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Marshfield CE VC Primary School

School Meals Payment Policy

Ratified by Governing Body on	Date: 07/07/2026
Due for review	Date: July 2028

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School Meals Payment Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to make clear how payment is made for school meals and to ensure a consistent and fair approach to any debt accrued by parents/carers whose children take school meals. The school pays for catering directly and as a result the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered. This, therefore, has a direct impact on the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

AIMS

- To outline the school's procedures, in alignment with government guidance, regarding the payment of school meals and the collection of debt accrued by non-payment.
- To work with parents to provide a flexible and fair approach to the payment of school meals.
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of school staff, parents and pupils.

PROVISION OF SCHOOL MEALS

At Marshfield Primary School, meals are prepared in the school kitchen by staff employed by ABM Schools catering service. A menu is available from the school office.

All children in Reception, year 1 and year 2 are entitled to a universal free school meal.

If you meet any of the criteria set out in appendix 1 your child may be entitled to free school meals (Pupil Premium). This is extra money paid directly to schools to support the education of children of parents and carers on a low income or those from military families.

School meals are available to pupils in year 3 to 6 at a cost of £3.30 per day (September 2026) or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals (see Appendix 1)

HOW TO APPLY FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS

You can apply for free school meals by completing the online form at the following link:

http://www.southglos.gov.uk/advice-and-benefits/benefits/free-school-meals/

South Gloucestershire Council will then:

- check your eligibility for free school meals
- send a letter to you confirming your free school meal entitlement.
- inform the school

Free school meals cannot be granted to any child until South Gloucestershire has received a correctly completed application.

If you are claiming free school meals due to receiving a qualifying benefit, or having a low income, you must inform South Gloucestershire immediately if your circumstances change. If you stop receiving one of the benefits listed in Appendix 1 you will need to inform South Gloucestershire because your entitlement to free school meals will stop.

Giving false information or failing to disclose a change in circumstances may lead to legal proceedings.

As of June 2026, South Gloucestershire will review your claim for free school meals on an annual basis using an online free school meals eligibility checking system provided by the Department for Education to confirm your entitlement.

Please note the online checking system only confirms or denies your eligibility to claim free school meals: it does not give any other information. If your entitlement cannot be confirmed through this process South Gloucestershire will contact you to ask you to provide up-to-date evidence of the benefit you receive.

PAYMENT OF SCHOOL MEALS

All school meals must be ordered and paid for in advance using our online platform Arbor (https://login.arbor.sc/). Meals can be booked in advance and up to 8:30am each day. Please contact the school if you experience any problems in accessing the system.

If you have booked your child's meal in advance but they are absent, Arbor will automatically cancel their meal for that day. If your child is present, but you know they will not require a lunch (due to a medical appointment, for example) please ensure you contact the school to cancel the lunch. Any meals not cancelled in sufficient time will be charged for as the kitchen prepares meals according to the numbers ordered. If you cancel your child's meal in sufficient time, the cost of the meal will be credited to the child's account on Arbor.

Should a child arrive at school without a booking or a packed lunch, the School will telephone home in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made and request a packed lunch be brought in. Children who do not have a lunch will be provided with a meal (this is likely to be a sandwich). If your child is not entitled to a free school meal or universal free school meal, the cost of this meal will be added to your child's Arbor account.

If a child's entitlement to free school meals has expired, the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or book and pay for meals in advance on Arbor.

MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL MEAL DEBT

The school understands that there may be unforeseen circumstances that result in school meal payment arrears, however in order to apply this policy fairly and transparently the following procedure will be adopted for all non-payment:

Week 1
If your child has a school meal that has not been paid for, a email will be sent from the school indicating the amount owing. A follow-up email will be sent later in the week if payment has not been received.

Week 2
If payment has not been received by the end of the week we will send a standard letter, see Appendix 2.

Week 3
If payment is not received by the end of the week we will send another letter outlining the school's intention to pursue the debt through the small claims court. See Appendix 3. If payment is not made, the head teacher reserves the right to request that a packed lunch be provided for the child until the debt is settled or a payment plan is agreed.

Week 4
The debt will be pursued through the small claims court.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, please contact the headteacher as soon as possible in order that we can work together to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

MONITORING SCHOOL MEALS DEBT

The headteacher will provide the Governing Body with details of any outstanding dinner money debt and the current position with regard to such debt at Governing Body meetings. It is the Governing Body's responsibility to ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently in order that the school budget is used to provide for children's learning and not to pay costs incurred by non-payment of school dinners.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Full Governing Body.

Signed …Steve Jefferys…… **Chair of Governors** date….07/07/26.....

Signed …Jessica Bolt…… **Headteacher** date….07/07/26…….

Appendix 1

You may apply for free school meals if you are in receipt of any of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit – your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Information on how to apply for Free School Meals can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals

Information about the Pupil Premium Grant can be found here:

Pupil premium: allocations and conditions of grant 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK

Appendix 2

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)
(Address Line 1) (Address Line 2)
(Address Line 3)
(Post Code)

Date: xx/xx/xx

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the school's financial records you have not paid dinner money for your child (pupil name) in Class: xx. As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt of £xx.

In order that the school's budget is not used to clear your school meals debt, please make arrangements for the outstanding dinner money debt to be paid immediately.

Once you have cleared the current debt, I should be grateful if you could ensure that you keep your account in credit.

The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 3

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)
(Address Line 1) (Address Line 2)
(Address Line 3)
(Post Code)

Date: xx/xx/xx

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

Following on from our letter dated……., according to the school's financial records you have not paid dinner money for your child (pupil name) in Class: xx. As at xx/xx/xx your account is now showing a debt of £xx.

In order that the school's budget is not used to clear your school meals debt please make arrangements for the outstanding dinner money debt to be paid immediately.

If your outstanding balance is not paid by Friday …….. then the school will follow the enclosed School Meals Payment Policy and pursue your debt through the smalls claims court.

Once you have cleared the current debt I should be grateful if you could ensure that you keep your account in credit.

The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher