

GREAT CHART PRIMARY SCHOOL

DINNER MONEY DEBT PROCEDURE

September 2025



A Great Place to Discover and Learn

Vision Statement

A respectful community where we thrive and achieve our full potential as confident life long learners

Mission Statement

Preparing for life in our ever changing world, by providing opportunities to develop core values and a love of learning

Our core value is Respect

Our termly values: Team work, Ambition, Responsibility, Resilience, Kindness & Independence

Introduction

This policy provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents/carers clearly understand what is expected of them.

It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that a child is provided with either a packed lunch or a school meal each day.

The school provides a service to ensure school meals are provided for pupils whether they are provided via pupils being eligible for Free School Meals or parents paying for their child's meal in advance.

A policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, the Governors wish to implement one that ensures meals are paid for, whilst aiding parents/carers during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime.

Great Chart Primary School has a clear 'no debt' policy relating to the school meal service.

We hope that through implementing this debt policy we will help parents/carers manage school dinner money and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is used appropriately.

Procedures

School meals must be paid for in advance of meals being taken. All payments are made online through ARBOR. Meals may be paid for on a daily, weekly, half termly or termly basis. The minimum payment accepted for meals is £2.60. Children will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals.

If a parent/carer genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of up to £5.20 per child. However this debt must be paid immediately on request, before any further meals are provided.

As soon as the school is notified that a child is leaving, a member of the office staff will run a check on the balance of the child's account. Any debt outstanding must be paid in full, and any credit balance will be refunded.

Free School meals

If you think your child may be eligible to receive free school meals there is now a fast and easy new way to check and prove eligibility. Simply visit <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals> and follow the instructions.

Debt procedures

In collecting any outstanding debts, a step by step process will be followed. Everyday dinner money debt will be reviewed, if an individual child's account is £5.20 or more in debt the following procedure will apply:

1. Each debt will be reviewed and a text message will be sent, via Arbor, to the parent. (Appendix A) This text requests that the child is provided with a packed lunch until the debt is cleared. The

School Office will ensure this is adhered to. If the child arrives at school without a packed lunch the parent/carer will be telephoned asking them to bring this into school immediately.

In the event that a packed lunch is not provided, the school reserves the right to request advice and assistance from Children's Social Services.

2. For those debts which received a text message and the debt has not been cleared the following day, a phone call will be made by one of the office team to find out when the debt will be cleared. The parent/carer will also be reminded that a packed lunch must be provided from home until the debt is cleared.

In the event that a packed lunch is not provided, the school reserves the right to request advice and assistance from Children's Social Services.

3. For those debts that have received a text message and a phone call and the debt has still not been cleared, "Debt Letter One" (Appendix B) will be sent via Royal Mail requesting the immediate payment of the outstanding debt.

4. For those debts that have received items 1-3 and the debts have still not been cleared "debt letter two" will be sent via Royal Mail recorded delivery. (Appendix C)

5. The School Business Manager will contact the parent by telephone to arrange an appointment. If this meeting is not kept or a satisfactory situation agreed, the debt will be referred to the Finance and Audit Committee and "debt letter three" will be sent via Royal Mail recorded delivery. (Appendix D).

6. For debts, which received "letter three" the Governors will make a decision on next steps to recover the debt.

If parents do not contact the school regarding the debt and no payment is paid, additional administration costs may be added to the debt. If this is necessary, the Governors may seek to reclaim these costs and any outstanding debt through the Small Claims Court.

The school reserves the right to reclaim any debt from payment for trips, breakfast club account etc that the parents have made.

If parents fall into debt more than three times in a term the school reserves the right to refuse to provide meals for the rest of the term.

If any monies are outstanding at the end of the academic year, the school reserves the right to not provide a school dinner for the next academic term until the debt is paid.

We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child.

In the event of a child leaving with an outstanding debt, the Governors will need to consider what further steps to take. This may include contacting the child's new school and informing them of concerns.

Dinner Money Debt Procedure

Appendix A

Your child(ren)'s account has an outstanding balance of £..... Please can this be settled today.
Please can you provide a packed lunch until the debt is cleared. Thank you

Dinner Money Debt Procedure

Appendix B - Letter 1

Date :

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms XXXXX

Re: School Dinner Payments for.....

Dinner Money Rate: Daily £2.60

According to our records has been taking school meals recently. It appears that we have not received sufficient money to cover this cost. We sent you a text message on and we phoned you on..... but you have not communicated with the school to discuss how and when the debt will be cleared.

The outstanding balance as at..... was £.....

I would be grateful if payment could be paid by, via ARBOR including monies for the forthcoming week if this is relevant. It is the policy of Great Chart Primary School that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children.

I would be grateful if you could arrange for prompt payment of this outstanding debt.

Please ensure is provided with a packed lunch until this debt is cleared and school dinners can re-commence.

Due to the ever increasing debts owing for children's dinners, it is imperative that payment for meals is made promptly to the school, in advance of meals being taken.

Thank you for your assistance. If you wish to discuss this further, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Office Manager

Dinner Money Debt Procedure

Appendix C – Letter 2

Date:

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms XXXXXXXX

Re: School Dinners

You will recall that we wrote to you previously regarding the outstanding balance on..... dinner money account. The balance as at is £.....

As you know, it is the policy of Great Chart Primary School that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children.

As you have failed to clear the outstanding debt as previously requested, via ARBOR, I will be phoning you in due course to arrange an appointment to discuss this further.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions in the meantime.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

School Business Manager

Dinner Money Debt Procedure

Appendix D

Date:

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms XXXXXXXX

Re: School Dinners

I am disappointed you were unable to make your appointment on..... To discuss arrangements to recover the outstanding dinner money debt of £

In line with the school's Dinner Money Debt Policy and procedures, a copy of which is available on the school website, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to the Governing Body who may decide to make a claim in the small claims court.

The Governing Body will consider the situation and you will be contacted in due course regarding the recovery of the outstanding debt.

Yours sincerely

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

Headteacher