



ALDERBURY & WEST GRIMSTEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Lunch Money Policy

Last reviewed: May 2025

Policy Ratified by LGC: May 2025

Next Review Date: May 2028

Introduction

Alderbury and West Grimstead Primary School Lunch Money Policy has been adopted to ensure that there is a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. The Schools Meals Service is no different to any other business, in that meals have to be paid for by someone, and the school budget will have to directly fund any outstanding debts that cannot be recovered, thereby directly affecting the amount of money that is available to provide education to all pupils.

Provision of School Meals

Free School Meals are available for children of parents who meet certain criteria, including the receipt of state benefits. Anyone who thinks they may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that all parents who qualify take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a school meal each day. Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application form can be found on the Wiltshire Council website [Free school meals - Wiltshire Council](#).

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parent's personal circumstances change, the parent must provide a packed lunch or pay for a school dinner.

Universal School Meals

From September 2014, pupils in the Foundation Stage, Year 1 and Year 2 have been entitled to a free school meal, which is funded by the Government.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.66 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals must be paid for in advance. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

Payment for School Meals

Parents pay for school meals using the Arbor system. More information about this is available from the school office.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure the school's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of meal debt, the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a 'Zero Tolerance' approach. Although, this may seem harsh to some parents, it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils and not a small number.

Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing. Reminders are sent by the school via Arbor messaging service once a debt becomes overdue. Where a child continues to require meals, the school must establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent is experiencing hardship, which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances, the parent should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Headteacher. When the debt exceeds £20 for a child, a formal letter will be sent to the parent (Example letter 1). If after seven days no payment has been made, a further letter will be sent to the parent informing them to provide their child/ren with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears (Example letter 2). If the child/ren is/are not provided with the requested packed lunch and the parent cannot be contacted, the school will provide a sandwich and a drink only. If the debt exceeds £30 for a child and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the school should formally write to the parent, explaining that the school is not obliged to provide a school dinner where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received (Example letter 3).

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

The aim of the school's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up. The school does however, reserve the right to inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunchtime. The Finance Manager and Headteacher must approve any write-offs of outstanding debt, following discussion outlining the debt together with reasons for no further action being taken.

Equal Opportunities

We believe the policy positively reflects the aims and ambitions identified in Alderbury and West Grimstead Primary's Single Equality Scheme.

Additional Support

If you find yourself in financial difficulty, please speak to the Headteacher as soon as possible. Additional support may be available from:

<https://www.trussell.org.uk/emergency-food/find-a-foodbank>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>

Example – Letter 1 (On School letterhead)

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

According to the school's financial records, you have not paid dinner money for your child (pupil name) in Class: xx. As at xx/xx/xx your account is showing a debt of £xx.

Please log in to your Arbor account to pay the outstanding dinner money debt immediately. Once you have cleared the current debt I should be grateful if you would ensure that you keep your account in credit. The current cost of a school meal is £2.66 per day.

If you think, you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office or the Wiltshire Council website [Free school meals - Wiltshire Council](#) for further information. Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. Your child will then receive a school meal each day.

Additional information can be found on the Wiltshire Council website.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter, further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Example – Letter 2 (On school letterhead)

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

Please note your Arbor account is currently in debt by £xx.

Due to this outstanding balance, we are putting your account on hold, which means your child will not be able to order school lunches from xxx. Therefore, we request that you provide a packed lunch until the account is cleared in full.

If you are having problems accessing your Arbor account, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation with this matter.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Example – Letter 3 (On school letterhead)

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

I am writing regarding the current level of outstanding school meal debt that is showing on your account. Despite previous correspondence and messages, the debt for your child xx is still outstanding. The school's records show that as at xx/xx/xx your account is £x in debt.

The current cost of a school meal is £2.66 per day. I would ask that you please arrange to clear this debt immediately and take steps to ensure your account is kept in credit in the future.

If you think, you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. Your child will then receive a school meal each day. Additional information and an application form can be found on the Wiltshire Council website [Free school meals - Wiltshire Council](#) or in the school office if you do not have access to the internet.

Since the school has to fund any school meal debts from its budget, it is essential that all payments are up to date so that the quality of the service provided to all pupils is maintained. Unfortunately, as the debt was not cleared by xxxxx a school meal will no longer be provided to your child and you must make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

The school reserves the right to inform the local authority that your child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunchtime.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately so that this matter can be resolved.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher