



DINNER MONEY PROCEDURE

Reviewed and Adopted by the CEO

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Responsible Officer: Finance Director

VISION ACADEMY LEARNING TRUST

DINNER MONEY PROCEDURE

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Document Control

Application	This procedure pertains to all primary school staff at Vision Academy Learning Trust
Associated policy reference and title	FIN-VALT-001 Financial Handbook FIN-VALT-003 Charging and Remissions Policy
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Lead	Mrs J Turner, Trust Compliance Manager
Members of working party	Mrs J Turner, Finance Director
This procedure has been ratified by: Board or Sub-Committee (specify)	CEO

Author & Contributors

Name	Role	Version	Date
Mrs J Turner	Trust Compliance Manager	V0.1	18/03/19

Consultation Audit Trail

Name	Role	Version	Date
Mrs J Turner, Finance Director	Assurance	V0.1	18/03/19
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Change Log

Summarise the major changes between versions below

Pg/Section	Change	Version	Date
	New procedure		

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1. Introduction

1. It is a parents' responsibility to ensure that a child is provided with a meal at school either a packed lunch or a school meal.
2. Parents are responsible for ensuring school meals are paid for and the school has a responsibility to ensure that money is not owing for school meals. Vision Academy Learning Trust cannot and will not permit any amounts outstanding.
3. Therefore, a procedure is required to ensure school meal amounts owing are kept to a minimum. In writing this procedure, the Governors of Chandlers Ridge Academy/The Links Primary/Junction Farm Primary/Whinstone Primary wish to implement one that ensures meals are paid for, whilst aiding Parents/Carers during financial difficulties and ensuring children still receive a meal at lunchtime.

2. Scope of procedures

1. This procedure relates to outstanding balances incurred by parents whose children take school meals. It excludes children who are entitled to Free School Meals.

3. Payment Procedures

1. All parents are provided with a copy of the dinner money procedure when their child joins school.
2. All parents are set up with the means to pay for their child's school meal with access to the ParentMail system.
3. ParentMail balance reminders are sent daily where there are zero or negative balances
4. All school lunches must be paid for in advance
5. No child should be sent to school with a zero/negative balance in their ParentMail account and expect to be given a meal
6. Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch should provide a healthy packed lunch or make alternative arrangements
7. As soon as school are notified that a child is leaving it is imperative for the school office to check the balance of the child's account. Any outstanding amounts must be paid in full, and any credit balance will be refunded.

3.1 Free School Meal Eligibility

1. If you think that your child may be eligible to receive free school meals, please contact the following service for further advice and guidance: Confidential Free School Meals Helpline – 01642 526605 email freeschoolmeals@stockton.gov.uk
2. If as parents/guardians/carers you receive one of the following, you may be able to claim for Free School Meals:
 - a. Income Support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - b. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - c. Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - d. The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

- e. Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
 - f. Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - g. Universal Credit
3. Please help us to provide the best support for your child by registering for free school meals if you are eligible. Registering for free school meals is confidential and taking up the free school meal is recommended but is not compulsory.

4 Procedures where there is a negative balance (money owed)

1. In collecting any money owed, a step-by-step process will be followed. The time lapse between the steps will normally be 5 school days. However, this may vary depending on factors such as the time period within a term. The next step will be implemented if the money owed has not been repaid or any contact made with the School.
2. If parents fall into negative balance more than 3 times in a term the school reserves the right to refuse to provide meals for the rest of the term.
3. If any money is owed at the end of the academic year, the school reserve the right to charge an administration fee for time taken to recoup this outstanding amount, as well as claiming the money owed through the Small Claims Court.
4. We acknowledge that on occasion, families have financial difficulties and in these proven circumstances, the school will work hard with the family to agree a solution which is not to the detriment of the child. In the event of a child leaving Chandlers Ridge Academy/The Links Primary/Junction Farm Primary/Whinstone Primary with money owed, the Governing Body will need to consider what further steps to take which may include contacting the child's new school and informing them of concerns.

4.1 Level 1 Indicator: A child's account goes into a negative balance of one week's dinner money or less

1. Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
2. Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
3. Check 3 does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

Action 1: Letter 1

Each week negative balances will be reviewed and a "letter one" will be sent via ParentMail and/or via the child for all negative balances. (Appendix 1) This letter requests that the child is provided with a packed lunch until the outstanding balance is cleared, the School Office will ensure this is adhered to – if the child arrives at School without a packed lunch the parent/carer will be telephoned asking them to bring this into School immediately.

4.2 Level 2 Indicator: A child comes to school again without the outstanding amount being paid or a packed lunch, and the outstanding amount exceeds one week of dinner money

1. Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
2. Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
3. Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 2: Letter 2/Personal contact

For those negative balances which received “letter one” the previous week have not been cleared and still have outstanding amounts, “letter two” will be sent via ParentMail requesting that the parent/carer makes an appointment with the Head to discuss the outstanding amount. (Appendix 2)

4.3 Level 3 Indicator: The parent does not comply with any of these options and the outstanding amount exceeds one week of dinner money.

1. Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
2. Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
3. Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 3: Letter 3/Referral to Governing Body

For those negative balances which received “letter two” the previous week have not been cleared and still have outstanding amounts, the school will contact the parent by telephone to arrange an appointment. If this meeting is not kept or a satisfactory situation agreed, the outstanding amount will be referred to the Governing Body and “letter three” will be sent via Royal Mail recorded delivery. (Appendix 3)

4.4 Level 4 Indicator: The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options

1. Check 1 is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
2. Check 2 is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
3. Check 3 has this parent made contact?

Action 4: bring in outside agencies

For negative balances which received “letter three” the previous week the School Governors will need to make a decision on how to deal with the outstanding amount.

If parents do not contact the school regarding the money owed and no payment is paid, additional administration costs may be added to the outstanding amount. If this is necessary, the School Governors may seek to reclaim these costs and any outstanding amount through the Small Claims Court.

5 Review

This procedure will be reviewed on a three year cycle, but will be subject to earlier review to reflect changes in legislation, organisational context or lessons learned as appropriate.

Appendix I

Action I: Letter I

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: School Dinner Payments for xx

Dinner Money Rate: Daily £xx/Weekly £xx

According to our records xx has been taking school meals recently.

It appears that we have not received sufficient money to cover this cost.

The outstanding balance as at xx was £xx I would be grateful if payment could be paid by xx via ParentMail including monies for the forthcoming week/half term/term if this is relevant.

It is the policy of Vision Academy Learning Trust that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. I would be grateful if you could arrange for prompt payment of this outstanding amount. Please ensure xx is provided with a packed lunch until this negative balance is cleared and school dinners can re-commence.

Due to the ever increasing debts owing for children's dinners, it is imperative that payment for meals is made promptly to the school, in advance of meals being taken.

Thank you for your assistance. If you wish to discuss this further, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

Appendix 2

Action 2: Letter 2/Personal contact

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Dinners

You will recall that I wrote to you a few days ago regarding the outstanding balance on Xxx dinner money account. The balance as at xx is £xxx .

As you know, it is the policy of Vision Academy Learning Trust that the School does not pay for dinners on behalf of the children. I am disappointed that you have not paid the monies owing via ParentMail as requested in my previous letter, and would request that you telephone the office to make an appointment to see me to discuss this further.

Thank you for your assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 3

Action 3: Letter 3/Referral to Governing Body

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Re: School Dinners

I am disappointed you have been unable to contact me to make arrangements to recover the outstanding amount of £xx. In line with the school's Dinner Money Procedure, a copy of which is available on the school website, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to the school Governors.

The School Governors will consider the situation and will contact you in due course over the action they will take.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher