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School Meals Debt Policy

Current Status:
FINAL

Ratified

Compliance:

**All members of Chandlers Ridge Academy staff will follow Academy policies.
The consequences of non-compliance may include disciplinary or legal action.**

Document Control

Application	This policy pertains to all activities undertaken by all staff at Chandlers Ridge Academy
Associated policy reference and title	CR-AP-009 Financial Policy CR-AP-018 Charging and Remissions Policy
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Replacing	n/a new policy
Policy Lead	Jo Turner, Business Manager
Members of working party	Louise Lidgard, Head teacher, Business Admin Team
This policy has been ratified by: Board or Sub-Committee (specify)	Board of Directors

Author & Contributors

Name	Role	Version	Date
Jo Turner	Academy Business Manager	V0.1	15/6/16

Consultation Audit Trail

Name	Role	Version	Date
Business Admin Team	Assurance	V0.1	June 2016
SLT	Assurance	V0.1	June 2016
BoD	Assurance/Ratification	V0.1	June 2016

Change Log

Summarise the major changes between versions below

Pg/Section	Change	Version	Date
	New policy		

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School Meals Debt Policy

1. Introduction

1. This policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. It provides clarity and consistency in managing the debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.
2. There will occasionally be the decision to be made about whether a child should be refused a meal in school if they have not paid. However, the school meals service is no different than any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone.
3. Parents should be able to relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to a restaurant e.g. McDonalds and expect them to be given food without paying. Yet a minority of parents in the school expect us to provide food for their children without paying for it. The Free School Meals system is there for parents who cannot afford school meals, there should be no excuses.
4. It is very time consuming for the office staff to continually chase parents for money - by letter, phone call or in person. It is also highly embarrassing for all concerned and occasionally it can have a negative effect on our relationships with families.

2. Scope of policy

1. This policy relates to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. It excludes children who are entitled to Free School Meals.

3. Responsibilities

1. **BoD:** The BoD has overall responsibility to ensure that policies and procedures are in place for the processes associated with the Chandlers Ridge Academy.
2. **Head Teacher:** The Head Teacher has responsibility to ensure that operational services are suitably established to provide the processes associated with the Chandlers Ridge Academy to ensure that all staff and volunteers understand and comply with the service provision.
3. **The Business Administration Team – all school office** staff within the scope of the policies and procedures are responsible for the implementation of the policy within their own area of accountability
4. Parents and carers - it is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that their child is provided with a lunch on a daily basis.

4 Key Themes

4.1 Zero Tolerance of debt

1. The Directors at Chandlers Ridge feel that a system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach.
2. We understand that it may seem a very hard stance as there has been a culture of debt tolerance and that this will be tough to implement.
3. However, it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for Free School Meals (FSM) entitlement.
4. Every other meal must be paid for.
5. Our ParentPay dinner money system highlights debt immediately so keeping track will be easy.

4.2 Communication

1. The school will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:
 - a. A letter to parents
 - b. Reminders in the school's newsletter
 - c. The school website
2. This will ensure that all parents get the same message in a consistent way. This will be done at least once each year, more often when it is first introduced.
3. All parents will be provided with a copy of the policy when their child joins the school.
4. The letter to parents is attached as Appendix 1.

4.3 School meal payment arrangements

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.
2. All parents are set up with the means to pay for their child's school meal with access to the ParentPay system
3. ParentPay balance reminders are sent on a weekly basis
4. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
5. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
6. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch

5. Debt policy implementation

5.1 Level 1 Indicator: A child's account goes into debt of £9.50 or less

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

Action 1:

Send a debt reminder via ParentPay

5.2 Level 2 Indicator: A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch, and debt exceeds £9.50.

1. Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
2. Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
3. Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Personal contact

A member of the Business Admin Team will phone the parent to ask them to either credit their ParentPay account immediately or bring sandwiches in before lunchtime

5.3 Level 3 Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options and debt exceeds £9.50.

1. Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
2. Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
3. Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: send strong debt letter

The head teacher will send a final letter.

5.4 Level 4 Indicator: The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options

1. Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
2. Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
3. Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 4: bring in outside agencies

The debt will be referred to a collection agency or small claims court.

6 Monitoring and Review

1. This policy will be monitored on a termly basis and debt reports will be issued to the Board of Directors Finance & Staffing Committee.
2. This policy will be reviewed in 2 years unless monitoring prompts otherwise.



5th September 2016

Appendix 1

Dear Parents & Carers

School Meals Debt Policy

Unfortunately, due to an increase in the number of school meals that are regularly not being paid for, from September 2016 Chandlers Ridge Academy will adopt a NO DEBT policy relating to school meals.

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 any unpaid meals. I am sure everybody will agree that this is unacceptable and we hope that all parents give this policy their full support. As we all know nobody takes their child to McDonalds and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school.

If you believe that you may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, please contact the school office or visit our website at www.chandlersridge.org.uk where you will find the details of our Confidential Free School Meals Entitlement Service. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will help you all we can with your application.

School lunches must be paid for in advance using the ParentPay website. Again, the school office is there to help if you are having difficulty logging in.

If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one week. However, this must be cleared immediately and future meals must be paid in advanced before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared and debt accumulates over £9.50 parents must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the office will phone the parent to ask them to make an immediate payment or come to school with sandwiches before lunch time.

If payment of the debt is not received by the next day, the Headteacher reserves the right to inform the Chair of the Directors Finance Committee who may decide to refer the debt to a recovery service or small claims court.

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

If you have any concerns please don't hesitate in contacting me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Lidgard
Head Teacher

Appendix 2

ParentPay balance reminder

Dear <<name of parent>>

Please be advised that your current balance for school meals on ParentPay is <<balance>>.

If this balance is negative please take immediate action to credit your account as the school operates a no debt for school meals. If the debt is not cleared and debt accumulates over £9.50 parents must provide a packed lunch for their child. You can read the full policy on our website www.chandlersridge.org.uk/policies/.

With thanks for your cooperation.

Mrs N Stangoe
School Administrative Assistant
01642 312741

Appendix 3

Final Reminder Letter

<<Date>>

Dear Parent/Carer

FINAL REMINDER Outstanding Dinner Money

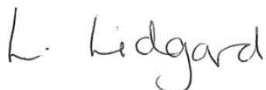
<<Childs name>> <<Amount outstanding>>

Further to the telephone call from the School Office about your outstanding balance on ParentPay, it appears that there has been no reduction in the outstanding balance owed. As you are aware the school operates a NO DEBT policy in relation to school meals. **Please take immediate action to credit your ParentPay account. If you fail to credit your account you must make alternative lunch arrangements for your child from <<date>> by either providing a pack lunch or taking them home for lunch.**

If payment of the debt is not received by the <<date>>, we reserve the right to inform the Chair of the Directors Finance Committee who may decide to refer the debt to a recovery service or small claims court.

You can view and pay off the amount owing at www.parentpay.com. If you need help accessing ParentPay please contact the school office on 01642 312741 or email crbadmin@chandlersridge.org.uk.

Yours sincerely



Mrs L Lidgard
Head Teacher