

Policy:	<b>Debt Policy for Parents and Carers</b> (non statutory)	
This policy was adopted or reviewed on:	March 2017	
Review Date:	March 2019	

**Signed:** Scott Heath, Chair of Governors

### Introduction

Oxley Primary School has adopted a **NO DEBT** policy relating to school meals and Breakfast Club. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. The Governors are confident that parents and carers will agree that this is unacceptable, and we therefore ask that all parents give this policy their full support. No parent would, for example, take their child out to a cafe, pub or restaurant for a meal and expect them to be given food without paying. The same principle applies at school.

### How are payments made?

All payments for meals and Breakfast Club must be made through the **School Money** system. Information about this system, including login information, is provided to all parents at the start of each year or when their child joins the school. **Please contact the school office if you have any questions about using this system.**

### Payments for school meals and Breakfast Club must be made in advance.

Parents/Carers who do not wish their child(ren) to have a school meal must provide them with a healthy packed lunch instead.

### What is free and what are parents/carers expected to pay for?

- If you are entitled to **Free School Meals**, then all school meals are provided **free of charge**. For these children, the school also receives **Pupil Premium funding (over £1300 per child per year)** from the Government; amongst many other things, we use this to provide **free Breakfast Club places** to these children, if their parents or carers want them to attend.
- If your child is in **Reception** or **Key Stage 1** (Year 1 and Year 2), then the Government also provides **Universal Free School Meals** for **all children**. This is **not** the same as Free School Meals as described above, and does **not** attract Pupil Premium funding. However, it does mean your child can have a freshly cooked lunch in school for free.
- If your child is in **Key Stage 2** (Year 3 and older), and you are not entitled to Free School Meals, **all hot meals and Breakfast Club sessions must be paid for.**

**If you think that your child(ren) 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. It also ensures Pupil Premium funding is awarded for 6 years, regardless of future circumstances. We will help you all we can with your application.**

## What will happen if I owe money to the school?

### We have adopted a 5-Staged Approach to Debt:

#### Stage 1 - as soon as a child's account goes into debt.

School will carry out checks:

- is this a Free School Meals child, are dates correct?
- Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
- Does this parent normally pay on time; is this just a one off?

Action: *School Money* reminders are sent out via text message and email, detailing amount owing, when last payment was received and a reminder of login details for making payments. A paper copy of the child's payment statement sent home. School will try to contact the parent by phone.

#### Stage 2 - no contact from the parent and/or the debt has not been cleared within 1 week of Stage 1 reminder.

School will continue to carry out checks as in Stage 1.

Action: Formal letter from the Headteacher sent to the parents/carers (see Appendix A).

#### Stage 3 - no contact from the parent and/or the debt has not been cleared within 1 week of Stage 2 reminder.

School will carry out checks as in Stage 1.

School will continue to attempt to make contact with the parents/carers.

Action: Second formal letter from the Headteacher sent to parents/carers, notifying that **Breakfast Club places and / or school lunches will no longer be provided** from a specified date until payments have been made (see Appendix B).

#### Stage 4 - no contact from the parent and/or the debt has not been cleared by the date specified, following the Stage 3 reminder.

School will continue to carry out checks as in Stage 1.

School will continue to attempt to make contact with the parents/carers.

Action: School to contact parent by text message or phone call, notifying of **withdrawal of Breakfast Club place and/or stopping of provision of school meals** until debt is cleared. In addition, a formal letter from Headteacher will be sent out, (see Appendix C).

#### Stage 5 - no contact from the parent and/or the debt has not been cleared within 1 week of Stage 4 reminder.

School to continue to try and make contact with the parents/carers. Where possible, a payment plan will be agreed to enable the parent to pay off the outstanding debt.

Action: School to seek advice from Local Authority regarding legal action to recover money owed. If school is also concerned about the welfare of the child, a referral will be made to Social Services.

## Appendix A - Formal Letter from the Headteacher

Date

Dear

### **Outstanding payments for School Lunches and / or Breakfast Club**

\*insert section from the School Money page\*

We have previously sent reminders and have attempted to contact you to discuss the outstanding payments above. We do understand that, from time to time, people can experience financial difficulties. If this is the case, we will always deal with your situation with the utmost confidentiality. Please do contact me or the school office if you are experiencing any difficulties making the payments.

If you think your child/children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals (this is **not** the same as the universal free school meals given to all children in Reception, Y1 and Y2), please contact the office staff, who will be happy to help with the application process.

It is important to note that, if school lunches or Breakfast Club sessions are not paid for, debts are incurred, and the school has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents.

If we do not receive payment or hear from you within the next 7 days, we will have to take further action in respect of the money owed.

Yours sincerely

Jason Gilman  
Headteacher

## Appendix B - Second Formal Letter from the Headteacher

Date

Dear

### Outstanding payments for School Lunches and / or Breakfast Club

\*insert section from the School Money page\*

Further to my previous letter and other reminders from the school, I note that you have not yet paid the outstanding amount for Breakfast Club / School Lunches.

It is therefore essential that you either make arrangements to pay the amount owed or to contact the school if you believe there are circumstances which you are making it difficult for you to make payments.

If we do not hear from you or receive payment by **XXXdate**, we will have no choice but to **withdraw your child's place from Breakfast club with effect from XXXdate**, until the outstanding money is paid in full.

If we do not hear from you or receive payment by **XXXdate**, then we will have no choice but to **cease providing your child with a school meal with effect from XXXdate**, until the outstanding money is paid in full.

Yours sincerely

Jason Gilman  
Headteacher

## Appendix C - Confirmation of withdrawal of Breakfast Club and/or School Lunch

Date

Dear

### Outstanding payments for School Lunches and / or Breakfast Club

\*insert section from the School Money page\*

Further to my previous letters and other reminders from the school, I note that you have not yet paid the outstanding amount for Breakfast Club / School Lunches.

I am therefore left with no option but to **cease providing your child with a school meal** with effect from **(date)** until the outstanding money is paid in full. You will need to provide a packed lunch or make arrangements with the school office for collecting your child and having lunch at home.

I am therefore left with no option but to **withdraw your child's place from Breakfast club** with effect from **(date)** until the outstanding money is paid in full.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt, and to inform social services of our concerns if we have reason to believe that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunch time. If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely

Jason Gilman  
Headteacher