



# Alver Valley Federation of Schools

## School Debt Management Policy

(for school dinners)

Date written	January 2025
<b>Date reviewed by FGB</b>	February 2025
<b>Review Date</b>	January 2026
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This policy aims to clarify Alver Valley schools' approach to dealing with debt, so parents and carers understand what is expected of them. Services provided by the school for school dinners must be paid for in advance and on demand. As a school, we can be viewed as being irresponsible and having financial mismanagement by allowing any level of debt to accrue. Therefore, as stated in our charges and remission policy we have a strict **NO DEBT** policy relating to school meals service.

### School Lunches

- The school can only offer 'Free School Meals' to those children whose parents/carers qualify for 'Free School Meals'(FSM) and or 'Universal Free School Meals' (UFSM) for children in years R-2.
- School meals must be paid for in advance. The price of a school meal is £3.20 per day. If your child has a school lunch every day, then the full weekly amount of £16.00 should be paid in advance on the Monday of that week. Payment can be made online via the payment system Scopay.
- If a parent/ carer forgets to pay or bring in a packed lunch, you will be contacted to request a lunch meal is brought in. However, if this is not possible, then the school may grant a debt allowance of 'one meal per child' and is dependable on whether there are other debts. In this instance, the 'one meal allowance', must be paid at the end of the same day. Failure to do so will result in no further meals being ordered.
- For a child that usually has a packed lunch, and there is not the possibility to bring the lunch into school, the 'one meal debt allowance can be applied' as detailed above.
- If a parent/carers makes no attempt to clear any outstanding debt, then you will be contacted by a member of staff to discuss the debt and make arrangements to pay the balance. If the balance remains unpaid, as per the debt recovery process you will be sent a letter from the head teacher warning of possible legal proceedings.

### Residential Trips

Full payment must be made before the start of the residential. Failure to do so will result in the child being withdrawn from the trip.

### Monitoring and reporting Of Debt

The headteacher will regularly monitor the debt and ensure the debt recovery process is followed and accurately recorded.

### Debt Recovery Process

**Step 1-** A text is sent as a reminder to clear the outstanding balance on day 1.

If the balance is not paid a notice is sent advising a packed lunch will need to be provided for the child, as the school cannot provide a lunch until the outstanding balance is paid in full.

**Step 2-** A follow-up telephone call will be made within a few days to discuss the debt with you.

**Step 3-** A letter will be sent after 7 days advising you that the debt is still outstanding and needs to be cleared up, before any school lunches are provided. This letter will request a meeting and the option to pay the debt off in instalments. (appendix 1a)

**Step 4 -** A final debt letter is sent from the headteacher advising you of further legal action we will be taking. (appendix 1b)

### **Related Information:**

The purpose of this debt management policy is to help parents/carers manage payments to the school and ensure the school budget is used for the purpose of educating the child.

### **Appendix 1a**

#### **Initial letter to parent /carer**

Dear [name of parent],

Following our conversation on [insert date of conversation], I am writing to remind you of the outstanding [insert amount of money] owed to the school for school meal costs.

- o We have not yet received payment from you for reducing this debt.
- o We have noticed that you haven't kept up with the payment plan as agreed in our conversation.

You can pay the debt in full using Scopay. Alternatively, we can set up a weekly/monthly payment plan to pay the debt off in installments of [insert amount per week or month]. To do this, please contact the school office to arrange a meeting.

No further school meals can be provided for your child until the debt is paid. Therefore, a packed lunch will need to be provided.

If by [insert deadline] you haven't either paid off the debt or contacted us to set up a payment plan, we will invite you to a meeting to explore options to help you pay the amount above. If you don't attend or if we don't reach a satisfactory result together, we may seek legal advice on recovering the debt.

Our school budget is intended to support children's learning, and we cannot use it to cover debt owed to the school.

Thank you for your help and understanding. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or difficulties complying with this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Roseblade (Executive Head Teacher)

**Appendix 1b**

**Final letter to parents/carers**

Dear [name of parent],

I am writing to you following [insert dates of any communication sent or meetings had concerning the debt].

Your outstanding debt is [insert amount]. As we have not received payment from you to settle this cost, I have no option but to refer this outstanding debt to our advisers to see what legal action we can pursue to recover it.

We will continue to offer support where practical. If you would like to hear more about the support available or meet again to discuss options, I would be more than happy to do so. You can contact the school by calling the office on 02392 583029 or by sending an email to [office@alvervalleyschools.co.uk](mailto:office@alvervalleyschools.co.uk)

We will contact you in due course over the action we will take, which could include making a claim in the small claims court.

To prevent this, please contact the school office immediately to discuss steps you can take to repay the debt.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Roseblade (Executive Head Teacher)