



# SCHOOL MEALS & PAYMENTS POLICY

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Headteacher)      Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Governors)      Date \_\_\_\_\_

October 2023

Date of next review: October 2024

## Our Mission Statement

### Loved

We love one another as Jesus taught us - our friends, our families and those who we may never meet.

### Valued

We value everyone - everyone is important; pupils, staff, parents, governors and members of the community- no matter their race, religion ability or need. We try to live like Jesus taught us.

### Challenged

We challenge each other - not only with our learning but challenge each other to be more merciful to others, have a little more understanding of others' needs and challenge each other to be better people.

## 1. Background

The School Meal Payment Policy has been adopted to ensure a consistent and fair approach to dinner money payments by parents/carers whose children take school dinners.

## 2. Provision of School Meals

Parents/carers of pupils within the school have the choice of paying for a school lunch for their child or providing a healthy packed lunch. All school meals are prepared by cooks from Aspens Catering Services Team and meet the stringent guidelines by the government regarding the provision of healthy school meals. They provide a main course each day\* and work on a three week menu cycle which changes throughout each year.

\*Daily menus choices are subject to change but parents are notified prior to any menu change.

Free School Meals are available to those who qualify and we believe it is important that those who are eligible take up their child's entitlement so that they can receive a cooked meal each day. Further information on entitlement to Free School Meals (FSM) may be obtained from the school office or online at

If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parents/carers' personal circumstances change, then the parent/carer **must** provide a packed lunch or make payment in advance for a school lunch. Any parent/carer requiring help with registering for a free school meal claim can request assistance from the school office team who will be happy to help.

## 3. School Meals Costs

School meals are available to children at a current cost of £2.45 per day\*\*, or at no cost if:

- a) the child is in Reception to Year 2 and therefore qualifies for a Universal Infant Free School Meal;
- b) the child qualifies for Free School Meals entitlement and the school has been notified by Derbyshire County Council's Grants and Benefits Team.

School meals **must** be paid for in advance. Any revision to the price of meals will be notified to parents/carers with sufficient notice to the new charge taking effect.

\*\*Price at £2.45 September 2023 - subject to change each year.

## Application for Pupil Premium/Free School Meals Funding

As part of ensuring equality of provision across our schools, Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT has teamed up with Derbyshire County Council to confirm whether our academies are entitled to claim Pupil Premium Funding for your child. The Pupil Premium provides extra funding within the school for additional equipment and support. Pupils eligible for Pupil Premium, due to economic circumstances, will also be eligible for Free School Meals. Staff within your child's school will be able to advise further on this.

We are therefore asking all parents and guardians of children who will be attending one of our Our Lady of Lourdes CMAT Schools in any class including Nursery Classes (aged 3 or 4 years old) to complete the online form at <https://ololcmat.co.uk/ppcheck> (please note, this redirects to a Derbyshire County Council form) **or** complete and return the form below.

Please complete all sections of this form and return it to your school who will forward it to Derbyshire County Council for processing in accordance with **GDPR** and the Council's Information Management policy.

Schools will be advised on the results of the eligibility status and any changes to this status on a monthly basis.

### 4. Payment for School Meals

Dinners may be paid on a weekly online via your child's Arbor account. Any parent/carer requiring help with registering for online payment systems can request support from the school office.

### 5. Management of School Meal Debt

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 'Zero Tolerance' approach as we are unable to carry these unmet costs. Although this may seem harsh to some parents/carers it is important that the school budget is spent for the benefit of **all** our pupils and not to cover the debt of a small number. Therefore, if a child arrives at school without a packed lunch, sufficient money is not present in your child's online account, or if a child's entitlement to FSM has ceased, the school will send a message and telephone the parent/carer as a reminder, in the first instance, to establish if alternative arrangements have been made. In some instances the school may allow a meal to be provided where it is felt that this is a temporary situation e.g. forgotten lunchbox.

If a child takes a school meal which has not been paid for an email or text detailing how much is owed will be sent to the parent during the week requesting immediate payment to the school. Prompt action will be taken to address any debt issue at an early stage in order to prevent arrears amassing.

Where a child continues to require meals due to the parent/carer experiencing exceptional hardship, the parent/carer should either apply for FSM or speak confidentially to the Headteacher or the Office Manager. The school will support parents/carers as much as possible in these circumstances. However, if parents/carers make no attempt to contact or co-operate with the school then parents can expect no further assistance from the school.

When the debt exceeds £12.25 (5 meals) for a *child* a formal letter (Appendix A) will be sent to the parent/carer immediately informing them to provide their child with a packed lunch to prevent

further arrears accumulating. If the child is not provided with the requested packed lunch or the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the school will provide a simple packed lunch only for a maximum of **five** days which will be charged for.

If the debt exceeds £12.25 (five cooked meals) for a child and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the school will inform the local Safeguarding Team and other appropriate agencies. The school will then send a final letter (Appendix B) with an invoice for the total amount of debt stating that if the amount is not settled, advice will be sought from Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi Academy Trust for assistance with recovery of the debt. This may result in small claims court action in line with the Trust debt policy.

### **Aspens Catering: Special Dietary Requirements**

The company firmly believes in providing high quality food for your child to enjoy that is safe to eat. Special diets are an integral part of our catering provision, whether as a result of an ethical or religious belief or a food intolerance or allergy. We accept our duty to comply with the Food Information Regulation 2014 which states that allergen information must be provided for all food prepared and sold, and as such we are able to provide a meal for your child if they have a special dietary requirement. In order for us to do this we require you to complete and return the special diets form to the school as soon as possible.

If your child has a food allergy resulting in a severe reaction/anaphylactic shock we will be in contact to discuss a suitable menu. If this allergy is to one of the known 14 allergens (celery, cereals containing gluten, crustaceans, egg, fish, lupin, milk, molluscs, mustard, peanuts, sesame, soybeans, sulphur dioxide, tree nuts.) then your child can be fed from our allergy free menu until we have agreed a suitable menu with you. If your child has multiple allergies or is allergic to other foods, such as tomatoes we request that you provide a packed lunch for them until we have met with you to agree a suitable menu. For those children with intolerance and lifestyle choices, please follow the ordering system to select a suitable meal from the daily menu.

### **Health and Safety**

If your child is bringing in their own packed lunch, hot liquids, such as soup, are **not allowed** to be sent in to school. This is because we cannot control the temperature of hot liquids brought in to school and do not want to risk hot liquids spilling and possibly injuring another child. However, something such as warm pasta is acceptable. Secondly, any packed lunch sent in from home should be healthy and nutritious. Therefore, it **will not be acceptable** to send in to school left over take away food such as McDonalds or KFC burgers and fries type foods. Please continue to ensure that a packed lunch contains a healthy balanced diet. We still do not allow sweets in packed lunches. Finally, please remember we are a **nut-free school**, so please do not send any foods to school that contain nuts.

The NHS provide suggestions for healthy lunch boxes and recipe ideas for families:

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>

The NHS also provide guidance on suggestions for 'sugar swap' foods and further information can be found here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/healthier-food-swaps/>

Name  
Address

Dear Parent/Carer

**Notice Letter of School Meal Debt**

In line with our School Meal Payment Policy we are writing to inform you that your child has now built up a debt of a full school week of school meals and you now owe £\_\_\_\_\_.

Due to this you need to contact the school office **as a matter of urgency** to discuss ways you can make the necessary arrangements to pay this amount off. You will also need to provide your child with a packed lunch with immediate effect to avoid any further arrears accumulating, as school dinners have now been suspended until the account is settled.

We need to remind you of the details in our policy which is attached. If you make no attempt to either pay this in full or contact us to discuss payment arrangements with us, we will seek advice from Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi Academy Trust's Legal Team for assistance with recovery of the debt which may result in small claims court action.

You need to be very aware that school is not obliged to provide a school meal where advance payments or authorisation of Free School Meals have not been received.

Failure by you to either provide a meal for your child or contact us to discuss ways forward will automatically create a serious concern, and should the debt exceed two weeks of meals we will then discuss this with the Safeguarding Team.

Please be assured we are here to support you but it is essential you do make contact with us immediately in order to avoid it being necessary for any further action to be taken by us. Many thanks for giving this matter your urgent attention.

Kind regards

Mrs Tammie McNamara  
Headteacher

Enc. School Meal Payment Policy

Insert name and address

Dear Mr/Mrs

**Final Notice Letter of School Meal Debt**

In line with our School Meal Payment Policy, we wrote to you on ??? (date of first letter) to inform you of an outstanding dinner money debt.

We are writing to inform you that the debt for your child (Name) is now £?? (as detailed in the attached invoice). As you have failed to contact school to address this, and in accordance with section 5 of the School Meal Payment Policy (which was also sent to you with our last correspondence), the school will inform the local safeguarding team and will be contacting Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi Academy Trust's legal team for assistance with the recovery of the debt. This may result in small claims court action and / or further costs.

It is therefore strongly advisable that you contact the school immediately to settle your debt and prevent any further action.

Kind regards

Mrs Tammie McNamara  
Headteacher

