

Meal and Nursery Debt Policy



EPWORTH
EDUCATION TRUST

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Version Control

Change Record

Date	Author	Version	Page	Reason for Change
04/02/19	J Buckley	2	4/5	Lunchshop and Parentmail addition
04/02/2019	J Buckley	2	4/5	Info on when debt warnings are issued and the consequences.
06/02/2022	J Field	3	various	Lunchstop and parentmail changed to electronic payment systems
06/02/2022	J Field	3	4	Removed reporting to Trust Finance committee

MEALS AND NURSERY DEBTS POLICY

Purpose

This policy aims to clearly identify the procedures for debt recovery for school meals and nursery extra hours.

If debts are incurred by the school, the school has to use its own funds to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support.

School dinners/nursery extra hours must be paid for in advance.

School Lunches

- School dinners can be pre-ordered and paid for in advance via electronic payment systems. Children are charged for a meal at the point of pre-ordering (either at home or at school) whether or not the meal has been taken or not.
- Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it has been paid for in advance (except those on on UIFSM - Reception, Years 1 and Year 2 or Free School Meals). Payment can be made via the electronic payment system or at the school office. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance and the parent will be contacted by the school.
- The parent will be contacted on day 2 of the debt by email/tel call. A follow up call/email will be issued on day 4 of the debt. If the debt has still not been paid by day 5, a letter, email and telephone call will be made to the parent to confirm that a packed lunch is needed until the debt is cleared.
- Where a packed lunch is not provided, the school will telephone the parent to ask them to pay via the electronic payment system, or to attend school with money for a lunch or to deliver a packed lunch.
- If parents believe their child (ren) may qualify for entitlement to free school meals, they should apply via the relevant Council. The Trust can assist parents with completion of their application. Until confirmation of free school meals is received, school dinners must continue to be paid for. If free school meals are back dated, the school will refund to the parent any money overpaid.

Nursery Paid Extra Hours

- Extra Hour invoices will be issued a week in advanced of all nursery sessions via electronic payment system or letter. These must be paid by the Sunday prior to the session starting that week.

- Children will not be provided with any "extra hours" sessions unless they are paid for in advance. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay, the school may grant a debt allowance and the parent will be contacted by the school.
- The parent will be contacted on day 3 of the debt by email/tel call. A follow up call/email will be issued on day 5 of the debt. If the debt has still not been paid by day 8, a letter, email and telephone call will be made to the parent to confirm that no more extra sessions can be permitted until the debt has been paid.
- If the debt is not cleared, no more extra sessions will be permitted and the parent will collect their child after the standard 15 free hours have been used. Failure to maintain payments for additional hours may result in the re-allocation of those sessions to another family.
- The Trust can assist parents with completion of their early years pupil premium application which assists by providing free school meals for the child whilst at nursery.

All parents are to be provided with a copy of this debt policy when their child joins school/nursery.

If payment of a debt is not received, the Trust reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Parents will receive at least 3 reminders (phone call or letter) before legal proceedings commence.

If a payment plan is agreed between the parent and school, no more debt recovery letters will be sent, providing that the outstanding arrears are reducing. If the parent defaults on the payment plan without pre-warning the Trust, the Trust is entitled to commence legal proceedings.

Parents continuing to bring children to additional sessions where they have not paid may be reported to Social services, who may also be informed about concerns that parents are not fulfilling their responsibility, either by not providing food at lunchtime or dropping their children at nursery without authorisation.

The Trust reserves the right to use any money given to school by the parent to pay off any debt, and are also entitled not to give change if debts are still owing.

Records of debt recovery letters and telephone calls will be kept on file.

The Headteacher may use their discretion for cases of genuine hardship or situations arising from exceptional circumstances.