




Southville Primary School

School Meals Payment and Debt Collection Policy

Policy written by:	Savi Flaecher (Business Manager) / BCC	
Ratified by Governing Body	25.2.25	
Future review date:	February 2027	
Signed (Headteacher):		Date: 25.2.25
Signed (Chair of Governors):		Date: 25.2.25

This policy concerns 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. This policy will be published on the school website.

1. General Principle

Where debts are incurred, these costs must not be covered by the school's budget. This is to ensure that money that should be spent on the education of all children in school is not used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/ carers. The governing body considers the use of school money for repayment of debt to be unacceptable and requests that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

If a child is to have school meals, this must be paid for in advance on Iris Parentmail. All parents and staff are set up with a Parentmail account for paying for school meals for each child in the family. Parentmail is linked with our Management Information System so all meals taken by a particular child are charged to that child's account. Staff meals are permitted and are paid for in the same way.

2. Free School Meals Entitlement

Bristol City Council encourages all parents, regardless of circumstances, to check their eligibility for Free School Meals as this entitlement is also used to determine whether a child is entitled to Pupil Premium funding. This is additional funding that goes directly to the school and is used for things like school trips, breakfast and after-school clubs as well as additional teaching and support staff. Parents/carers can check eligibility and make an application using the website below. If parents/carers require support with accessing this website, they should contact the Family Liaison Support Worker via the school offices.

www.bristol.gov.uk/schools-learning-early-years/free-school-meals

All children in Reception and Key Stage 1 receive Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) regardless of family circumstance. Children in Preschool and Key Stage 2 will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to Free School Meals. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying children, it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to children where this has been officially approved and the school has been notified by the Local Authority.

3. Procedure for Collection of Arrears

The school understands that on occasion arrears arise for a number of reasons. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following course of action where arrears arise:

1. A **first letter** will be sent home one school week after payment became due.
2. A **second letter** will be sent to the parent/carer if the debt remains unpaid three school weeks from the date of the first letter. This will state that, with immediate effect, no further school meals will be provided for their child(ren) until the debt has been cleared, and that the debt must be cleared within five working days.
3. A **final letter** will be issued if the debt is yet to be cleared four weeks after the first letter was sent. The final letter will inform the parent/ carer that if the debt remains unpaid after five working days it shall be passed to the Debt Recovery Team at Bristol City Council.

This policy will take effect from the 28th February 2023. For the purposes of collecting arears, existing debts as at the 28th February 2023 will be treated as becoming due as of that date.

Appendix – wording of reminder letters

First letter: *Reminder of overdue payments*

According to our records, your school meals payments are in arrears. The debt amounts to £_____ as of today.

Please settle this amount as soon as possible by making payment on Iris Parentmail. If you are having difficulties using the online payment system, in the first instance please contact the school office. If you are worried about being able to repay these arrears please contact Mrs Mathias, our Family Liaison.

Second letter: *Accumulated school meal arrears*

Following our letter dated _____ regarding outstanding school dinner payments, our records show that this has not yet been paid.

The amount of arrears is now £_____.

Please ensure this debt is paid within five working days via Iris Parentmail. In the meantime please provide a daily packed lunch for your child from until the debt is cleared if you wish them to stay at school during the lunch break.

If the debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with the outstanding arrears or to provide sandwiches before lunch time. Please note that no further school meals will be provided until this debt is cleared.

If you are having difficulties using the online payment system, in the first instance please contact the school office. If you are worried about being able to repay these arrears please contact Mr Bowman, our headteacher. We wish to work with you to resolve this and may be able to agree a payment plan and sign post you to independent debt management advice.

Final letter: *Non-payment of school meal arrears*

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your child(ren) despite you previously being contacted on _____ and _____.

The amount of arrears is now £_____.

In line with school policy on dinner money arrears, a copy of which is published on the school website, I must inform you that if payment is not received within five working days of the date of this letter, the debt will be referred to Bristol City Council Debt Recovery team. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery process may result in court proceedings to recover the debt.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the Headteacher as soon as possible. We wish to work with you to resolve this and may be able to agree a payment plan and sign post you to independent debt management advice.