**DEBT COLLECTION**

**POLICY**



**Jan 2024**

HOLY NAME RC PRIMARY SCHOOL

**DEBT COLLECTION POLICY**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Holy Name Primary School is a voluntary aided, inclusive, Roman Catholic School serving the children of Our Lady’s and St Alphonsus and neighbouring parishes.

The school exists to help the Catholic Community fulfill the promise made to each child when welcomed in Baptism by the promotion of Catholic values in school. This is undertaken in partnership within the home and parish.

Recognising the variety of children’s backgrounds, the Governors and staff seek to be sensitive to and cater for their individual needs. We work to create a safe and secure environment with consistency, tolerance and generosity of time for all members of our school community.

We emphasise the positive aspects of all parts of school life, teaching the children about their value and worth and at the same time having high expectations in relation to academic and personal development.

# 1 Key Information

1.1 All parents are provided with a copy of this debt collection policy when their child joins the school.

1.2 This policy is available on the school website.

1.3 All school lunches must be paid for in advance unless an agreed arrangement is made with the Administrator.

1.4 Parents who do not want their child/ren to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch instead.

1.5 If a parent wishes their child/ren change from school meals to packed lunches or vice versa they must let the Administrator know before they make the change.

1.6 Taking meals without paying for them is theft and deprives all children of learning materials that cannot then be bought.

1.7 Payment of school meals should be made regularly via [www.ParentPay.com](http://www.ParentPay.com). and parents/carers may make lump sum payments if they wish to.

# 2 Do you qualify for Free School Meals?

To get free school meals from the Manchester Benefits Service:

2.1 Your child/ren must **live** in Manchester, even if s/he/they go to school in another area, and

2.1.1 be aged up to 16, or over 16 and attending full-time at a school with a sixth form; or

* + 1. attend nursery part-time, providing their session crosses lunchtime (they attend mid-morning to mid-afternoon). It is up to the school to decide whether a nursery child's hours of attendance make them eligible.

2.2 You must be responsible for that child, for example, receiving Child Benefit for them. You must also get:

2.2.1 Income Support; or

2.2.2 Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; or

2.2.3 Income-related Employment Support Allowance; or

2.2.4 Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;or

2.2.5 the guaranteed part of Pension Credit; or

2.2.6 Child Tax Credit (CTC) (provided you’re not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190); or

2.2.7 A Working Tax Credit 'run-on' payment for four weeks after stopping work or reducing working hours to under 16 hours a week; or

2.2.8 Universal Credit.

2.3 If your child lives in another Local Authority i.e. Trafford, you must apply to that authority.

# 3 Payments

School meals are payable in advance. Meals are priced at £2.55 each day which is £12.75 per week. The payment needs to be made via www.ParentPay.com. If you do not have access to the internet or prefer not to use the internet, you may request a barcode letter from the school office.

# 4 Changing from meals to sandwiches

If you wish to change your child’s meal arrangements, please let the school office before you make the switch. **To change on a daily basis is not acceptable unless it is an emergency.**

# 5 Food Allergies

If your child has an allergy to certain foods we need to be aware of this so that we can notify the school kitchen, midday staff, breakfast club and afterschool club staff. We will need proof, from your GP, of any allergies your child may have. If you have any concerns about your child regarding the lunchtime we will gladly pass those on to the Senior Lunchtime Organisers and the Cook when you notify the school office.

# 6 Dealing with payment arrears

At Holy Name RC Primary School we do not allow dinner money to go into arrears unless an agreed arrangement has been made. Remember taking meals without paying for them is theft and deprives children of much needed learning materials. At Our Lady's RC Primary School, breakfast and afterschool club should be paid weekly in arrears unless an agreed arrangement has been made.

If your child/ren’s dinner money or breakfast and afterschool club account goes into arrears, the following procedures apply. We understand that parents and carers sometimes get into financial difficulties and are not able to pay for services at the usual time. If you are in this position, it is always best that you contact the school and discuss the matter as soon as possible and not let the matter be ignored. School can make arrangements for a payment plan to be put in place to help parents who are in arrears.

**Step 1**

Your child’s account goes into debt.

This is what the school checks before contacting you:

* Is this a Free School Meal (FSM) child?
* Are dates correct?
* Are the ParentPay records correct, with absences correctly marked?
* Does this parent normally pay on time; is this just a one off?

**Action 1: Gentle debt reminder**

A text message is sent to you reminding you that you have an outstanding debt for school meals, breakfast club or afterschool club.

**Step 2**

Your child’s account remains in debt after the letter

This is what the school checks before contacting you:

* Is this a FSM child?
* Are dates correct?
* Are the ParentPay records correct, with absences correctly marked?
* Has this parent/carer made contact?

**Action 2: Personal contact**

School Meals - The administrator will phone or write, asking you to either make a payment or provide a packed lunch from home from a specified date.

Breakfast Club/After School Club - The administrator will phone or write, asking you to either make a payment and advising that if no payment is received provision of breakfast and/or afterschool club could be refused.

**Step 3**

School Meals - If you do not comply with the above, you will be responsible for providing your child/ren with a Packed Lunch. If you do not provide a packed lunch you will receive a phone call asking you to take your child home for lunch.

This is what the school checks before contacting you:

* Has this parent made contact with anyone at the school about anything at all?

**Action 3: Debt letter**

A letter will be sent from the Head of School asking you to settle the debt and warning that we may pass this on to a debt collection agency.

**Step 4**

If you do not comply with the above, the school will have to involve outside agencies

This is what the school checks before contacting you:

* Has this parent made contact with anyone at the school about this or any other matter?

**Action 4: Involve outside agencies**

* The matter will now be referred to a debt collection agency.
* The details are brought to the attention of the Governing Body (Chair of Governors initially).
* The Governing Body may consider referring the matter to Children's Services since you appear not to be carrying out properly the responsibility of care by not providing food for your child at lunchtime.