SCHOOL MEAL DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITHIN

QUEST

St. Peter's C. of E. Primary School, Hindley;
Hindley Green Community Primary School;
St. John's C. of E. Primary School, Hindley Green
St. John's C. of E. Primary School, Abram

September 2020
Review date: 2021

QUEST
School Meal Debt Management Policy

Aims

- To outline the Trust's procedures regarding school meals payments
- To work with parents to provide a flexible approach to the lunchtime nutritional needs of our pupils
- To ensure the smooth, efficient and cost effective operation of the school meal system
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of school staff, parents and pupils
- To present a workable, fair mechanism for the collection of school dinner money.

School Meals Debt Policy for Parents

As from 1st November 2011, schools within QUEST (formerly The Keys Federation Academy Trust) adopted a strict no debt policy relating to the school meals service. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the 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.

If parents believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals they should contact Wigan Council's Benefits Section for more details. Application forms are available from the Council's website at www.wigan.gov.uk. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that parents use it if they qualify. Schools will offer to help parents with their application.

School meals must be paid for in advance through the parent/carer's cashless School Grid account. Payments can be made via credit/debit card and is paid direct to the Catering Provider, Dolce. *Only in exceptional circumstances will arrangements be made for school meals payments to be paid to school.*

Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a school meal debt reaches £10.75, Dolce will not allow further meals to be ordered. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may authorise one additional meal. However, this debt must be paid next day and future meals must be paid for in advance before any meal is provided.

The Debt Recovery Procedure overleaf will be followed and Learning Mentors will be informed as necessary. In some cases, Social Services may also be informed about concerns that parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

The school is not obliged to provide a school dinner where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school meals has not been received. We will therefore act promptly to address such issues at an early stage, in order to prevent arrears of dinner monies from accumulating to a point beyond parents means to settle. School admin staff may also use the Parent Pay System to send outstanding dinner money reminders to parents/carers.

We hope that by implementing this debt policy we are able to help parents manage school dinner money better and at the same time ensure that all money that is for children's learning is available.

Signed: *S. Bruton* Date: July 2020
CEO (on behalf of QUEST)

Appendix a of the School Meal Debt Management Policy
Debt Recovery Procedure

The following information provides a recommended procedure for schools to adopt in relation to school meals debt including example letters. Admin Staff should keep a record of all follow-up action, including text messages/telephone conversations/email communication, on the follow-up form at appendix f or by using the school's own debt management records.

Level 1

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt, ie payment in advance not made or credit runs out.

Check 1 Is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded?
Check 3 Does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: send a text message or 'reminder letter' to parents (by email if possible) – see example at Appendix b - school can authorise one additional meal

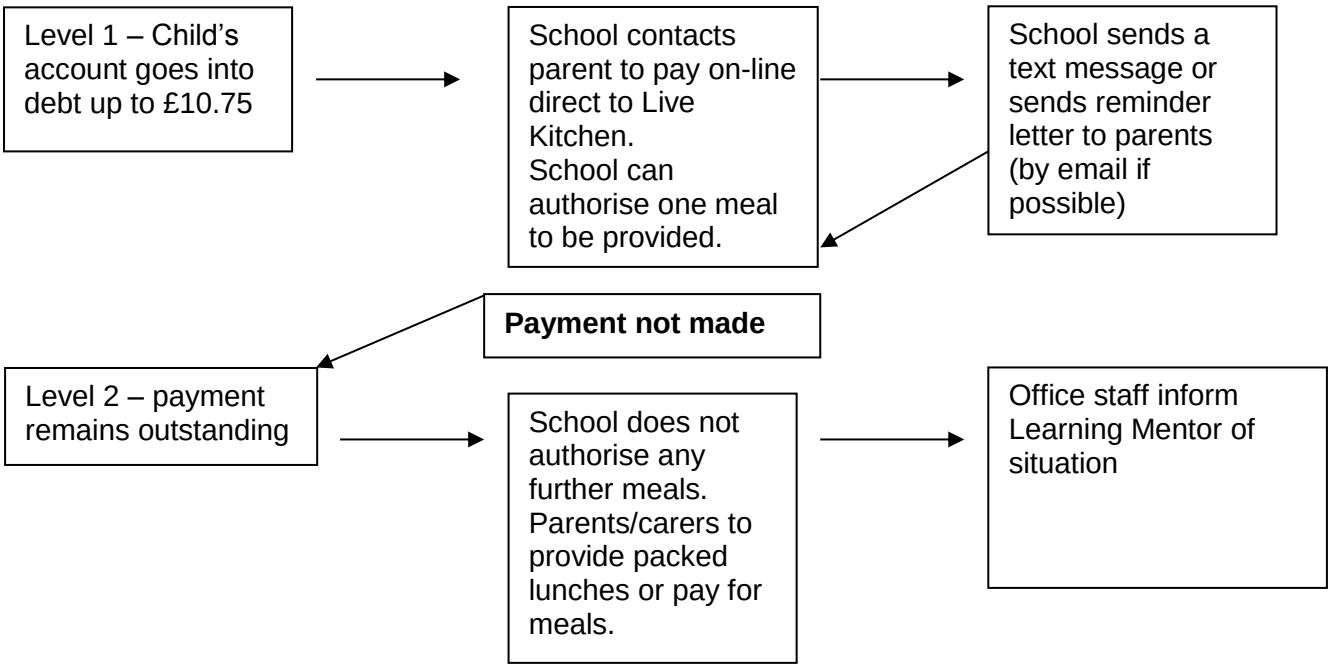
Level 2

Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch.

Check 1 Is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
Check 2 Is there a possibility that payments have not been recorded?
Check 3 Has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

Office staff in school will phone the parent to ask them to either pay online or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime. School does not authorise any further meals. Office staff should inform Learning Mentor.



Appendix b of the School Meal Debt Management Policy

1st Reminder letter or send text message

Dear Parent/Carer of ……..

REMINDER – OUTSTANDING DINNER MONIES

Our records show that you have not paid dinner money for your child …….. in class: ……..

As at ……. your account is showing a debt of £……

Please arrange for this money to be paid immediately and once the debt is cleared, please ensure the account is always in credit. If you have a problem paying these arrears, please contact the school office to discuss.

If you think your child should be eligible for a free school meal please contact the school office to discuss this.

I wish to remind you that this school operates a no debt policy in relation to school meals and I have attached a copy of the School Meals Debt Policy for Parents for your reference.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Admin Officer

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Encs: (School Meals Debt Policy for Parents)

Appendix c of the School Meal Debt Management Policy

Record of actions taken to recover outstanding dinner money

Child's Name …….. **Class** ……

Parent/Carer's Name
……

Contact Telephone Number
……

Amount outstanding …… **Date of debt** ……

Date first reminder letter sent …… **By whom** ……

Date telephone contact with parent/carer …… **By whom** ……

Learning Mentor informed – Yes/No

Outcome of telephone conversation with parent/carer:

……

……

Date final reminder letter sent …… **By whom** ……

Learning Mentor informed – Yes/No

Date withdrawal of meals letter sent …… **By whom** ……

For debts of up to £50

Date reported to CEO: ……

Action agreed:
referral to solicitors for legal action /
referral to a debt collection agency /
write-off the debt

Reason for action:

Date reported to Resources Committee:

……

For debts in excess of £50

Date reported to Resources Committee

……

Action agreed –
referral to solicitors for legal action /
referral to a debt collection agency /
write-off the debt

Reason for action: