



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
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Date Reviewed:	13 th October 2023
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Policy Approved by:	Board of Trustees
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Board of Trustees:	7 th November 2023
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Next review due:	October 2025
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1.0 Confirmation that the Dinner Debt Recovery Policy in respect of the Epsilon Star Trust and its constituent academies, Kents Hill Junior School and Lubbins Park Primary Academy & Nursery has been reviewed by the FAR Committee and formerly adopted by the Board of Trustees.

Signed by:

Chair of FAR Committee:

Print name: Alex Cadogan

Date: 13th October 2023

Chair of Trustees:

Print name: Annie Sutton

Date: TBC

2.0 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.

3.0 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.

4:0 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.

5:0 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 after one week / in excess of

£12.50 accumulated arrears (**Appendix 1**).

- The Parent/Guardian will be informed in writing where two weeks / in excess of **£25.00** arrears has accumulated and advised to make immediate payment (**Appendix 2**).
- A final letter to the Parent/Guardian will be sent when four weeks of arrears has been accumulated. This will inform the Parent/Guardian that no meals will be provided for their child/children if payment is not received by the specified date. (**Appendix 3**).

- 5.1 Any Parent/Guardian experiencing financial difficulty may make a claim for the remission of charges which should be addressed to the Head of Academy and will be considered confidentially on an individual basis.
- 5.2 No meals will be provided to pupils when arrears exceed four weeks / in excess of £50.00.
- 5.3 Once the final letter deadline has expired the Board of Trustees will decide whether legal proceedings should begin.

[Date:]

[Child's name:]

Dear [Parent/Guardian Name]

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.

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 Head of Academy]

[School Name]

[Date:]

[Child's name:]

Dear [Parent/Guardian Name]

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 [Head of Academy/Deputy Head of Academy]. Please telephone the school office as soon as possible to arrange an appointment.

Until the debt is cleared, you must provide a packed lunch for your child/children. In a case when payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, we will phone to ask you to come to the school with either the money owed or a packed lunch before lunch time.

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 [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 Head of Academy]

[School Name]

[Date:]

[Child's name:]

Dear [Parent/Guardian Name]

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 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 Head of Academy]

[School Name]

