Debt Arrears Policy

Date adopted: 21st March 2013

History of most recent policy reviews

Date	Review	Who is Responsible?
September 2013	Standard Review	Finance Committee
April 2014	Change policy from Dinner Money Arrears to Debt Arrears & include additional section	Finance Committee
March 2016	Amendment to dinner money arrears process	Finance Committee
January 2018	Amendment to dinner money arrears recovery process	Finance Committee
January 2023	Reference to ARBOR for communications	
January 2025	Amendment to dinner money arrears recovery process	

Review date: January 2027

January 2025

Air Balloon Hill Primary School

Debt Arrears Policy

This policy has been compiled recognising the difficulties placed on Headteachers in balancing the social welfare of pupils with the management of the school budget while being sympathetic to families who may be suffering financial hardship.

Dinner Money:

Dinner money should be paid on Monday for any dinners required that week. Ideally, this should be paid via the parent/carer's Arbor account.

1. When a pupil 's dinner money account has insufficient funds to cover the cost of the day's meal, a meal will still be provided but a message will be sent via Arbor to the parent/carer to inform them that a meal has been provided but their account has a negative balance.

2. Meals in Arbor are charged **after** the meal has been taken and so a negative balance may not show in an account until the afternoon.

3. In the first instance of an account being in a negative balance, a message (message 1) will be sent to the parent/carer during the morning of the following day to notify them that money is owed and requesting payment either via the office or online by the end of the day.

4. Where a pupil continues to require meals and no payment is made, the debt will increase. A meal will be provided, and a message (message 1) will be sent on each day that the debt is outstanding up to a maximum of five days.

5. If the debt remains outstanding, a further message (message 2) will be sent.

6. If the debt remains outstanding after five days, a further message (message 3) will be sent requesting payment by a specific date.

7. If the debt is paid by the specific date, no further action will be taken, and meals will continue to be provided when requested.

8. If the debt remains outstanding, Administration staff will notify the Headteacher and Assistant Head for Pastoral and Safeguarding. If agreed by the Headteacher, letter A will be sent advising the parent/carer that they need to now provide a packed lunch or collect their child to have lunch at home. Letter A will also offer support to the family if necessary. If requests for school dinners continue, the school will provide a basic meal (e.g. a cheese sandwich and piece of fruit), however the full cost will be charged to the parent/carers which will increase the amount owed. The outstanding balance must be paid within the next thirty days or the matter referred to the Chair of the Governors Finance Committee for a formal debt review.

9. If parents/carers have difficulty clearing their arrears, it may be possible to draw up a payment plan to spread the cost of clearing the arrears, however, any further meals provided **must** be paid for in advance and the school must see an ongoing reduction in the overall debt. Any plan would be at the school's discretion

10. The same process should be used if a cheque is not honoured by the bank.

    If, in the opinion of the headteacher, failure to provide a meal could have serious consequences for that pupil, a meal should be provided and details recorded electronically. The headteacher may also request that the school's Family Support Worker contacts the family to offer wider support.

Wraparound Care Provision (Breakfast, After-School and Holiday Clubs)

1. When a parent/carer has failed to pay for the provision provided, a message will be sent reminding the parent/carer that their account has a negative balance.

2. If this action proves unsuccessful in securing payment for the arrears, a second message will be sent to parents/carers 5 days later advising them of the amount owing and that urgent payment is required.

3. If the outstanding debt remains unpaid, parents/carers will be informed in writing that no more provision will be made for their child/ren within the school's wraparound care facilities until the debt is paid.

4. When the outstanding debt remains unpaid after another month, the debt will be referred to Chair of the Governors Finance Committee for advice

5. If parents/carers have difficulty clearing their arrears, it may be possible to draw up a payment plan to spread the cost of clearing the arrears. Parents/carers should speak to the Wraparound Care Manager directly to discuss the options available. Any plan would be at the school's discretion and future provision for the child/ren within wraparound care would be dependent on adhering to any agreed plan

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years
Date for review: January 2027

Linked Policies:

Finance Policy
Charging and Remissions Policy
Wraparound Care Policy

Communication Plan for dinner monies arrears

Messages (via Arbor) to parents/carers

Message 1:

We've noticed that [Pupil] account has a balance of [AMOUNT] and could do with a top-up. Please make a payment as soon as possible.

Message 2:

[Pupil] has an outstanding balance of [AMOUNT] for school dinners. Please pay [AMOUNT] via the school office or online by the end of the day. Thank you.

Message 3: #Name has an outstanding balance of £ for school dinners. This will need to be paid by dd/mm/yy before any further meals can be ordered. Thank you.

Letters to parents

Letter A summary: Clarifying the debt. Explaining the basic school dinner option until payment has cleared. Offering support if needed.

Letter B summary: Bespoke letter outlining the formal steps that will be taken if debt is not cleared by final deadline.

January 2025

Air Balloon Hill Primary School,
Hillside Road,
St George,
Bristol,
BS5 7PB
Tel: 0117 903 0077
Email: airballoonhillp@bristol-schools.uk
Head Teacher: Mr. T Browse

We look to the stars…

LETTER A

Date

Name
Address
Address line 2
BRISTOL
Postcode

Dear *name*

Despite several reminders by email, the amount of £ is still owing on *child's name* dinner money account.

As you can appreciate, we rely on prompt payment of dinner money in order for us to maintain and run an efficient dining room provision and a relatively small amount of money owing can soon lead to a larger debt over a surprisingly short amount of time. This can become difficult for the school, and some families, to manage.

With this is mind, we are now unable to provide a school dinner for *#name* until the account is cleared. In the meantime, you are welcome to provide a packed lunch or take *#name* home for lunch.

Should *#name* continue to order a school dinner, we will only be able to provide #name with a basic meal at full cost. The cost of the meal will be charged to *#name's* dinner money account which will further increase the amount owed. If the debt is not paid within the next thirty days, we will be forced to refer the matter to the School Governors for a formal debt review.

As a school we recognise that failure to pay debts, or provide your child with a lunch, may be a sign that a family is in need or, that a child is at risk of neglect. If you feel you may require support, or would like to talk to someone about this, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the family support worker.

Yours sincerely

Mr T Browse
Headteacher