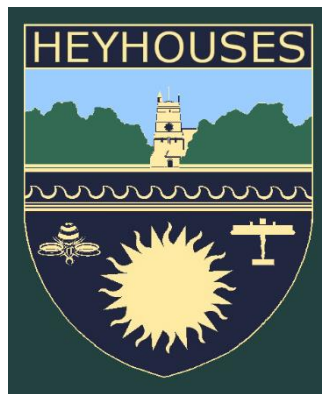


Heyhouses Endowed C of E Primary School



SCHOOL MEALS PAYMENT & ARREARS POLICY

Updated: March 2023
To be revised March 2024

Introduction

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals. This policy will be published on the school website. Parents/carers are advised of the policy when their children start at Heyhouses and through periodic reminders in the newsletter.

General Principle

School meals must be paid for in advance. Parents can opt to pay either weekly, monthly or up to half a term at a time if this is more convenient.

If children are absent and parents notify school before 10am, their dinner money for that day is credited. If a child leaves school after 10am and a school meal has been ordered for them, then this will still be charged.

Where a child's dinner money account is in credit, refunds will only be given at the end of each term and only in the following circumstances:

- Where a child is leaving our school to attend another.
- Where parents request a refund and have credits totalling over £11.

In all other circumstances the credit will be carried forward to the following term.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on all children's education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents / carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents / carers give this policy their full support.

Any families who are experiencing temporary financial difficulties are asked to contact the school so we can work together through the issue, rather than let arrears accumulate without any communication with the school. Where parents/carers have communicated that they are having difficulty paying the debt, wherever possible the school will work with the parent/carer to agree a suitable repayment period.

Free School Meals Entitlement

Children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 receive Universal Free School Meals. Children in Key Stage 2 will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to Free School Meals. If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact the County Council via one of the following methods:

- Clicking on this link to access the online application for Free School Meals [Free school meals - Lancashire County Council](#).
- Completing the application form and returning to school. Please contact the school office if you wish a form to be sent home.

As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying children it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to children where this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority. If parents/carers need any assistance with the Free School Meals application, they should contact the school office.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

- School meals should be paid in advance via ParentPay. The current cost of a school meal is £2.40 a day. This will increase to £2.50 as of 1st September 2023.
- Parents/Carers/Staff will be contacted weekly when their account is more than £12 in debt which is one week in arrears. This will increase to £12.50 as of 1st September 2023
- Parents/Carers will be contacted by telephone when arrears exceed £36 (3 weeks of school lunches) and advised to make immediate payment. At this stage, the Parent/Carer will also be advised to contact the Welfare Rights Service if they think that their child/ren are entitled to free meals. This will increase to £37.50 as of 1st September 2023.
- Parents/Carers will be asked to provide their child/ren with a packed lunch if payment is not received by a specified date (once £48.00 of arrears have accumulated. This will increase to £50 as of 1st September 2023).
- If no payment is received this information will be escalated to the Bursar.
- Discretion to be exercised if free meals application has been submitted.
- Discretion to be exercised if prior agreement has been made with the Headteacher/School Office.
- When arrears exceed £60, the letter in Appendix A is issued in agreement with the Headteacher. This will increase to £62.50 as of 1st September 2023.
- When arrears exceed £72 letter in Appendix B is issued in agreement with the Headteacher. This will increase to £75 as of 1st September 2023.
- If Parents/Carers do not respond to our communications, Appendix C may be issued in agreement with the Headteacher and the details referred to legal services.
- When a child leaves school and there is an outstanding balance on their ParentPay account any balance will be refunded wherever possible

Appendix A

Date XX

Dear XX

SCHOOL MEAL ARREARS – INSERT CHILD’S NAME

Although the school office has contacted you a number of times, your school meal account remains in significant arrears of over £48.

The amount overdue as at today is £XX

If you have difficulty with the payment of these arrears, please contact the School Office on 01253 722014. If this has been an oversight, please settle the arrears by XX (a week later).

You will appreciate that this situation cannot be allowed to continue. If the arrears are not paid in full by this date, in accordance with our School Meals Payment and Arrears Policy, you may be referred to the Lancashire County Council Legal Team.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Collings

Bursar

Appendix B

Date XX

Dear XX

SCHOOL MEALS ARREARS – INSERT CHILD’S NAME

Further to our previous letter, and as no payment has been received, please note that your account is now overdue by £XX.

If you are having difficulty with the payment of this debt, please contact me to discuss this further. In accordance with our School Meals Payment and Arrears Policy, if full payment is not received by XX, and you have not already started to send your child/ren with a packed lunch, you will now need to do this.

If we do not receive payment by the date specified above, this matter will be referred to the Lancashire County Council Legal Team.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Collings

Bursar

Appendix C

Date XX

Dear XX

SCHOOL MEALS ARREARS – INSERT CHILD’S NAME

Further to my letter of XX, your outstanding debt has not been settled. The amount overdue in respect of school meals for XX is: £XX

In accordance with our School Meals Payment and Arrears Policy, this has now been referred to the Lancashire County Council Legal Team.

If you wish to make a payment, please bring cash or a cheque made payable to Heyhouses CofE Primary School to the school office as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs E Hodgson

Headteacher