



School Meal Provision and Debt Management

Policy Title	School Meal Provision and Debt Management
Statutory	No
Policy Version	1
Policy Author	Mrs E Cameron
Ratified By	Headteacher
Review Period	1 Year
Next Review Period	Autumn 2025
Distributed To	Staff & parents
To be published on website	Yes
Changes to this policy	New policy, based on School Bus (updated Sept 2022)
This policy has been impact assessed against race, gender and disability and no adverse impact has been identified.	

Contents:

Statement of intent

1. Legal Framework
2. Charging for school meals
3. Free school meals (FSM)
4. Management of school debts
5. Exceptional circumstances and remissions
6. Monitoring and review

Appendix 1 – First payment reminder letter

Appendix 2 – Second payment reminder letter

Statement of intent

Carrington Junior School is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils, regardless of financial circumstances, and has established the following policy and procedures to ensure that no child is discriminated against.

The governing board is responsible for ensuring that school meal provisions are accessible to all pupils and that procedures are in place for the recovery of any outstanding debt.

This policy has been adopted to ensure that there is a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents whose children eat school meals. The responsibility falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment.

The school budget will be directly affected by any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered, thereby directly affecting all pupils in school. We are confident that every parent will agree that this is unacceptable, and we encourage that all parents give this policy their full support

1. Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014
- DfE (2018) 'Charging for school activities'
- DfE (2020) 'Governance handbook'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Charging and Remissions Policy

2. Charging for school meals

School meals are available to pupils at a cost of **£2.80** or at no cost to those in receipt of FSM entitlement. Payments will be expected from parents for school meals on a regular basis and must be made using our online payment system, ePay.

Where a meal has been ordered but not taken, and instead the child has had a packed lunch, a charge will still be made for that meal. The only exception is when a child is off unwell.

3. Free School Meals (FSMs)

There is a statutory right to FSM for families who meet certain criteria. It is important that all parents who qualify take up their entitlement so that their child can receive a school meal each day.

Parents who receive one or more of the following support payments will be entitled to receive FSM (assuming the parent does not receive working tax credit):

- Universal Credit
- Income support
- Income-based jobseeker's allowance
- Income-related employment and support allowance
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of pension credit
- Child tax credit (provided they are not also entitled to working tax credit and have an annual gross income of no more than the current threshold)
- Working tax credit run-on – paid for four weeks after they stop qualifying for working tax credit

A pupil will only be eligible to receive FSM when a claim for FSM has been made on their behalf and their eligibility has been verified by the school. Parents will take responsibility for ensuring that they have claimed FSM for their child and will be aware that the entitlement to FSM cannot be backdated.

The school will check the eligibility of all applicants for FSM, working with the LA, and will record the date on which they receive the initial application for FSM from a parent and the date on which eligibility is verified. Eligibility checks are carried out promptly to ensure that the most accurate and up-to-date information is being used.

4. Management of school debts

The SBM will regularly check the amount owed by parents, with weekly reminders about payment being sent to parents on the email for ordering hot lunches. Where a parent is more than a week in arrears (**£14**) the steps of debt management are as follows:

- **First formal written reminder** – the school will send an official, dated letter addressed to the parent detailing the amount owed and when payment must be made by.
- **Second formal written reminder** – the school will send a second formal reminder two weeks after the first formal reminder, citing the details of the previous reminder and stating that concerted efforts have been made to make the parent aware that an outstanding debt is overdue.

Where the parent does not respond to the above reminders, the school will send a follow-up letter to the parent advising them that the case has been referred to the school's legal advisors and governing board.

The school will work with the parent to establish, and agree on, a timeframe for a repayment or, if necessary, a payment plan for separate instalments.

The school will inform parents that debts should be repaid as soon as possible, particularly after repeated reminders; however, delayed payments can be negotiated in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the governing board.

If there is a case where the parent is deemed to be refusing to pay without sufficient reason, the school will consider involving the LA's legal services to resolve the issue and recuperate owed funds.

5. Exceptional circumstances and remissions

The school will ensure that parents of pupils are aware of the help the school can extend to those in financial difficulty. Parents who may be eligible for remissions will be considered to be those in receipt of any of the benefits outlined in **section 3** of this policy.

Where the school expects that a parent with an overdue debt may qualify for remissions, the headteacher will contact them with details of the different types of bursaries available.

The governing board will consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether to waive or reduce the outstanding debt in these circumstances.

APPENDIX 1

1ST PAYMENT REMINDER

Carrington Junior School
Head Teacher: Mrs E Cameron
4 Chapel Road, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 9AA
Tel: 01628 521457 e-mail: office@carringtonjs.co.uk

Date.....

OUTSTANDING LUNCH PAYMENT FIRST REMINDER

Dear Parent/Carer,

Child.....Class.....

According to our records there is outstanding dinner monies for your child(ren). Please could you make payment on ePay by.....

If you have any queries or difficulties, please contact the school office.

Kind regards

Carrington Junior School

APPENDIX 2

2ND PAYMENT REMINDER

Carrington Junior School
Head Teacher: Mrs E Cameron
4 Chapel Road, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 9AA
Tel: 01628 521457 e-mail: office@carringtonjs.co.uk

Date.....

OUTSTANDING LUNCH PAYMENT SECOND REMINDER

Dear Parent/Carer,

Child.....Class.....

Following the letter dated.....sent home regarding outstanding school dinner money, our records show that this has not been paid. To date the amount of arrears is now £..... If the debt is not cleared, you must provide a packed lunch for your child(ren) from..... In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to school with the money or to provide sandwiches before lunch time. This debt needs to be paid via ePay by.....

If you have any queries or difficulties, please contact the school office.

Kind regards

Carrington Junior School