

Killamarsh Junior School

Dinner Money Policy

2025

Version History		
Version	Date	Detail
18/19	04.10.18	
20/21	08.09.20	Updated price and reference to ParentPay rather than cash
22/23	27.09.22	Updated price
23/24	27/09/23	Updated price
24/25	1/10/24	No change
25/26	30/9/25	No change

Background

The Killamarsh Junior School Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt the responsibility now falls on the school to pursue instances of non-payment. As a result, the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

Provision of School Meals

The Schools Meals Service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for by someone. Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. Anyone who may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents/carers who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a School meal each day.

Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website:

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your-child-at-school/meals/school-meals/free-school-meals.aspx>

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parents' / carer's personal circumstances change the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £3.25 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals must be paid for in advance or on the day of the meal taken. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

Payment for School Meals

Please pay by using ParentPay on the day your child is having a school dinner or you can pay in advance and have a running balance which you can top up.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the School's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of School meal debt the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Although, this may seem harsh to some parents it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not a small number.

When a child has not had payment made for that day the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation. e.g. parent forgotten to top up ParentPay, temporary hardship etc. however details should be recorded in writing and a record maintained and monitored.

If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a letter/text detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school within 7 days. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require meals, the School must establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Head Teacher.

When the debt exceeds £10 for a *child or family* a formal letter must be sent to the parent/carer informing them payment is required to clear the outstanding amount. (*Example letter 1*).

If the debt exceeds £30 for a family and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears school will formally write to the parent/carer, explaining that the School is not obliged to provide a school dinner where advance payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received (*Example letter 2*).

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

At each Full Governing Board meeting the Clerk (School Business Officer) will provide Governors with a Parent Pay summary of outstanding dinner money debt and explain any concerns and current action with regard to such debt. The aim of the School's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to legal advisors. The School does however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunchtime.

All Write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Governing Board Resource Management Committee following submission of details of the debt by the School Business Officer together with the Headteacher's reasons for no further action being taken.

Example – Letter 1

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name) Class XXX**Outstanding Fees £XXX**

According to the School's financial records your child has been provided a school meal on the following dates, which have not been paid for.

Date	Cost
XX/XX/XXXX	£3.25
XX/XX/XXXX	£3.25
Total Due as at XX/XX/XXXX	£6.50

In order that the school's budget is not used to clear your child's debt please make arrangements for the outstanding dinner money debt to be paid by **(give date as 7 days after date of this letter)**. Once you have cleared the current debt please ensure payment for school meals is made in advance in accordance with the Killamarsh Junior School dinner policy. The current cost of a school meal is £x per day or £x per week.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your-child-at-school/meals/school-meals/free-school-meals.aspx>

Please be aware that the school benefits from extra funding for children receiving free school meals which will be used to enhance your child's education at this school.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Example – Letter 2

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name) Class XXX**Outstanding Fees £XXX**

Further to my recent letter the above school meal fees are still outstanding. The School's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your debt is £x.

This debt must be cleared immediately. If this debt is not cleared by **(give 7 days from date of this letter)** a school meal will no longer be provided to your child and you must make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

The School reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the outstanding debt and to inform the local authority that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your-child-at-school/meals/school-meals/free-school-meals.aspx>

The School has to fund all school meal debts from its budget it is essential that all payments are up to date and paid in advance, so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher