



# Tockwith

## CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY ACADEMY

Policy Number

21

# School Meals Arrears Policy

Signed: Sue Corbett

Date: February 2024

Review Date: February 2027

## School Meals Arrears Policy

This Policy recognises the difficulties placed on Tockwith Church of England Primary Academy in balancing the social welfare of pupils to provide nourishing and healthy hot meals, with the management of the school budget.

We ask that each child's dinner money account is paid in advance via ParentPay or by cash or cheque to the school office. If the dinner money account is not in credit the child will be provided with a school meal in good faith and on the assumption that payment will be made by the next day. The school office will notify the parent / carer that a meal has been taken and that payment is required, unless the child is entitled to free school meals.

If school meal arrears are incurred, then the school budget has 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/carers. This is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full support.

Parents/carers whose child takes a school lunch must pay the relevant cost stated by the schools catering supplier. Pupils may be eligible for free school meals where a parent / carer is in receipt of the following:

- Universal Credit, (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- Child Tax Credit, provided you are also not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual household gross income that does not exceed £16,190 (as assessed by HMRC)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- A run-on of Working Tax Credit – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

Procedures for payment of arrears are as follows:

1. On the Wednesday of week one – a text message will be sent home advising of the arrears and requesting payment by the following Monday.
2. On the Monday of week two – a letter (letter 1) will be sent home with the child advising of the level of arrears, requesting payment is made by that Wednesday and that a packed lunch should be provided until the account has been settled and setting out the eligibility for receiving Free School Meals. A FM/B1 form will also be enclosed with the letter.
3. On the Thursday of week two – a telephone call will be made to the parent/carers requesting payment of the amount outstanding, requesting that a packed lunch is provided until the account is settled and to agree a payment plan.
4. On the Monday of week three – a second letter (Letter 2) will be sent home with the child advising of the level of arrears, requesting payment is made with immediate effect and that a packed lunch is provided until the account is cleared. The letter will also set out the eligibility for Free School Meals and that the debt if not settled will be referred to the Education Office in Harrogate from where a North Yorkshire County Council invoice will be issued.

5. Once all attempts to collect the outstanding dinner money have been exhausted and no payment plan or meeting with the parents/carers has been made the matter should be referred to the Finance Team at Ebor Academy Trust and the decision will be made as to whether legal action will be taken to recover the outstanding debt. The following details need to be provided:
  - School Name
  - Pupil Name (in full)
  - Parents/Guardian name and address
  - Arrears to be recovered
  - Specific dates to which the arrears relate
  - Statement printed out from ParentPay software, with details of meals taken
  - Copy of correspondence sent to parents/carers
  
6. Where a pupil(s) transfer to another school within the Local Authority, the school should contact the new school to advise them that outstanding arrears.