

# **Seaham Trinity Primary School**

## **School Meals Payment Policy**

### **Background**

The Governors of Seaham Trinity Primary School are committed to a transparent, consistent and fair approach to the operation of the School Dinner system. By adopting this Policy, the Governors wish to ensure that parents, carers, children and staff can work together to ensure that the School Dinner system works efficiently and effectively and that arrears in payment can be avoided. Where debts are built up over a period of time, it can often be harder for parents to pay them off. As a result 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. Parents are given the choice to buy this service from the School and can decide to provide a packed lunch.

The school will make parents aware of this policy in the following ways:

- A letter to parents
- Reminders in the school's newsletter
- The School website
- Social Media (Facebook)

This will ensure that all parents get the information in a consistent way. This will be done at least once each year.

### **Cost of School Meals**

School meals are available to children at a cost of £2.15 per day, £10.75 per week or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals entitlement. School meals must be paid for in advance/or on a Monday of the week the meals are taken. Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carer the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

### **Payment of School Meals**

Paying for School Meals (this section currently refers to KS2 Pupils taking dinners) The payment for meals is required in the week meals are taken. Parents can make payment on a termly basis in advance if they wish. The school operates a cashless system. School meals should be paid for via ParentPay using either a debit or credit card.

### **Treatment of Arrears**

If your child has taken school meals which has not been paid for, you will be sent a reminder firstly by text via Parentpay at the end of the week meals were taken detailing how much you owe. If payment is not received a 2<sup>nd</sup> reminder will be sent out by letter via Parentpay (Appendix 1). If payment is not received after 7 days a 3<sup>rd</sup> reminder letter will be sent out via Parentpay (Appendix 2) detailing how much you owe, the consequences of non-payment, a final date by which payment must be made. Parents will be requested to provide a packed lunch for their child until the arrears

are cleared. In the event of non-payment the debt will then be referred to the Durham County Council Debt Recovery Team. (*Appendix 4*)

Should a child arrive at School without a packed lunch or without payment for a school meal, the School will telephone the parent to see whether alternative arrangements have been made. The School is not obliged to provide a school dinner where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for Free School Meals has not been received, some schools are known not to provide a meal in these circumstances. The School retains its discretion to refuse to provide a school meal in circumstances where there has been persistent non-payment. However, we regard this as a last resort. We do not wish our children to be in a situation where their learning or welfare suffers and the School will therefore act promptly to address such issues at an early stage and to work with families in order to prevent arrears of dinner monies from accumulating to a point beyond parents' means to settle their account.

### **Provision of School Meals**

Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. If a parent thinks they may qualify for FSM entitlement, they should contact the school office for further details.

### **Free School Meals**

All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, are eligible for a free school meal through the Universal Infant Free School Meal Scheme. It is still important that you complete a Free School Meal Verification Form (*Appendix 5*) as the school receives additional funding for those who are eligible.

Any child may qualify for a free school meal if your receive one of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit with an annual earnings threshold that does not exceed £7,400
- Income Support
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit, provided you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income, assessed by HMRC that does not exceed £16,190
- Working Tax Credit run on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit.
- Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

**Please note:**

***If you receive Working Tax Credit only, your child is NOT eligible.***

**How to claim:**

You can apply for Free School Meals by completing a Verification Check Form available from the school office. Please ensure you complete all of the relevant information on your application form, ensuring that you have included the claimant's correct National Insurance Number/ or NASS

reference number and date of birth. This information will then be checked via Durham County Council.

### **Key Information**

1. All parents are informed of the School Meals Payment Policy.
2. All school lunches must be paid for in advance/or on a Monday of the week the meals are taken.
3. All payments to made through Parentpay.
4. If for some reason payment cannot be made parents should contact school at earliest convenience to advise office.
5. The school will work closely with parents/carers to work out a form of payment plan to help resolve the situation in the event of Dinner Money arrears.
6. Information will be provided for parents who may be eligible to complete Free School Meal Verification Form.
7. Parents who do not want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch.

### **Conclusion**

We hope that by implementing this policy we are able to help parents/carers manage their school payments effectively, reduce administration time and costs involved chasing dinner money debts and at the same time ensure that school budgets are used correctly for the education of its pupils.

Appendix 1 – 1st Debt Reminder Letter

Appendix 2 – 2nd Debt Reminder Letter

Appendix 3 – 3rd & Final Debt Reminder Letter

This policy has been agreed and adopted by the governing body:

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Head Teacher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Governor's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Review Date: September 2022