THE LOYNE SPECIALIST SCHOOL

SCHOOL MEALS ARREARS POLICY

Introduction

This policy relates to the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for this. As a result, money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/guardians. The Governing Body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/guardians give this policy their full support.

Parents/carers can view this policy on the school's website/will be sent a copy of this policy when their child starts school.

General Principle

- Letters requesting dinner money payments are issued at the start of each term and monies owed are calculated half-termly in advance. School meals must be paid for in advance on a weekly, monthly or half-termly basis. Payments must be up to date and not fall into unacceptable arrears of 3 weeks or more. School meals are available to pupils at a cost of £2.70 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of a free school meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals (Reception, Year 1 and 2).

- Payment should be made by either the cash/cheque to the school office or via the school's electronic payment system, SCOpay. Should you require registration details for the online system, please contact the School Office who will provide you with these together with any assistance you may need in accessing the system.

Free School Meals Entitlement

If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the Pupil Access Team on (01524) 581207. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/guardians make use of it.

The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where this is officially approved and the school informed by the Local Authority.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons, however, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The Governing Body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

1. An outstanding dinner money text will be sent to parents/carers 3 weeks after letters have been issued if payment to date is not received within this time. Immediate payment will be requested.

2. If arrears continue to accumulate a further text will be sent or phone call will be made if payment is not received within 1 week of the first follow up text/phone call, and no acceptable reason is given. Immediate payment will be requested.

3. If payment is still not received within 1 week of the second reminder a final text or phone call will be made requesting immediate payment within 3 days.

4. If the account remains unpaid, a final letter non-payment of dinner money arrears will be sent requesting immediate payment within 48 hours of receipt of the letter, informing parents/carers that no meals will be provided for their child(ren) if payment has not been made by the date specified in the letter. This letter will also advise that an LCC Invoice will be issued that would be subject to LCC Debt Recovery Policy.

   Once the final letter deadline has expired an LCC Invoice may be issued therefore being subject to LCC Debt Recovery Policy where legal proceedings may commence. Parent/carers will be informed of this in the final non-payment letter issued to them.

   Reviewed: February 2025
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   Reviewed by: Anna Bradley