

APPENDIX 5

School Meals Debt Policy for Parents

Hackbridge Primary School has a strict NO DEBT policy relating to the provision of school meals. **This, in effect, means that all money for school meals must be paid in advance.**

If debts were allowed to be incurred, then the School would need to consider how such debt could be managed which may mean that money which should be spent on your child(ren)'s education would be used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers. This is an unacceptable use of school funds and it is therefore expected that all parents/carers who choose our school for their child will give this policy their full support.

Parents/Carers must pay in advance for school meals using the payment methods outlined below:

- Credit/Debit cards online using ParentPay
- PayPoint cards (please ask in the School Office about PayPoint payments if you are a cash based family) or barcoded letter

If parents believe that their child/children may qualify for entitlement to benefits-related Free School Meals then they need to apply at

https://www.sutton.gov.uk/info/200521/benefits/1288/free_school_meals_and_pupil_premium

The allowance for benefits-related Free School Meals is a statutory entitlement and should be claimed if your child qualifies. It also benefits the school's funding allocation. If you need any advice with a benefits-related Free School Meal claim, the School Office can help with this.

Children will only be entitled to a school dinner if it is paid for in advance using ParentPay or if the child is entitled to a benefits-related free school meal or universal infant free school meal, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of up to three meals. 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 must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received, nor a packed lunch provided, the school will phone the parent to ask them to provide a packed lunch before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home.

If payment of the debt is not received and the reason for non-payment not advised to the school, the school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Children's Services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

In the case of recurrent school meal debts, the school can withdraw the option of school meal availability for individual pupils and parents will have to provide a packed lunch.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are able to help parents manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available.

You can access your ParentPay account at the local 'Paypoint' if paying by cash or on the ParentPay website if paying by credit/debit card. If you have not got internet access at home, we can provide access via a computer in our Meeting Room on our Hackbridge Corner site. Please ask at the office if you need any assistance.

If you have any concerns, please contact us.

Mrs E Walford
Headteacher

Mrs C Cook
Chair of Governors