



Grove School

## **Debt Policy**

Mission statement:

**“Enjoy, learn, achieve”**

Dawson Road  
Handsworth  
Birmingham, B21 9HB  
Tel: 0121 464 4669  
Fax: 0121 464 0508

E-mail:  
[enquiry@grove.bham.sch.uk](mailto:enquiry@grove.bham.sch.uk)

Headteacher: Mrs P Matty

## **Grove Primary School** **Debt Policy**

### **Introduction**

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015, Grove School will implement a strict debt policy relating to the school meal service.

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that the money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents/carers. Every parent/carer will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents/carers give this policy their full attention.

### **Free School Meals**

If parents/carers believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact the school office for more details. This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. We will continue to assist you with your application and you can also check on line using the following link:

[www.link2ict.org/FSM](http://www.link2ict.org/FSM)

### **Payment for School Meals**

All payment for school meals must be made via a secure online system called ParentPay. Those parents wishing to pay cash should contact the school office to request the option of paying via PayPoint for dinner money. Meals must be paid for in advance on a Monday. Payments can be weekly, half termly or termly.

### **When payment for School Meals Has Not Been Received**

We will not allow dinners money to accumulate above two weeks and therefore expect that parents owing more than this to provide a packed lunch for their child.

#### **Week One**

If the weekly payment is not displayed on ParentPay by the Friday of that week, a letter will be sent to the parent/carer.

## **Week Two**

If the debt is not cleared by Friday of the second week of non-payment, the school will telephone the parent/carer to inform them that the school meal will be suspended. This will be followed up by letter 2 as the start of the third week for parents who have not paid the debt. Parents will be requested to provide a packed lunch on the Monday of the third week.

## **Half Termly Debt Procedures**

At the end of each half term, parents who have a dinner money debt will be requested by letter to clear the debt by the start of the new half term. If payment for the outstanding dinner money is not received, a daily packed lunch must be provided at the start of the new half term until the debt is cleared.

## **Consequences of Non Payment for School Meals**

If payment of dinner money is not received, school will complete an unpaid dinner money debt form (OD1 Form) which will be passed to the finance office of Citiserve. For debts over £25.00, Citiserve will raise an official Birmingham City Council invoice on behalf of the school requesting payment of the outstanding debt from the parent/guardian. Thus BCC give the school the income and “takes over” the debt. This official invoice now falls under the remit of Birmingham City Council’s debt recovery process where a number of recovery actions are at their disposal.

## **Conclusion**

We hope that by implementing this debt policy:

- We are able to ensure parents/carers manage payments effectively
- We reduce the administration time and costs involved chasing debts
- We ensure that all monies for children’s learning are available for that purpose.

## **Monitoring and Recovery of Debts**

At each meeting of the Governing Body/Finance Committee, the Head Teacher will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner money and the current position with regard to such debt. The aim of the school’s debt policy is to minimise the opportunity for debt balances to build up and incurring costly referral to the school’s solicitors. The school does however, reserve the right to begin legal proceedings to recover outstanding debts

## **End of Academic Year Procedures for Leavers**

Parents will be informed of current meal balances during the summer term to encourage them to manage the balances before the end of term.

### **School Leavers with Credit Balances**

Where credit exists against a leaving child account, the credit will transfer onto a sibling account.

Where there is no sibling, the balance will be refunded back to the card that made the payment or via a manual process.

### **School Leavers with Debt Balances**

Where debt exists against a leaving child, a barcoded letter will inform parents of this with payment requested before the end of the summer term.

If no payment is received, the debt will transfer onto a sibling account and parents will be informed of this by letter.

## Appendix 1

Parent/Carer of .....

Further to my telephone call on Monday, our records show that you have not yet made a dinner money payment for your child.

Our records show a debt of £ .....

This payment must be made immediately via the ParentPay website using your secure username and password. Alternatively payment can be made at a local PayPoint outlet using a barcoded letter or payment card.

The cost of a school meal is £2.10 per day/£10.50 per week.  
The cost of a nursery lunch is £1.80 per day/ £ 7.20 per week.

If payment is not forthcoming, then the school will be unable to continue providing school dinners for your child, and you will need to provide a packed lunch until the debt is cleared.

May I finally remind you that payments must be made via ParentPay by Monday or, if paying for the whole term, on the first day back after the school holiday.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs E Patel  
Financial Administrator

## Appendix 2

Parent/Carer of .....

Despite previous correspondence, our records show that you have still not made a dinner money payment for your child.

As at ..... our records show a debt of £ .....

Please arrange for a payment to be made by .....

Since non-payment for school meals affects the quality of service we offer to the children we need to ensure that all payments are up to date. Unfortunately, if payment is not forthcoming, then the school will be unable to continue providing school dinners for your child, and you will need to make your own arrangements for your child's lunch until the debt is cleared.

The school reserves the right to begin legal proceedings to recover the debt and to inform social services of our concerns that you are not providing a meal for your child at lunchtime.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears, please contact the school office immediately. I have attached a statement for your records.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs E Patel  
Financial Administrator

**Unpaid Dinner Money Debt (OD1 Form)**

The Finance Office  
Cityserve  
Ashted Lock  
Birmingham Science Park  
Dartmouth Middleway  
Birmingham  
B7 4AZ

(Please send completed form to the above address)

School Name:

Pupil Name:

Parent/Guardian Name:  
(including initials)

Parent/Guardian Address:

Post Code:

Outstanding Amount: £

Period (from – to):

Additional Information:

Action by Cityserve:

For debts over £25.00, Cityserve will raise an official Birmingham City Council invoice on behalf of the school requesting payment of the outstanding debt from the parent/guardian. Thus BCC give the school the income and “takes over” the debt. This official invoice now falls under the remit of Birmingham City Council’s debt recovery process where a number of recovery actions are at their disposal.

Throughout the process, where appropriate, debtors are given various opportunities to pay. Despite this, not all debt is recovered. If this is the case, debts will be “written off”, thus charging the debt back to the school.

Please note that Cityserve (Direct Services) only raise this official Birmingham City Council invoice on behalf of the school as many schools do not have the facility to do this. However, due to the number of invoice requests that are made, Cityserve do not monitor or chase this debt and therefore strongly recommend that if you require a status on the current position of any debt (i.e. paid, still outstanding, written off) then you will need to contact Cityserve to discuss.