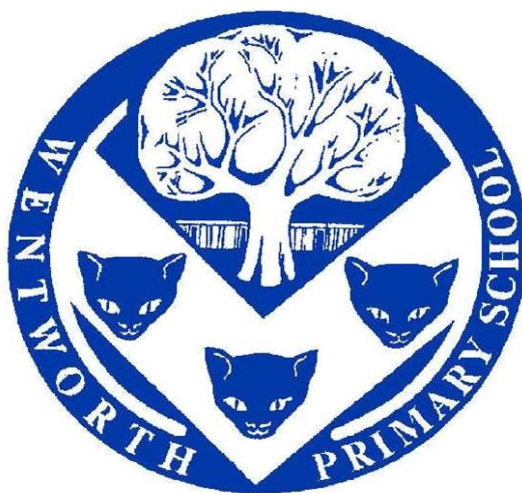


SCHOOL MEALS POLICY

for

Wentworth Primary School



APPROVED BY GOVERNORS: October 2025
POLICY TO BE REVIEWED: October 2027

School Meals Policy

This policy has been written to assist the school in adopting a consistent approach to parents who have an outstanding amount in their child's school dinner account, whereby a dinner has been ordered and provided but the school has not received payment. It provides clarity and consistency in managing this situation and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

Occasionally a decision will have to be made as to whether a child should be refused a meal due to the school not receiving payment. The school meal service is available to all children and dinners can be ordered on a daily basis but is only available when parents have paid online using the school payment system (School Gateway) or by cash handed into the school office.

Free School Meal Entitlement

Children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 receive Universal Free School Meals.

Children in Key Stage 2 will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, except those confirmed as entitled to Free School Meals. If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, they should contact the School Office who will submit an application to check their entitlement. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying children it is important that parents/carers make use of it. The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to children where this is officially approved and informed in writing by the Local Authority.

A small number of parents expect the school to provide a meal for their child/ren without paying for it, however this practice is not acceptable and means funding which should be spent on the children's education and learning resources is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/carers.

It is not acceptable that office staff must constantly make telephone calls, send letters or statements to parents requesting for immediate payment to clear their accounts. This has a negative effect on relationships with some families.

All school meals must be paid for, the online payment system School Gateway will automatically track all outstanding amounts on a weekly basis, therefore showing all accounts that are in a debt situation. From this information contact will be made to the parent.

This policy appears on the school website and can be sent out upon request so that all parents are aware of their obligation for paying for school meals.

Email reminder is attached as Appendix 1.

The letter to parents is attached as Appendix 2.

Key Information

1. All parents have access to this policy when their child starts the school upon request
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
3. No child should be sent to school with no money in their account and expect to be given a meal
4. Parents who do not want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch or take their child home for lunch.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

It is accepted that, on occasion, arrears may arise for various reasons e.g. children forget their money or parents forget to top up their child's account online. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

Stage 1. On a weekly basis, accounts with dinner arrears are sent an email reminder.

Stage 2. Should the arrears reach £20.00 then a letter requesting immediate payment will be sent to parents/carers.

Stage 3. A follow up letter will be sent one week later requesting immediate payment.

Stage 4. Should the debt remain, a phone call will be made to the parent/carer requiring immediate payment to settle the account.

The procedure for collecting arrears will be conducted with sensitivity and with the aim of working with the family if there is genuine reason for the arrears accruing. Families that are experiencing financial difficulty will be offered an appointment to discuss what avenues of support may be available.

In extreme circumstances if the school does not receive payment of any kind the head teacher will send a final letter and legal proceedings could potentially take place.

Appendix 1.

Good afternoon,

Please can you check your child's dinner money balance on school gateway and please make a payment to bring the school dinner account back into credit.

Many thanks and kind regards,

School Office

Appendix 2.

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: School Meal Payments for

Your child's outstanding balance as of today is.

Please settle this amount before requesting any more school dinners. All meals must be paid for in advance without exception.

Please provide a packed lunch until you are in credit.

School meals can be paid for online on School Gateway. If you are having difficulties making payments, please do not hesitate to contact the office.

Many thanks and kind regards,

School Office

Tel. 01621 853572