



School Meals Payments Policy

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thesovereigntrust.uk

The Sovereign Trust is a Multi Academy Trust registered in England No. 09666511. Registered Office: Manor Academy Sale, Manor Avenue, Sale M33 5JX



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Aim

This policy has been written to support schools within the Sovereign Trust to adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school meals. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents/carers understand what is expected of them.

Introduction

The responsibility of ensuring school meal payments are made by parents/carers lies with the school. Therefore, a policy is required to ensure school meal debts are kept to a minimum. In writing this policy, the Trust 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.

The Sovereign Trust has a clear 'no debt' policy relating to the school meal service. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money allocated for children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers. Every parent/carer will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we can provide parents/carers with the support to help them manage their school meals money whilst ensuring that funds allocated for children's learning is allocated appropriately.

Roles and responsibilities

- If your child does not receive free school meals, then It is a parent/carers responsibility to ensure that a child is provided with either a packed lunch or a school meal each day.
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure school meals are paid in advance.
- The trust will implement and review this policy on an annual basis

Procedure

School meals should be paid for in advance of meals being taken.

Meals may be paid for on a daily, weekly, half termly or termly basis.

If a parent/carer forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of up to £10 per child. We ask for the debt to be paid immediately on request.

As soon as the school is notified that a child is leaving, a member of 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 before the child leaves school.

Free School Meals

Your child may be able to get free school meals. Please contact your school for further information.

Debt

In collecting any outstanding debts, a step by step process will be followed.

Everyday school meals debt will be reviewed, if an individual child's account is £10.00 or more in debt the following procedure will apply:

1. Each debt will be reviewed and a text message will be sent 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.
2. For those debts which have 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.
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 Reminder Letter" (Appendix C) will be sent via Royal Mail recorded delivery.
5. The parent/carer will be contacted by telephone to arrange an appointment to discuss the arrears. If this appointment is not kept or a satisfactory repayment plan agreed, the debt will be referred to the Finance and Audit Committee and "Debt Final Notice Letter" (Appendix D) will be sent via Royal Mail recorded delivery.
6. For debts which have received "Debt Final Notice Letter" the Finance and Audit Committee will make a decision on next steps to recover the debt.

If parents/carers 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 Trustees may seek to reclaim these costs and any outstanding debt through the County Court Money Claims Centre.

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 reserve the right to charge an administration fee for time taken to recoup this outstanding debt, as well as claiming the money owed through the County Court Money Claims Centre.

We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work in collaboration with the family to agree a solution. In the event of a child leaving a school with an outstanding debt, the Finance and Audit Committee will need to consider what further steps to take. This may include contacting the child's new school and informing them of concerns.

Appendix A (sent as a text)

Dear Miss/Mrs./MS/Mr. <insert surname>,

Your child(ren)'s school meals account has an outstanding balance of £<insert amount owed>.

Please can this be settled today. Please can you provide a packed lunch until the debt is cleared. Thank you <insert name of school>.

Appendix B

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Town

Postcode

00/00/2021

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms <insert name>,

School Meals Payments for <insert child's name>

Due to the increasing debts for school meals, it is imperative that payment for meals are made promptly, in advance of meals being taken.

According to our records, <insert child's name> has been taking school meals recently. It appears that we have not received sufficient funds to cover this cost. We sent you a text message to discuss this matter on <00/00/2021> and we phoned you on <00/00/2021> but we have not received any communication from you to discuss how and when the debt will be cleared.

The outstanding balance as of <00/00/2021 > is -£ <insert amount>. Please can you ensure that the balance is cleared by <insert date>. Payment can be made via Arbor/Parent Pay. Please include monies for the forthcoming week/half term/term if this is relevant.

School Meals Rate: Daily £<insert amount>/Weekly £<insert amount>

The Sovereign Trust School Meals Payments Policy states that the school will not pay for meals for children. Please note that those in receipt of certain benefits will qualify for Free School Meals for their child. You can find details on how to apply for Free School Meals on the Trafford Council website.

Please arrange the prompt payment of this outstanding debt and kindly ensure that <insert child's name> is provided with a packed lunch until the debt has been cleared. Once cleared, school meals can recommence.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you would like to discuss this matter, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

Name Surname
Role Title,
The Sovereign Trust
T: 0161 976 1553
www.thesovereigntrust.uk

Appendix C

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Town

Postcode

00/00/2021

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms <insert name>,

REMINDER - School Meals Payments for <insert child's name>

Further to our previous letter regarding the outstanding school meals balance for <insert name>, we write to you again to inform you that the balance as of <00/00/2021> is now -£<insert amount owed>.

We would like to remind you that The Sovereign Trust School Meals Payments Policy states that the school will not pay for meals for children.

As you have failed to clear the outstanding debt as previously requested, you will receive a phone call from school in due course to arrange an appointment to discuss your options.

Please note that those in receipt of certain benefits will qualify for Free School Meals for their child. You can find details on how to apply for Free School Meals on the Trafford Council website.

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

Yours sincerely,

Name Surname

Role Title,

The Sovereign Trust

T: 0161 976 1553

www.thesovereigntrust.uk

Appendix D

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Town

Postcode

00/00/2021

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms <insert name>,

FINAL NOTICE - School Meals Payments for <insert child's name>

It is disappointing that you did not attend the appointment on <00/00/2021> to discuss arrangements for clearing the outstanding balance on <insert child's name> school meals account.

As of <00/00/2021>, the amount now owed is £<insert amount>.

Despite numerous attempts to contact you we have been unable to resolve this issue. In line with The Sovereign Trust School Meals Payments Policy (a copy of which is available on the school website), we will refer this debt to the Finance and Audit Committee who will consider the situation. You will be contacted in due course regarding recovery of the debt and whether the claim will be referred to the County Court Money Claims Centre.

Yours sincerely,

Name Surname

Role Title,

The Sovereign Trust

T: 0161 976 1553

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