



DINNER DEBT RECOVERY POLICY

The Board of Trustees has resolved to ensure that all children receive a meal at lunchtime whilst recognising the trust budget should not be used to pay for debts incurred by individual Parents/Guardians.

Policy Reviewed by:	FAR Committee
----------------------------	---------------

Date Reviewed:	13 th March 2026
-----------------------	-----------------------------

Next review due:	February 2028
-------------------------	---------------

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	General Principle.....
3.0	Free School Meals.....
4.0	Procedure for collection of arrears.....
Appendix 1 – Gentle reminder letter – School Meals Arrears	
Appendix 2 - Accumulated School Meals Arrears Letter	
Appendix 3 - Non-Payment of School Meals Arrears	

1.0 Introduction

This policy concerns the collection of school meals income and the approach to be taken in cases of debts arising when a Parent/Guardian fails to pay for school meals.

This policy is applicable to Parents/Guardians with children in Key Stage 2 (KS2).

This policy is not applicable to Parents/Guardians with children in the Foundation Stage and Key stage 1 as they are entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School meals.

2.0 General Principle

School meals **must** be paid for in advance of the pupil having a meal and can be paid weekly, half termly or termly. School meals **must not** be paid for in arrears.

If the school is to accept pupils having an occasional meal, monies **must** be received during that week.

If debts are incurred due to non-payment of school meals and not satisfied by Parents/Guardians, the debt will need to be recovered from the trust budget. This means that money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual Parents/Guardians. The Board of Trustees see this as unacceptable and request that all Parents/Guardians give this policy their full support.

3.0 Free School Meals

KS2 pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to free school meals.

- If Parents/Guardians believe that their child/children may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, they should contact the school office as soon as possible.
- As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that Parents/Guardians make use of it.
- The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where entitlement has been verified.

4.0 Procedure for Collection of Arrears

The Board of Trustees accepts that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons. However, arrears **must not** be allowed to accumulate.

The Board of Trustees has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

- A gentle reminder letter / text message will be sent home for arrears in excess of **£13.50**.

For arrears less than £13.50, a letter will be sent where the arrear appears on the report for more than 1 week. **(Appendix 1).**

- The Parent/Guardian will be informed in writing where the arrear has been outstanding for two weeks and advised to make immediate payment **(Appendix 2).**
- A final letter to the Parent/Guardian will be sent when the arrear has been outstanding for three weeks. This will inform the Parent/Guardian that no meals will be provided for their child/children until the debt is cleared and that legal proceedings may be started if payment is not received within 5 working days. **(Appendix 3).**

4.1 Any Parent/Guardian experiencing financial difficulty should contact the school office and make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher/ Head of Academy and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

4.2 No meals will be provided to pupils when arrears exceed three weeks.

4.3 Once the final letter deadline has expired the Board of Trustees will decide whether legal proceedings should begin.

Dear Parent / Carer of

School Meals Arrears

According to our records arrears have accumulated on your child's dinner account.

The outstanding arrears balance of [£.....] for the week commencing [.....] is payable immediately.

To make payment easier, if you would like to sign up for our online payment system, please contact the school office and they will send home registration details for you.

If you have any queries regarding the above arrears balance, please contact the school office to discuss.

Yours sincerely

[Name of Headteacher/ Head of Academy]

[School Name]

Dear Parent / Carer of

Accumulated School Meals Arrears

Following our letter dated [...] regarding the arrears balance on your child's dinner account, our records show that this has not been paid.

To date, the amount of arrears owed to the school is [£.....].

We now request that you attend a meeting to discuss the situation with the [Headteacher/ Head of Academy/Deputy Head of Academy]. Please telephone the school office as soon as possible to arrange an appointment.

These arrears must be cleared as soon as possible. Payment can be made via our online payment system, cash or cheque (*payable to **Epsilon Star Multi Academy Trust***).

Any Parent/Guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the [Headteacher/Head of Academy] and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

If you have any queries and/or wish to discuss this matter, please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

[Name of Headteacher/Head of Academy]

[School Name]

Dear Parent / Carer of

Non-Payment of School Meals Arrears

Our records to date show that you have not cleared the accumulated arrears on your child/children's school dinner account despite previous letters sent home on [.....] and [.....].

Your total arrears balance to date is [£].

Following the Trust policy on dinner money debt recovery, a copy of which was sent to you when your child joined [school name or Key Stage 2], I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days of receipt of this letter, the Board of Trustees will be asked to consider starting legal proceedings for debt recovery. I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in a summons to Court.

With effect immediately and until the debt is cleared no meals will be provided in school and you will need to provide a packed lunch for your child/children.

Any Parent/Guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Headteacher/ Head of Academy and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school office as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

[Name of Headteacher/Head of Academy]
[School Name]

