



Ready, Respectful, Safe

Dinner Money Policy

v. September 2025

This policy was formally adopted by governors in October 2025 and will be reviewed annually.

Date of next review: September 2026

Aim

The William Rhodes Primary and Nursery School Dinner Money Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach is taken in regards to paying for school dinners and resolving any debts incurred by parents / carers whose children take school dinners.

Provision of School Meals

We currently purchase school meals directly through Derbyshire County Council (DCC) catering services. We are invoiced per meal ordered regardless of whether it is ultimately taken or if it has been paid for within school as they are non-refundable. Therefore, it is the schools responsibility to pursue any instances of non-payment, as any outstanding debts will have a direct and detrimental impact on the school budget. Any debts the school has to absorb due to non-payment will have a direct impact on the amount of money available for expenditure elsewhere in the school budget. Parents/carers are free to provide their children with a suitable packed lunch that is healthy and nutritious to ensure they have sufficient energy to have a productive afternoon. The lunchtime staff will monitor the children's lunches to support with this and if any concerns are identified the parents/carers will be contacted.

FSM and UIFSM

The Schools Meals Service is no different to any other business in that meals have to be paid for by someone. All government-funded schools must currently offer free school meals (Universal Infant Free School Meals) to every pupil in:

- Reception
- Year 1
- Year 2

Free school meals (FSM) are available for parents/carers who meet certain criteria including the receipt of state benefits. Anyone who may qualify for free school meals should contact the school for further information or check their eligibility on the link provided below. Free school meals 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. Your child will also benefit from the extra funding the school receives for families entitled to claim free school meals. Information on the entitlement to free school meals and an application process can be found on the Derbyshire County Council's website:

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/your-child-at-school/meals/school-meals/free-school-meals.aspx>

Currently, if you are eligible for FSM at any point in your child's school life this eligibility will carry through with them and is protected regardless of any change in circumstances. However the government have the potential capability to review and amend this legislation. In which case if a child's entitlement to free school meals expires the parent/carer must provide a packed lunch or send payment in advance for a school dinner. The school will help in any way possible should this happen and if parents/carers struggle to provide their children with lunch. We will never let a child go hungry.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a current cost of £3.25 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of free school meals entitlement or Universal Infant Free School Meals. Parents/carers are free to choose if they would like to take a school meal or provide a packed lunch on a day-to-day basis as long as payment is made where required.

School meals must be paid for in advance.

Any revision to the school meal prices will be notified to parents/carers as soon as we are informed by our provider, Derbyshire County Council Catering Services. We have no real influence on the price of the meals, we charge the recommended amount based on the charge incurred by the provider to avoid making a loss.

Payment for School Meals

The school must ensure that all dinner money collected is banked in a timely manner in accordance with the school's financial regulations. We use ParentPay for collecting dinner money (and other monies such as for school trips) as we aim to be a cashless school. You will be provided with an account to use, www.parentpay.com please activate your account once you receive the log in details.

You can manually upload an amount onto ParentPay to pay in advance of meals as and when you want to or you could set up a monthly direct debit that will automatically pay a designated amount that you set up each month.

For anyone wanting to use cash or cheques rather than using online, ParentPay have a system called PayPoint which allows you to make payments at local shops into your ParentPay account similar to how you would pay for gas and electric if you were on a prepay meter. If you would like to use Paypoint please ask at reception and we will provide the letter with the Paypoint code on.

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 rigorous approach. If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment hasn't been made in advance for meals the school will allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation. However the school will contact the parents/carers in the first instance to request the packed lunch is brought if it has been forgotten or request payment is made as soon as possible. The school is happy to support parent/carers with completing the FSM eligibility process if they think they might qualify but haven't as of yet.

The school will ensure that each meal ordered is recorded on ParentPay in a timely and accurate manner to give parents an updated ParentPay balance. If parents/carers notice a discrepancy or wish to discuss a balance they can contact the office and all discrepancies will be investigated and amended accordingly if required. Parents/carers can monitor their balances on the ParentPay website. A weekly update by ParentHub will also be sent out to the parents/carers of any debts or credits they have to support them with tracking any payments required and to minimise the accumulation.

As payments should be made in advance there should not be any debts accumulated. However if a debt does accumulate due to unforeseen circumstance and exceeds £30 on the ParentPay account, a

formal letter must be sent to the parent/carer informing them to provide their child/children with a packed lunch to prevent further arrears.

If the debt exceeds £50 the School Business Manager will call to discuss and arrange a payment plan to resolve the situation as soon as possible whilst ensuring it is affordable for the family. As a last resort, we will seek the advice from the schools legal team when there has been no response to the previous communications and no resolutions has been possible. If at any time you are struggling with finances, please speak to the office or contact our Family Support Worker who will assist you and your family with accessing the relevant services available.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

The Local Governor Team will be kept updated with the details of any outstanding debts due to the financial implications to the schools budget. The aim of the school's dinner money policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt to accumulate and effective action to be taken by the school to support parents/carers where needed. The school 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 lunchtime. All write-offs of outstanding debt must be approved by the Local Governor Team following submission of details of the debt by the Head Teacher together with reasons for no further action being taken.