**Introduction**

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

**General Principle**

School meals must be paid for in advance. Money should be uploaded to ParentPay and there should be sufficient funds in the school lunch section to cover the cost of the food that is to be purchased.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for this. As a result, money which should be spent on all students' education in school is used to pay for debts incurred by individual parents / carers. The governing body see this as unacceptable and request that all parents / carers give this policy their full support. This would be an inappropriate use of public funding and schools are not permitted to use funding this way.

**Free School Meals Entitlement**

Students will cannot be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, or if the student is 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 Barking and Dagenham Council. As this allowance is a statutory right for qualifying students it is important that parents/carers make use of it. Here is a link to the appropriate form for free school meals;

<https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/free-school-meals-pupil-premium>

The school is only allowed to provide free school meals to students where this is officially approved and the school has been informed by the Local Authority. The free school meal allowance can be used at lunch time only.

**Procedure for Collection of Arrears**

It is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons e.g. students or parents / carers have forgotten to upload money to ParentPay. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate. The governing body has therefore agreed the following policy where arrears arise. If there is not sufficient money in students account to purchase food or hot meal, students will be reminded by the till operator and will be able to purchase a sandwich or a hot meal at break time and/or lunchtime so that they do not go hungry. This cost will be added to the debt. At stage 3, student debt referred to DSL for further action and student will no longer be permitted to receive food from school, and will need to bring a packed lunch.

1. A verbal reminder to the student by the till operator after week 1.
2. An electronic debt reminder will be sent out via ParentPay after 2 weeks
3. A phone call to the parent/carer if debt reminder letter not actioned after 4 week and referral to the DSL.