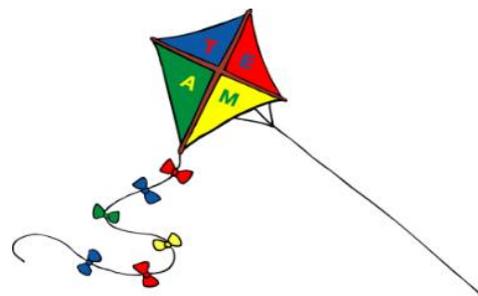


# Twyford St Mary's C of E Primary School



## School Meals Debt Policy

### Policy Statement

Each day pupils at Twyford St Mary's C of E Primary School have the choice of taking a hot meal provided by Hampshire County Council's caterers (HC3S) or bringing in a healthy packed lunch.

For Children in Key Stage 1, hot meals are provided free of charge under the Government's Universal Free School Meals initiative. Parents of children in Key Stage 2, are required to pay for school meals unless they are in receipt of certain welfare benefits (see Free School Meals section below).

This policy is designed to provide a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers of children in Key Stage 2 who take school meals and to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up.

### Payment for School Meals

Meals should be paid for in advance or on the day that the meal is taken. Payment should be made using our online payments system although we can also accept cash or cheques made payable to Hampshire County Council. Any amounts prepaid will be carried over to the next term / academic year. Upon leaving the school, any outstanding credit amount will be returned to the parent / carer.

### Free School Meals

Free school meals are available for children whose families are in receipt of certain welfare benefits. Parents can check their eligibility and make an application online at: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/freeschoolmeals>

### Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of school meal debt, it is considered that the fairest system to all families is a 'zero tolerance' approach. Although this may seem harsh to some parents it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not just a few.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, or if a child's entitlement to free school meals has ceased, the School will contact the parent / carer by phone or text in the first instance to establish whether a packed lunch is to be provided or whether a school meal is required.

If a school meal is required and this is a one-off occurrence e.g. forgotten / lost dinner money or if the parent is unable to bring a 'forgotten' packed lunch to the school before lunchtime, the school will provide a meal subject to payment being received within 7 days. Details will be recorded and a record maintained and monitored to ensure payment is received.

Where a child regularly arrives at school without a packed lunch or there is insufficient payment for a hot meal, the school will contact the parent to establish the reasons why. In cases of financial hardship which is affecting the parent's ability to pay, the parent will be encouraged to apply for free school meals or speak to the Headteacher in confidence.

If payment in settlement of school meals is not received within 7 days or where the outstanding dinner money exceeds £10.50 per child, a formal letter will be sent to the parent/carer requesting immediate payment. The letter will also inform them that the school will not be prepared to provide any further school meals until the debt is repaid and that they must, therefore, provide their child with a healthy packed lunch.

If the child is not provided with the requested packed lunch and the parent / carer cannot be contacted, the School will provide a roll, drink and a piece of fruit only. The cost will be passed on to the parent/carer.

If the debt exceeds £25 for a family and / or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, a formal letter will be sent to the parent /carer explaining that the school is not obliged to provide a school meal where advance payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for Free School Meals has not been received. The School also reserves the right to commence legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debt and inform the local authority that parents are failing to provide a child with a suitable meal at lunchtime.

Where necessary the school will utilise a court claim, in which case parents / carers will be liable for all costs incurred in addition to the original debt. Such measures will be taken even after a child no longer attends the school if they have left without settling all outstanding money owed.

### **Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts**

Details of outstanding dinner money and the current position with regard to such debt will be provided to the Resources Committee.

Any families or staff with significant outstanding debts will be informed by the school at the end of each Term.

The write-off of any outstanding debt must be approved by the Resources Committee.

**Date of Policy Approval: Spring 2022**

**Date of Next Review: Spring 2025**