ASTON-ON-TRENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

DINNER MONEY POLICY

This policy has been impact assessed in the light of all other school policies, including the Disability Equality Scheme

SIGNED:	PRINT NAME:	DATE:
	C. Jones Chair of Governors	24.03.25
SIGNED:	**PRINT NAME:**	**DATE:**
	S. Moore Headteacher	24.03.25

The Aston on Trent Primary School dinner money policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the local education authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt, the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered, thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

Scope

With the introduction, in September 2014, of the Government '***Universal Infant Free School Meals'*** scheme for all infant pupils, this school dinner money policy is currently applicable to Key Stage 2 pupils only.

Provision of School Meals

The school meals service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for by someone. Free School Meals (FSM) are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. Anyone who may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents/carers who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a school meal each day.

Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website.

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires, or the parents/ carers personal circumstances change, the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or book and pay for meals in advance via Parentpay.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £3.25 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals **must** be paid for in advance. Any

revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers as soon as possible prior to the new charge taking effect.

Payment for School Meals

Aston on Trent Primary School uses ParentPay to collect payment electronically for school meals. All families are set up with an account when they join the school. Parents must book and pay for meals in advance using this system. The school must ensure that all dinner money is received in a timely manner in accordance with the school's Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by audit.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the school's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of school meal debt the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue 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 a small number.

If a child eats a school meal that has not been booked the school office staff will book that meal retrospectively via ParentPay, and a Parenthub message will be sent to inform the parents of this action, that payment is due, and that they need to book future meals before another meal is eaten.

Parents must contact school if they believe their child/ren is/are entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the head teacher.

If the debt exceeds £30 for a family and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the school business officer will create an invoice via SAP and send this to parents. The debt in ParentPay would be written off at this point and money collected via the invoice. If the invoice is not paid on time DCC will refer this to the legal department to secure payment.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

At each meeting of the Resources Committee, the head teacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money debt referred to legal and still unpaid. The aim of

the school's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to the school's solicitors. The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

All write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Resources Committee following submission of details of the debt by the head teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.