debt Policy**

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## **CELT School Meals Charging and Debt Policy ==**

This policy has been written to help our academies to adopt a consistent approach to school meal charging and debt. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

There have been many discussions around whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. However, a school meal service is no different than any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone.

Parents can easily relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to a restaurant and expect for them to be given food without paying, yet a minority of parents expect free food in school. The Free Schools Meals system is there for parent who cannot afford school meals, there should be no excuses. Applying for Free Schools Meals is straight forward and, once parents have applied and eligibility is authorised, the child can take a free school meal the following day.

The system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach. It may seem a very hard stance in a school where there is a culture of debt tolerance. Although this will be tough to implement it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for Free School Meals (FSM) entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for. The academies' ParentPay system highlights debt immediately so keeping track is easy.

### **Payment Structure:**

- School meals are charged at £2.30 for the meal deal, with a range of other healthy food/meals options individually priced subject to each school catering department.

When your child is enrolled you will automatically receive a ParentPay account and a password.

- Parents are required to regularly top up their child's ParentPay account so that there are sufficient funds available should you wish for your child to have a school meal or tuck
- ParentPay can be accessed using the following web address:  
[www.Parentpay.com](http://www.Parentpay.com)

This policy should be discussed with all staff and Local Advisory Board. Parents should then be made aware of this policy through:

- An advisory letter
- The school's newsletter
- The school's website

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This policy should be shared at least once a year and all parents should be given a copy of the

policy when their child joins the school. The policy statement for parents is found as appendix 1 of this document.

### **Debt policy implementation**

#### Key Information

1. All parents 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 on their ParentPay account and expect to be given a meal
4. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch or arrange to take them home for lunch

The following procedure will be followed if a child's account goes into debt:

- 1) A member of the school admin team should check first whether the child should receive FSM. If not eligible, then a staff member should phone the parent to politely remind them to pay online immediately or either bring money in for a school lunch or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home at lunchtime.
- 2) If the child's parent pay account is in debt by £11.50, then a letter should be sent home, see appendix 2. **This letter can be set up in Parentpay by updating the gentle letter and sent.** Communication>create letter>select gentle debt dinner money>edit>continue> continue> select student>continue>send.
- 3) The parent does not comply with the letter after one week, then a stronger debt letter to be sent. Appendix 3. **This letter can be set up in Parentpay by updating the final dinner money debt letter and sent.** Communication>create letter>select final debt dinner money>edit>continue> continue> select student>continue>send.
- 4) The parent does not comply with the above letter in appendix 3 then the school should notify children's social care team at the Local Council Social Services who will initiate further action.

## **School Meals Debt Policy**

### **Appendix 1**

Cornwall Education Learning Trust has adopted a strict no debt policy relating to the school meals service.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should have been spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

No parent would take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school. If parents believe that their child may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, please complete the online form on the Cornwall Council website by visiting [www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/school-meals/application-for-free-school-meals-and-pupil-premium](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools-and-colleges/school-meals/application-for-free-school-meals-and-pupil-premium). This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. Help is available with your application; please contact the school office for more details.

Parents must pay in advance for a school lunch, ideally using the school's ParentPay system. Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to Free School Meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of 1 meal. However, this debt must be paid with 1 week and future meals must be paid for in advance before any meal is provided.

For non-payment days, where the school is unable to contact the parents, and therefore has to provide the child with a lunch, the school will provide the child with a standard meal (i.e. whatever is on the menu that day). If, however, it is discovered that the child has forgotten to bring a packed lunch after the school has finished serving the main meal the school's kitchen will do their best to provide them with a cold lunch (i.e. sandwiches and fruit).

## **Appendix 2**

Dear Parent/Carer

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child \*\*\*\*\* in class \*\*.

As at \*\*\*\*\* your account is showing a debt of **£\*.\*\***

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. Once the debt is cleared, please ensure that the account is always in credit.

You have 2 ways to pay:

1. In the secure online payment system through ParentPay, using the login already provided, go to [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com). NB THIS IS OUR PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD. Your username and password are as follows:

**Username: \*\*\*\*\***

**Password: \*\*\*\*\***

2. Send in money to the school office in a marked envelope

No matter how much you pay you can check the account balance at any time by logging into your ParentPay account at [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com). You can see what meals have been taken and when.

The cost of a school meal is £2.30 per day and £11.50 per week.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours faithfully/sincerely

Headteacher

### **Appendix 3**

Dear Parent/Carer

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child, \*\*\*\*\* (Class \*\*) despite a previous written reminder and a telephone call.

As at \*\*\*\*\* your account is showing a debt of £\*. \*\*

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately. You have 2 ways to pay:

1. In the secure online payment system through ParentPay, using the login already provided, go to [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com). NB THIS IS OUR PREFERRED PAYMENT METHOD. Your username and password are as follows:

Username: \*\*\*\*\*

Password: \*\*\*\*\*

2. Send in money to the school office in a marked envelope

No matter how much you pay you can check the account balance at any time by logging into your ParentPay account at [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com). You can see what meals have been taken and when.

The cost of a school meal is £2.30 per day and £11.50 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 and I am afraid that 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 queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours faithfully/sincerely

Headteacher

Should you require further information, please contact  
the **Policies Manager for CELT.**

Telephone:

Email:

**www.**