



Dinner Money Policy

Introduction

It is a parents' responsibility to ensure that a child is provided with a meal at school, either a packed lunch or a school meal. Parents are responsible for ensuring school meals are paid for and the school has a responsibility to ensure that money is not owing for school meals. School meals are currently £2.50 per day, per child. If a parent should fail to pay for dinners eaten by their children the money will have to be met directly from the schools educational budget. If the schools educational budget is used to pay parents outstanding dinner debts this will reduce the amount of available money the school can use to educate pupils.

Aims/Objectives

This policy aims to ensure that meals are paid for and amassing debt is avoided, whilst aiding Parents/Carers during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime.

School Practice

- School dinners are to be paid for in advance; either daily, weekly, monthly or termly.
- Payment can be made by cash, cheque or bank transfer.
- Should a child arrive at school without a packed lunch or payment for a school dinner, a dinner will be provided and a request will be sent to parents for immediate payment.
- Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. If any family think they qualify for Free School meals, then an application needs to be submitted. Please 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.

Management of debts

- Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing
- An email detailing any outstanding balances will be sent out at the end of each week. A period of 2 days will be given to clear any monies owing.



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- Should the balance remain unsettled a letter will be sent home making a further request for payment and informing parents/guardians that no further school meals will be provided until the debt is cleared.
- A follow up phone call will also be made to discuss the payment issues and establish if there are any issues of hardship or financial difficulty that may make payment problematic. In these situations we are happy to discuss putting a payment plan in place.
- After a 7 day period, accounts where the debt has not been cleared, no contact has been made or a payment plan put in place, will be passed to the Headteachers for review. In exceptional circumstances some accounts may be referred to the Trustee Board for further investigation.
- Pupils with any outstanding balances at the school will not be permitted to attend any non-educational trips until the debt is cleared – Challenger Troop, Big Cat Sanctuary, After school fun afternoons. This decision will be made on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of the Headteachers or Senior Management Team.
- Any trip payments or deposits made will be held on account and a provisional place booked until all debt has been settled. Any payments received will first be allocated to the outstanding debt, prior to any trip being paid for.
- In extreme cases, continued non-payment and a build up of debt, the school reserves the right to pursue legal proceedings and/or inform the Local Authority that the child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunchtime.

Monitoring and Review

The Finance Manager and Finance Assistant will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing payments each week and will be responsible for maintaining contact with parents. It is the responsibility of the board of Trustees or delegated staff to agree, review and monitor the payment policy as and when necessary.

Bank details

Payments for School Dinners can be made into the following account:

Lloyds Bank

Sort Code	30-64-57
Account Number	40262260
Reference	'Childs name SD'



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Free School Meal Applications

If you would like to apply for free school meals, please go to the following website to make your application:

www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/free-school-meals

As at 1st July 2023 the following eligibility criteria currently applies:

Your child must attend a maintained school (most schools in Kent are maintained schools) or receive alternative education approved by Kent County Council.

Children attending private or independent schools can't get free school meals.

Your child may be able to get free school meals if you get any of the following:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals.

Your child may also get free school meals if you get any of these benefits and your child is both:

- younger than the [compulsory age for starting school](#)
- in full-time education



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If you do not qualify for most benefits (also known as having 'no recourse to public funds'), your child may still be eligible for free school meals. Ask their school or local authority whether they're eligible.

You may be asked for proof of benefit after you apply.

To make an application you will need to provide your own details, including your national insurance number, and the details of your children. All children can be entered onto one form.

Once your application is made your eligibility will be checked and you will receive an email informing you of the decision. The school will be informed separately of the outcome of your application.

Should your child be eligible for free school meals they will be able to access these at school immediately, however, these cannot be backdated to cover any meals previously taken.

Should you not have internet access, please contact us and we can arrange for you to come into school to complete this.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Finance Office, either in person or at finance@ststephensjuniorschool.co.uk, should you have any queries or questions.