



Castle Hill Primary School School Meal Debt Policy

Reviewed: July 2025

Reviewed by: Head Teacher & School Business Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. L. Stanick".

Approved by: Full Governing Body 10/07/2025

Review frequency: Annually

Castle Hill Primary School have historically adopted a strict **NO DEBT** policy relating to the School Meal and Breakfast Club service. If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support. No parent would take their child to a restaurant and expect them to be given food without paying; the same applies at school.

Families who receive certain benefits may be eligible for free school meals. Your child is eligible for free school meals if you are in receipt of one of the following benefits:

Your child might be able to get free school meals if you get any of the following:

- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400 per year / £616 per month, as assessed by earnings from up to 3 of your most recent assessment periods)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

To check if your child is eligible, please complete the link to apply for free school meals at the following address. Our admin team are able to help you with this process if needed.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/free-school-meals/apply-for-free-school-meals/>

Parent/s **must book and pay in advance** for Breakfast Club. This can be done by logging into your Parentpay account

<https://app.parentpay.com/public/client/security/v2/#/login>

A log in for your Parentpay account can be obtained from the office and help navigating Parentpay can be obtained from the admin office via phone, email or in person.

School meals/dinners

We do expect parents to ensure that their child's dinner money accounts on Parentpay are kept at a £0 balance or credit balance if dinners are being taken. All meal payments should be made as follows:

- Online using Parentpay
- Via PayPoint payments

A log in for your Parentpay account or paypoint barcode can be obtained from the office and help navigating Parentpay can be obtained from the admin office via phone, email or in person.

Parents are expected to regularly check their Parent Pay account to ensure there is always sufficient funds in their account. Parentpay does have the ability to set up 'low balance' alerts if you find a reminder to be helpful – again, our admin team can help you with setting this up if needed.

The below protocol will be followed with regard to any outstanding debt for lunches on ParentPay.

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Etrick – Head Teacher.

Debt chasing process

Before any debt is chased, the following questions need to be satisfied:

- Is this a FSM child, are the dates correct?
- Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
- Has this parent made contact to explain why there is an outstanding debt and their planned actions to settle the debt – does this mitigate the need to chase the debt?

1st reminder

Indicator: A child's account goes into debt by the value of £14.25 (5 x £2.85 daily meal rate) or more of accumulated debt relating to dinner provision

Action: send a 'Gentle debt reminder' text - example in Appendix 1 below

Appendix 1

Dear Parent/Carer,

Please note that your Child's dinner debt account is currently in debt. Please can you arrange for an immediate credit to be applied to clear any outstanding debt,

Many thanks,
Castle Hill Primary School Admin Team

2nd reminder - (follow up to reminder 1 if debt remains outstanding)

Indicator: The Parentpay account remains at a debt of £14.25 or more for 7 days after the first reminder.

Action: Personal contact – admin will phone the 1st primary contact on SIMS to ask parent/carer to ask them to either pay online, at a pay point or as a last resort bring the money into the school office. This will be followed up by an email to the parent/carer to reiterate the phone conversation in line with Appendix 2 below:

Appendix 2

*Dear Parent/Carer,
Following on from our phone conversation, please can you ensure that the dinner debt on your child's Parentpay is cleared immediately and in full. This will ensure that further meals can be provided to your child.*

Many thanks,
Castle Hill Primary School Admin Team

3rd reminder (follow up to action 2 if debt remains outstanding)

Indicator: The Parentpay account remains at a debt on £14.25 or more for 7 days after the 2nd reminder.

Action 3: Personal contact – admin will ask School Business Manager to call the 1st primary contact on SIMS to ask them to either pay online, at a pay point or as a last resort bring the money into the office. The Business Manager will also ask the parent/carer to start sending the child with a packed lunch (from the next school day) as no further school meals will be provided until the debt is cleared.

This will be followed up by an email to the parent/carer to reiterate the phone conversation in line with Appendix 3 below:

Appendix 3

Dear Parent/Carer,

Following on from our phone conversation, please arrange immediate settlement of your child's diner money debt. Until the debt is cleared, we will require you to send your child in with a packed lunch as the system will no longer allow us to order them a school meal. If you are in genuine hardship, please make contact with the School Business Manager on 01452 863380 to discuss your circumstances in order that we can support you and your child.

Many thanks, Castle Hill School Business Manager

4th reminder: (follow up to action 3 if debt remains outstanding)

Indicator: The Parentpay account remains at a debt on £14.25 or more for 7 days after the 3rd reminder.

Action 4: Liaise with Headteacher and decide whether to bring in outside agencies – LEA to advise, small claims court, social services.