

*'Ursuline Catholic Primary School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.'*



# **Ursuline Catholic Primary School**

## **School Meals Arrears Policy**

Designation	Name	Date Approved	Date of Renewal
Headteacher	Mrs Nichola Robinson	March 2024	March 2025
Chair of Governors	Mr Paul Vine	March 2024	March 2025

## **Introduction**

This policy relates to the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the case of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for this. As a result, money which should be spent on all pupils' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents/guardians. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents/guardians give this policy their full support.

Parents/guardians can view this policy on the school's website & will be sent a copy of this policy when their children start at the school.

## **General Principle**

- School meals must be paid for in advance/arrears *weekly*. School meals are available to pupils at a cost of £2.60 or at no cost to those in receipt of a free school meals or Universal Infant Free School Meals (Reception, Year 1 and 2).
- Payment should be made by *school's electronic payment system (e.g. Arbor)*

## **Free School Meals Entitlement**

Pupils will not be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, or if the pupil is confirmed as entitled to free school meals. If parents/guardians believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, they should contact the Sefton Council. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying pupils it is important that parents/guardians make use of it.

The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to pupils where this is officially approved, and the school informed by the Local Authority.

## **Procedure for Collection of Arrears**

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons, however, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise.

1. An outstanding dinner money message & email will be sent to parent/guardian after 2 weeks of accumulated arrears, requesting immediate payment (Appendix 1).
2. If unpaid, an accumulated dinner money arrears letter will be sent when 3 weeks' arrears have accumulated, advising immediate payment (Appendix 2).
3. If unpaid, a final message / email of non-payment of dinner money arrears will be sent informing them that no meals will be provided for their child(ren) if payment has not been received by a specified date, (i.e. in accordance with the policy when 3 weeks' arrears have accumulated). This letter will also advise that a Sefton MBC Invoice will be issued that would be subject to Sefton Debt Recovery Policy (Appendix 3).

No meals to be provided to pupils when arrears exceed 3 *weeks*.

Once the final letter deadline has expired a Sefton MBC Invoice may be issued therefore being subject to Sefton MBC Debt Recovery Policy where legal proceedings may commence.

## APPENDIX 1

### **Outstanding Dinner Money Reminder – Message 1**

We've noticed that (Account Name) has a balance of (Amount) and could do with a top-up. Log in to the Parent Portal or Arbor App to pay by card or drop into the school office to pay by cash.

If you have any queries, please contact the school office.

Yours Sincerely

**Accumulated Dinner Money Arrears**

Following the email sent (Date) we've noticed that (account name) has a balance of (Amount)..... and could do with a top-up. Log in to the Parent Portal or Arbor App to pay by card or drop into the school office to pay by cash or cheque.

If the debt is not cleared 5 days, it will not be possible provide a school dinner and you must the make your own arrangements for your child's lunch.

If you have any queries and/ or wish to discuss this matter, please contact the school office.

Yours Sincerely

**Non-Payment of Dinner Money Arrears – Message 3**

We've noticed that (account name) has a balance of (Amount) and could do with a top-up. Log in to the Parent Portal or Arbor App to pay by card or drop into the school office to pay by cash.

In following the school policy on dinner money arrears, a copy of which *is available on the school website*, I must inform you that if payment is not received within 5 working days of the date of this message / email, the debt will be referred to the authority for issue of an Sefton MBC Invoice. This would therefore be subject to Sefton MBC debt recovery policy.

I am obliged to warn you that the debt recovery procedure can result in additional costs and potentially a summons to court.

Until the debt is cleared, you must make alternative arrangements for your child(rens)'s lunch as no meals will be provided in school.

Please make payment immediately by *Cash/Schools Electronic Payment System*.

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding this debt, please contact the school.

Yours Sincerely