



# Ashdon Primary School

## School Meal Debt Policy

Date adopted by  
Governing Body:

**February 2022**

Next Review:

**March 2023**

### **SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT**

Ashdon Primary School takes seriously the responsibility to protect the welfare of the children in its care, believing that “The welfare of the child is paramount” Children Act 1989.

This policy plays an integral part in our aim to safeguard the children and ensure their wellbeing in order to promote optimum development.

### **Introduction**

This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

We request that all parents give this policy their full support.

If debts are incurred, the school has to pay for the meals eaten. This means that money which should be spent on the children’s education has to be used for debts incurred by parents/carers.

The Free School Meals system is there for parents of children of all ages to claim if they are in receipt of certain benefits; information is available from the school office.

Presently, all pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are entitled to receive Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM). Therefore, this policy only relates to pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) whose parents pay for school meals.

The school wishes to avoid a situation which allows parents to accrue large amounts of debt for school meals which they then find difficult to clear.

The Governors at Ashdon Primary School feel that a system that works best is a ‘zero tolerance’ approach. We understand that it may seem a very hard stance as there has been a country-wide culture of debt tolerance. However, it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for free school meals (FSM) or UIFSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for.

It is very time consuming for the school’s office staff to continually chase parents for payment - by letter, email, phone call or in person. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

There will occasionally be the decision to be made by the school about whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. However, the school is no different than any other café / restaurant and meals taken must be paid for.

The school will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- Reminders in the school's newsletter;
- The school website.

This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This will be done at least once each year.

All parents will be reminded about the policy when their child joins KS2.

### **Key information**

- All school lunches must be paid for in advance;
- No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal;
- Parents who do not want their child to have a school meal should provide a healthy, nut-free, packed lunch.

### **Debt recovery policy implementation**

A weekly check to be carried out by the office staff.

For an account with £2 - £25 of debt per child:

- Debt report checked.
- A balance email/letter will be issued to the parents/carers reminding them to top up.

For an account with £25.01 and above of debt per child:

- A reminder email/letter will be issued from the Headteacher to the parents/carers to top up their account.
- We reserve the right to withhold meals if payment is not made.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every year by the staff and Governing Body of the school, or sooner if deemed appropriate.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **(Chair of Governors)**      **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_