



## **Dinner Money Debt Recovery Policy**

**Date policy adopted: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Due for review: Spring 2028**

*The Board of Trustees has resolved to ensure that all children receive a meal at lunch time whilst recognising that the academy budget should not be used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers.*

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**1.0 Confirmation that the Dinner Money Debt Recovery Policy in respect of The Learning Partnership Trust has been discussed and formally adopted by the Board of Trustees.**

Signed by:

Chair of Trustees: ..... Date:

Print name:...Diane Hancock

## **2.0 Introduction**

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in cases of debts arising when parent/carers fail to pay for school meals. Parents/Carers will be sent a copy of this policy when their children reach Key Stage 2 (KS2).

All pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key stage 1 are currently entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School meals

## **3.0 General Principle**

- 3.1 School meals must be paid for in advance. If a pupil is to have meals for the duration of the week, monies must be received in advance of, or during that week.
- 3.2 If the academy is to accept pupils having an occasional meal, monies must be received during that week.
- 3.3 If debts are incurred, these have to be paid from the academy budget. This means that money which should be spent on all pupils' education in the academy is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers. The trust board see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

## **4:0 Free School Meals**

- 4.1 KS2 pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for in accordance with 3.1 and 3.2, except those confirmed as entitled to free school meals.
- 4.2 If parents/carers believe that their child/children may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, they should contact the academy or complete an online application form on the Essex.gov.uk website.
- 4.3 As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/carers make use of it.
- 4.4 The academy is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where entitlement has been verified.

## 5:0 Procedure for Collection of Arrears

- 5.1 It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate.
- 5.2 The Board of Trustees has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.
- A gentle reminder letter will be sent home after a parent/carer fails to pay for a pupil's school meal and the debt amounts to 5 days' meals. (Appendix 1)
  - The parent/carer will be informed in writing where 10 days' meals have been taken without payment and advised to make immediate payment/packed lunches must be provided until the arrears are cleared (Appendix 2).
  - A final letter to the parent/carer informing them that no meals will be provided for their child/children if payment has not been received by a specified date in accordance with the policy, the date when 15 days' meals have been taken without payment and they will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss the arrears. (Appendix 3)
- 5.3 Any parent/carer experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.
- 5.4 Once the final letter deadline has expired, the Board of Trustees will decide whether legal proceedings should begin.

## APPENDIX 1

Date

Gentle Reminder Letter

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Carer

According to our records there are some outstanding dinner monies for your **child/children**.

The arrears are for the week commencing **.....**

Please make the payment of £ **.....** tomorrow.

If you are in receipt of some benefits, you may be eligible for free school meals; this must be applied for.

If you have any queries regarding the above, please contact the academy office.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## APPENDIX 2

Date:

Accumulated School Meals Arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Carer

Following our letter dated ..... regarding outstanding dinner money, our records show that this has not been paid.

To date, the amount of arrears is £..... We may request that you attend a meeting to discuss the situation with the Headteacher.

Until the debt is cleared, you must provide a packed lunch for your child/children. In a case when payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to the academy with either the money or a packed lunch before lunch time.

These arrears need to be cleared as soon as possible. Payment can be made via the online payment system,

If you are in receipt of some benefits, you may be eligible for free school meals; this must be applied for.

Alternatively, any parent/carer experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

If you have any queries and/or wish to discuss this matter, please contact the academy office.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

## APPENDIX 3

Date:

Non-payment of school dinner money arrears

Child's name:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Our records show that you have not cleared the school dinner money arrears for your **child/children** despite previous letters sent home on ..... and .....

Arrears to date total £ .....

Following the academy's policy on dinner money debt recovery, a copy of which was sent to you when **your child started school/started in KS2**, I must inform you that if payment is not received with 5 working days, the Board of Trustees will be asked to consider starting legal proceedings for debt recovery. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to Court. Please therefore contact the school office to arrange an appointment with myself to discuss the arrears to avoid any court action.

Until the debt is cleared no meals will be provided in the academy and you need to provide a packed lunch for your **child/children**.

If you are in receipt of some benefits, you may be eligible for free school meals; this must be applied for.

Alternatively, any parent/carer experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the academy office.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher