

# Hartford Junior School



## Dinner Money Debt Policy

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### Introduction

The responsibility of ensuring school meal payments are made by parents lies with the school. In addition, Hertfordshires Catering LTD cannot and will not sustain any debts outstanding. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, the Governors of Hartford Junior School 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.

### Procedures

School meals must be paid for in advance of meals being taken. All meals for the period being paid for must be paid via the Schoolgrid online payment system.

Meals can be paid for on a weekly, half termly or termly basis. If parents choose to pay either half termly or termly and a debt arises at the end of the period it will be the parent's responsibility to provide the office with information as to where the error occurs.

When a child is leaving it is imperative for the school office to check the balance of the child's account and refund any credit balances and obtain any debt outstanding.

If a pupil has a school meal everyday it will be assumed that on promotion days that they will take that meal. Parents will need to advise the school office if that is not the case. If a pupil does not have school meals every day the parents will need to return the appropriate form to confirm that lunch is required.

If you think that your child may be eligible to receive free school meals, please contact the following service for further guidance and advice: Education Welfare Benefits Service, 01233 703200, or email [ewb.fsm@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:ewb.fsm@cambridgeshire.gov.uk). Online applications can be made through the following website [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals)

## **Debt procedures**

In collecting any outstanding debts, a process will be followed. The time lapse between steps will normally be 5 school days. However, this may vary depending on factors such as the level of debt and the time period within a term. The next step will be implemented if the debt has not been repaid or any contact made with the school. The maximum debt that should occur at anyone time is One week, £11.50.

Debts will be reviewed and an email reminder will be sent to all outstanding debt.

### **Debts under £11.50**

“Though this is probably an oversight we would ask you to pay the amount outstanding.

If you wish to sign up for direct debit your outstanding balance must be less than £11.50 and you can do so from your School Grid online account. If you do not have an account, please come into the school office with your email address and we will facilitate this.”

### **Debts over £11.50**

“Though this is probably an oversight we would ask you to pay the amount outstanding as we cannot extend further credit.

If you wish to sign up for direct debit your outstanding balance must be less than £11.50 and you can do so from your SchoolGrid online account. If you do not have an account, please come into the school office with your email address and we will facilitate this.”

At this point if the debt is not cleared within 2 weeks school meals could be denied and parents/carers will be asked to provide a packed lunch until the debt has been completely cleared. The office staff from Hartford Junior school will contact you by telephone prior to this arrangement being put in place.

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 Hartford Junior School with an outstanding debt, the Governing Body will need to consider whether to write off this debt or pursue payment by other means including making a claim in the Small Claims Court.

