

# Forty Hill CE School

## No Debt and Debt Recover Policy



### Introduction

Forty Hill CE School has adopted a strict NO DEBT policy relating to the following facilities and services:

- School meals service
- Extended hours facility
- After school club activities

If debts are incurred, then the already over-stretched school budget has to be used to pay for them. This means that the money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. We feel that this is unfair on our pupils and therefore we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

### School Meal Debt

- If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to **Free School Meals**, please contact the office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application. In order to claim, parents must complete an application form and provide any supporting evidence required. Entitlement to free school meals will only apply from the date the completed form and evidence is received and the application has been approved. It cannot be backdated.
- Parents/carers must pay in advance for school meals, if their child does not qualify for free school meals, using any of the methods of payment outlined below:
  - Online using ParentPay
  - At Parent Pay Points in shops (please be aware these payments take up to 48 hours to show as a credit on your account. Receipts can be shown to the Office if necessary)
- Parents are encouraged to pay half termly or termly in advance. Payments are recorded and reconciled by the School Business Manager. If payment is not received, parents/carers will be sent a reminder at the end of each week, via the ParentPay email system. A further reminder will be sent on a Sunday
- If the debt is unpaid, a letter will be sent advising parents of this debt and the steps that need to be taken in order to pay the debt quickly
- Every effort will be made by the school to ascertain whether financial difficulties are present and advice will be given accordingly. All reminders (copies of emails, letters, record of verbal reminders etc) will be kept on file. If payment of the debt is not received the next day, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin proceedings against parents to recover the debt.
- While the school will never allow any child to go hungry, parents should also be aware that they are responsible for providing lunch for their children and, if appropriate, the school may inform Enfield Children's Services if they do not do so. Enfield Children's Services may also be informed if parents are not carrying out their responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

### Severe Financial Hardship

In cases of severe financial hardship, foodbank vouchers may be obtained from frontline care workers such as clergy, local councillors, doctors and social workers.

### Extended Hours (Den Club) Debt

- Parents/carers must pay in advance for the use of the Extended Hours (Den Club) Service, using the method of payment outlined below:

#### ➤ Online using ParentPay

- Parents are encouraged to pay monthly, half termly or termly in advance. Payments are recorded and reconciled by the School Business Manager. If payment is not received, parents/carers will be sent a reminder at the end of each week, via the ParentPay email system. A further reminder will be sent on a Monday
- If the debt is unpaid, a letter will be sent advising parents of this debt and the steps that need to be taken in order to pay the debt quickly
- Every effort will be made by the school to ascertain whether financial difficulties are present and advice will be given accordingly. All reminders (copies of emails, letters, record of verbal reminders etc) will be kept on file. If payment of the debt is not received the next day, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin proceedings against parents to recover the debt.
- Should a debt arise and it is not cleared upon request, the school reserves the right to refuse access to that facility or service until the debt is paid.

#### **Other School Debt**

As with school meals, parents and carers are expected to pay in advance for all other paid-for facilities and services offered by the school. Should a debt arise and it is not cleared upon request, the school reserves the right to refuse access to that facility or service until the debt is paid. The school may also begin proceedings to recover any such debt.

#### **Debt Recovery**

1. The school will actively pursue the collection of any sums owed to it. The parents of a pupil are jointly and severally liable for any charges
2. The administration staff are required to ensure that:
  - Copies of all invoices are kept and records of outstanding charges are maintained
  - Dated documentary evidence is kept of all steps undertaken to recover any debt, including copies of statements and letters sent and records of phone calls
3. The Governing Body will:
  - Consider and approve the arrangements for debt recovery
  - Recommend the maximum level of debt which any family would be permitted to incur
  - Minute their approval of any legal action
4. The school will:
  - Not pass on to the debtor any costs incurred in pursuing the debt
  - Give the debtor appropriate notification and reasonable time to settle the debt
  - Before taking any legal action, send the debtor a final statement stating that it is the final notice and that further action will be taken if the debt is not settled within a specified time, which must not be less than 10 days
5. The Headteacher may waive or reduce a debt if it is reasonably believed the debtor is experiencing financial hardship. A debt may also be written off by resolution of the Governing Body on the recommendation of the Headteacher. A recommendation to write off a debt may be made when it is considered that all reasonable avenues to recover the debt have been exhausted and it is not likely to be cost effective to pursue the debt through legal action
6. Any action related to an outstanding debt or the waiving or reduction of a debt must be dealt with confidentially and the anonymity of any family involved must be preserved.

## **APPENDIX 1 - Day One of Lunch Debt Letter**

Dear (Parent's name),

Today your child's ParentPay school meal account was in debt. Advance payment is required for children's lunches in Key Stage Two and email reminders Friday and Sunday have been sent from the school.

Our governors have agreed a two day grace period and the school has provided your child with a hot school meal today. Please settle your arrears together with an appropriate sum to cover future meals immediately.

If you believe that your child might qualify for entitlement to free school meals, please contact the school office for further information. Free school meals are a statutory entitlement and should be claimed if a child qualifies. In order to claim, parents must complete an application form and provide any supporting evidence required. We are more than happy to help you with your application.

We will only be able to provide one additional meal for your child without advance payment. If you do not credit your account, you may choose to provide a packed lunch or take your child home for lunch. Please let the office know if this is the case.

If you are experiencing severe financial hardship, please contact me in confidence or contact the clergy, your local councillor, doctor or care agencies for Foodbank vouchers.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Newham  
Headteacher

## **APPENDIX 2 - Day Two of Lunch Debt Letter**

Dear (Parent's name),

We contacted you yesterday via email and letter (VERBALLY IF EAL) concerning your child's ParentPay school meal account being in debt. This is in addition to the two email reminders sent on Friday and over the weekend by the school. However, the account is still in arrears.

Yesterday we provided your child with a hot school meal and our Debt Policy allows you one final day of grace. If advance payment on ParentPay is not cleared by tomorrow, please bring in a packed lunch for your child or take your child home for lunch and confirm this with the school office before 9.30am. The arrears will need to be paid in order for your child to return to school dinners.

Parents are responsible for providing lunch for their children and, if appropriate, the school may inform Enfield Children's Services if they do not do so.

If you believe that your child might qualify for entitlement to free school meals, please contact the school office for further information. Free school meals are a statutory entitlement and should be claimed if a child qualifies. In order to claim, parents must complete an application form and provide any supporting evidence required. We are more than happy to help you with your application.

In cases of severe financial hardship, please contact me in confidence. You may be entitled to Foodbank vouchers through your clergy, your local councillor, doctor or care agencies.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Newham  
Headteacher

### **APPENDIX 3 - Day Three of Lunch Debt Letter**

Dear (Parent's name),

We have contacted you via email and by two letters (**VERBALLY IF EAL**) concerning your child's ParentPay school meal account being in debt. This is in addition to the two email reminders sent on Friday and over the weekend by the school. However, the account is still in arrears.

We have provided your child with two hot meals already this week and your child was given cheese, crackers, salad, fruit and a drink for lunch today.

Please bring in a packed lunch for your child for tomorrow or take your child home for lunch and confirm this with the school before 9.30am. The arrears will need to be paid in order for your child to return to school dinners. Whilst we do not wish to prevent your child from having a hot meal, our school funds are unable to continue to pay for your child's meals.

Parents are responsible for providing lunch for their children and, if appropriate, the school may inform Enfield Children's Services if they do not do so.

If you believe that your child might qualify for entitlement to free school meals, please contact the school office for further information. Free school meals are a statutory entitlement and should be claimed if a child qualifies. In order to claim, parents must complete an application form and provide any supporting evidence required. We are more than happy to help you with your application.

In cases of severe financial hardship, please contact me in confidence. You may be entitled to Foodbank vouchers through your clergy, your local councillor, doctor or care agencies.

Yours sincerely,

Mr J Newham  
Head Teacher