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School Meal Payment and Arrears Policy

Approval Date: October 2023

Review Date: October 2024

Dovecotes Primary School
School Meal Payment and Arrears Policy

Chargeable School Meals

- School meals are charged at £2.50 per day, £12.50 per week.
- Flexible meals are charged at £2.00 per day, £10.00 per week.
- Staff meals are charged at £3.50 per day.
- Meals are ordered daily.

Payments

- Payment can be made by cash or cheque (cheques must be made payable to Wolverhampton City Council).
- All payments are received in the morning and recorded.
- All meals should be paid for promptly with any outstanding balances paid off by the end of the week.
- Any payments made in advance will be carried forward if a child does not have a meal.
- If a child forgets their packed lunch and is given a school meal, parents/ carers must pay for the meal as soon as possible.

Free School Meals

Children are entitled to receive free school meals if they or their parents/carers receive any of the benefits below:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018, your household income must be less than £7,400 a year, equivalent to £616.67 a month (after tax and not including any benefits you get) to qualify for benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM)

If parents/carers are entitled to Working Tax Credit (apart from during the four-week run-on period), they will not qualify for benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM), regardless of their income. If parents/carers are receiving Child Tax Credit only, their annual income must be less than £16,190 to qualify.

If parents/carers don't currently claim for Free School Meals but think they may be eligible:

If parents/carers think they may be eligible for free school meals, they can submit a claim to school. The information provided will be used to check if parents/ carers are in receipt of a

qualifying benefit and, if they are on Universal Credit, that their earnings do not exceed the threshold. If parents/carers claim Universal Credit, their earnings will be assessed from up to three of their last Universal Credit assessment periods. If parents/carers are eligible, school will be notified and the child will receive free school meals.

If parents/ carers currently claim for Free School Meals:

Most people won't be affected by the new criteria. If parents/ carers currently claim free school meals, but don't meet the new criteria, their child will continue to receive free school meals until the end of the Universal Credit rollout period. This will apply even if earnings rise above the new threshold or if the parent/ carer stops being entitled to Universal Credit. The rollout period is currently scheduled to end in March 2023. Once Universal Credit is fully rolled out, the child will keep their free school meal until the end of their current phase of education, i.e. primary or secondary.

Arrears

- At the end of each week arrears are checked to see which parents/ carers owe dinner money.
- A text is sent to parents/ carers on a weekly basis showing meals taken and money owed.
- After 4 weeks, if no payment is made, a letter is sent informing that the child must switch to sandwiches.
- If the debt remains unpaid, the debt will be referred onto the Local Authority.
- If the payment is still not received then it will be referred onto the Civic Centre to commence formal debt proceedings.