CLAYTON ST JOHN CofE PRIMARY

SCHOOL MEAL DEBT POLICY

Ratified by Governors:	30/6/2026	Signed Headteacher: Mrs Gemma Emsley Full Governing Body
Next Review Date:	Summer Term 2028	

Safeguarding Statement of Intent

At Clayton St John CofE Primary we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by or invited to deliver services at Clayton St John CofE. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access the school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect and bullying. We also work to ensure that our pupils are aware of Online Safety and who to talk to if they feel vulnerable or scared.

Vision

'Growing together in God's Love'

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."

1 Chronicles 16:34

Our Values



Statement of Intent

At Clayton St John CofE Primary we strive to ensure that our pupils are safeguarded against any form of harm. We ensure that our staff are trained appropriately, can identify signs of abuse and follow policy and procedures for reporting concerns, disclosures and allegations.

Background

This School Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As an in-house meal provider, the responsibility of this falls on the Headteacher to pursue instances of non-payment. 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.

Provision of School Meals

The provision of a Schools Meals Service is no different to any other business in that meals must be paid for by someone. Free School Meals are available for parents who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. Anyone who may qualify for Free School Meals should contact the school office for further information. Free School Meals (FSM) are a statutory right, and it is important that all parents/carers 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 can be found on this link. Applications can be completed online or telephone on 01274 432772.

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parents/carers personal circumstances change the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost 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/carers the term prior to the new charge taking effect.

Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 currently receive meals at no cost through the UIFSM (Universal Infant Free School Meals) Grant.

Payment for School Meals

Please ensure payments are made on ParentPay on a Monday morning for the coming week. Parents/Carers must pay in advance for school lunches, our preferred payment method is

- ParentPay – online or at any local outlet with PayPoint facilities.
- In exceptional circumstances cash or cheque should be placed in a marked envelope and passed by hand to the school office.

Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those who are entitled to free school meals or UIFSM. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the Headteacher may grant a debt allowance of £20.00. However, this debt should be paid the next day, and future meals be paid in advance before any meal is provided.

If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case where a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the parent will be contacted and asked to come to school with the money. Otherwise, they must provide sandwiches before lunchtime or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

Management of School Meal Debts

To ensure that the school's budget is not adversely affected by the cost of school meal debt the Governors consider the fairest system to all families is to pursue a strict approach 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.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment, or if a child's entitlement to free school dinners has ceased, a telephone call will be made to the parent/carer in the first instance to establish if alternative arrangements have been made.

When a parent has failed to produce dinner money the Headteacher may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation e.g., lost or forgotten dinner money, temporary hardship etc. However, this would be monitored.

If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for, a letter detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent/carer requesting payment directly to the school within seven days.

Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require meals, the Headteacher must endeavour to establish if the child is entitled to free school meals, or if the parent/carer is experiencing hardship which affects their ability to pay. Under these circumstances the parent/carer should be invited to apply for free school meals or speak confidentially to the Headteacher or Academy Business Leader.

ParentPay System of School Debt Communication

ParentPay allows communication to parents regarding reminders for payment of school meals using the following procedures;

1. Every week a reminder will be sent to all parents/carers owing more than £0.50 by email or letter.

2. Any debts greater than £20.00 a reminder will be sent informing parents that if the outstanding amount is not paid, it may be necessary for them to provide packed lunches until the account is in credit.

3. Any debts greater than £30.00 a reminder letter will be sent informing parents that they should make payment immediately or contact the Headteacher or Academy Business Leader to discuss payment arrangements. At this point, parents must provide packed lunches for their child/ren to avoid incurring further debt. If the child/children is/are not provided with the requested packed lunch and the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the Headteacher will arrange to provide a sandwich and a drink.

4. Any debts greater than £50.00, where the parent has not made payment arrangements, the Headteacher should inform the Children's Social Care Team and formally write to the parent/carer, explaining that the School is not obliged to provide a school dinner where advance payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school dinners has not been received.

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 and incurring costly referral to the school's solicitors. The Headteacher does however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding school meal debts and inform the local authority that a child is not being provided with a suitable meal at lunch time.

Staff Meals

Staff in school can order meals daily, but these must be paid for in advance in line with appropriate use of public funds. Staff meals are not subsidised, and any unpaid amounts will be chased using the same procedures for pupil school meals.

Review of Policy

The Local Governing Body will review the policy biannually. Any new legislation or directives will be incorporated into the policy as necessary.