



# Spon Gate Primary School

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## Dinner Money Policy

**Date last reviewed:** 09 November 2017

**Date signed off by Headteacher and Governing body:** 08 November 2017

## **Background**

Spon Gate Primary School Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure that a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners. As the Local Education Authority is no longer accountable for the administration of dinner money debt the responsibility now falls on the school 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**

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 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.

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 of £2.00 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.

## **Payment for School Meals**

Please send payment either cash or cheque (made payable to Spon Gate Primary School) on a Monday morning in a sealed envelope clearly marked with your child's name and class number, and amount enclosed. This payment should be handed to the School Office only. The School must ensure that all dinner money collected is banked in a timely manner in accordance with the School's Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by audit.

## **Claiming for a Free School Meal**

From December 2015 entitlement to Free School Meals will be processed as part of Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support claims by the Benefits Service. Free School Meals are a statutory benefit. Applying for a free school meal could raise up to an extra £1320 per annum for six years for your child's school (funded by central government). This can help to fund valuable teaching and learning support for your school (and is still paid to the school even if your entitlement ceases).

Free school meals are available to children of families who are in receipt of:

- income Support
- income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- an income-related employment and support allowance
- support under part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs) that does not exceed £16,190

Parents receiving Working Tax Credit for four weeks after their employment finishes are entitled to free school meals during that period. This also applies to parents who start working less than 16 hours per week (please seek advice about this from the Benefits Agency)

**Please note:**

If you receive Working Tax Credit only, your child is **NOT** eligible.

**How to claim:**

You can apply for free school meals using the online process:

[http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/54/benefits/168/free\\_school\\_meals](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/54/benefits/168/free_school_meals)

Please ensure you have completed all of the relevant information on your application form, ensuring that you have included the claimants correct National Insurance Number /or NASS reference number and date of birth.

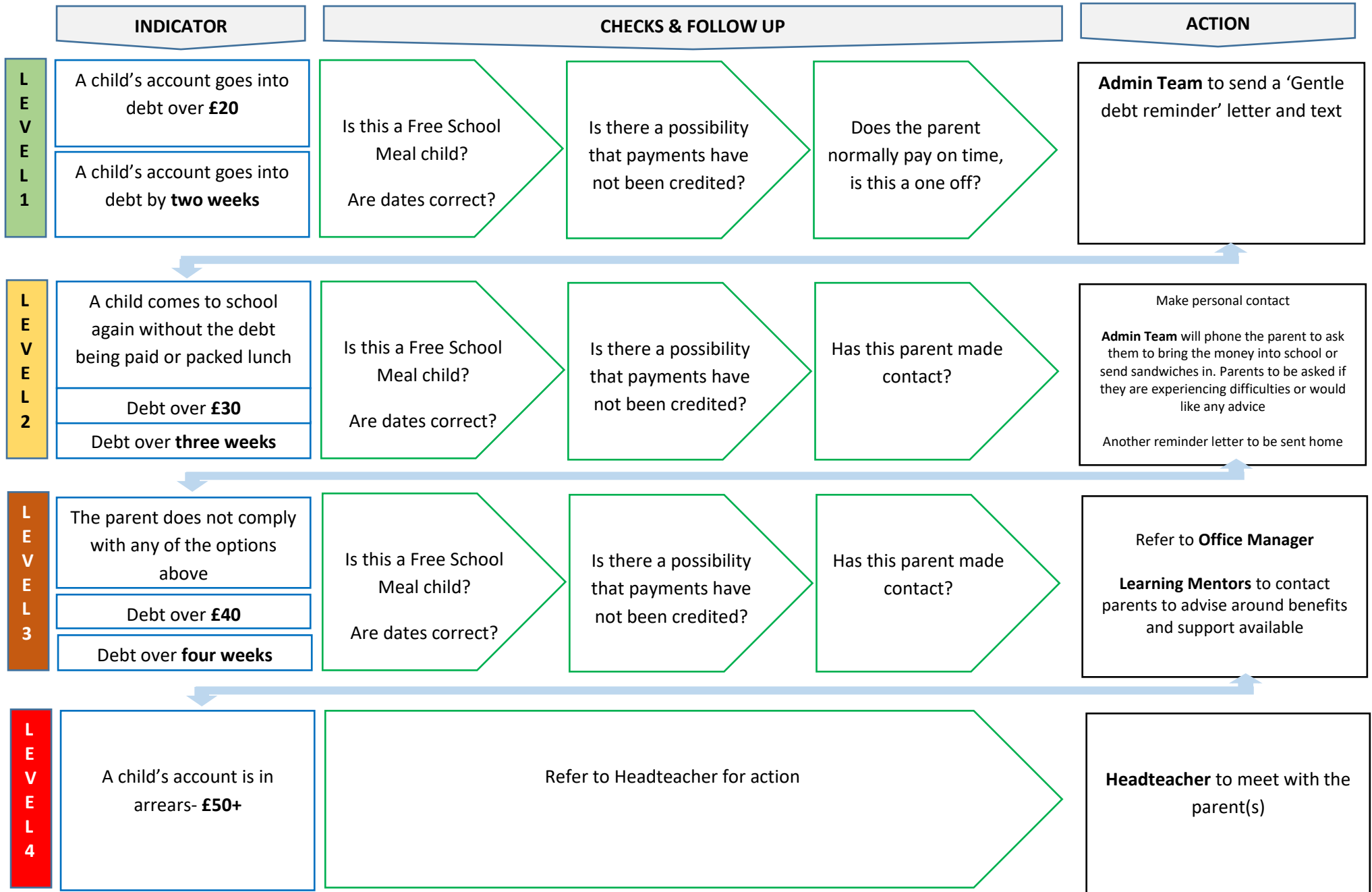
You are no longer required to provide proof of your benefit entitlement. Your eligibility for Free School Meals is processed via a database held by the Department of Works and Pensions.

**Management of School Meal Debts**

**Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2** outline how the school will address instances where debt has accrued and money is owed to the school in relation to meals.

# MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL MEAL DEBTS

## PROCESS CHART



## APPENDIX 2

### Framework for Managing School Meal Debt

<p><b>Level 1</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator:</b></p> <p>A child's account goes into debt</p> <p>(over <b>£20/two week</b>)</p>	<p><b>Check 1</b> is this a Free School Meal child, are dates correct?</p> <p><b>Check 2</b> is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?</p> <p><b>Check 3</b> does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?</p>	<p><b>Action 1:</b></p> <p><b>Admin team</b> to send a 'Gentle debt reminder' letter and text</p>
<p><b>Level 2</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator:</b></p> <p>A child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch</p> <p>(over <b>£30/three weeks</b>)</p>	<p><b>Check 1</b> is this a Free School Meal child, are dates correct?</p> <p><b>Check 2</b> is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?</p> <p><b>Check 3</b> has this parent made contact?</p>	<p><b>Action 2:</b></p> <p>Make personal contact</p> <p><b>Admin team</b> will phone the parent to ask them to either bring the money into school or bring sandwiches in. Parents to be asked if they are experiencing difficulties or would like any advice</p> <p>Another reminder letter to be sent home</p>
<p><b>Level 3</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator:</b></p> <p>The parent does not comply with any of these options</p> <p>(over <b>£40/four weeks</b>)</p>	<p><b>Check 1</b> is this a Free School Meal child, are dates correct?</p> <p><b>Check 2</b> is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?</p> <p><b>Check 3</b> has this parent made contact?</p>	<p><b>Action 3:</b></p> <p>Refer to <b>Office Manager</b></p> <p><b>Learning Mentors</b> to contact parents to advise parents around benefits and support available</p>
<p><b>Level 4</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator:</b></p> <p>A child's account is in arrears - <b>£50+</b></p>	<p>Refer to Headteacher for action</p>	<p><b>Head teacher</b> to meet with the parent (s)</p>