

## **Botley School – Payment of School Meals and Arrears Policy**

As of [31<sup>st</sup>] January 2014, the Governors have adopted the policy set out below for the payment of School meals and the treatment of arrears.

### **Reasons for this Policy**

The Governors of Botley School are committed to a transparent, consistent and fair approach to the operation of the School dinner system. By adopting this Policy, the Governors wish to ensure that parents, carers, children and staff can work together to ensure that the School dinner system works efficiently and effectively and that arrears in payment can be avoided. Where debts are built up over a period of time, it can often be harder for parents to pay them off. In addition, if a debt incurred by parents during the course of the School year is not repaid by the end of the Summer term, then the costs that should have been paid for by that parent will have to be paid for from the School budget, instead. This means that money which should have been spent on our children's education is instead used to pay for debts incurred by parents, which has a negative impact on learning for all.

Our parents choose to buy this service from the School and can decide to provide a packed lunch, instead. Free School Meals are also available if parents believe that they qualify for this service. Please contact the School Office for more details and an application form, if appropriate.

### **(1) Payment for School meals**

School meals are available to pupils at a cost of £2.00 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals.

**Parents must pay in advance for School meals on a weekly, half termly or termly basis, using any of the methods of payment outlined below:**

- **Online using ParentPay - THIS IS OUR PREFERRED METHOD**
- **Send cash or cheque (made payable to Oxfordshire County Council) in an envelope marked with the amount in the envelope, your child's name and class.**
- **Ask in the office about PayPoint payments**

Any credits for meals paid for but not taken remain, on the system and are carried forward to the next week/term/year until year 6 when any credit remaining will be transferred back to the parent via the method received. Any meals ordered where the child is subsequently sent home due to illness do have to be paid for as the meal has already been ordered. However, if we are notified before 9.30am that your child will not be taking a school meal on that day, we will be able to avoid ordering that meal and no payment will need to be made.

### **The ParentPay System**

The ParentPay system incorporates a Low Balance warning system which can be set up by each parent/s according to their own needs. When the balance on a particular payment item for a particular child reaches a pre-set level (set by the parent), the system will automatically send a text to the parent/s nominated phone (mobile) or a free email to their nominated

email account advising them of the Low Balance. Each text sent through the system costs the parent 6p; emails are free.

## **(2) Treatment of Arrears**

The ParentPay system is set up to notify the School as soon as an individual payment item on a child's account goes into debt.

If your child has taken a school meal which has not been paid for, you will be sent a reminder by email, if a current address is available, detailing how much you owe. If we do not have an email address for you, the reminder will be placed in a sealed envelope and given to the child. Payment must be made immediately by one of the methods listed above.

If payment is not received within 7 days, a further letter will be sent, by email if a current address is available, if not in a sealed envelope and given to the child, detailing the consequences of non-payment and a final date by which payment must be made.

If the matter remains unresolved, you will be sent a 3rd and final letter via email and in a sealed envelope posted to the home address requesting payment and detailing the School's next course of action, which may include taking legal action to recover the debt.

If a parent repeatedly fails to provide a packed lunch, or sufficient money to cover the cost of school meals, the School may need to inform Social Services that the parent is not carrying out the responsibility of care by providing food for their child at lunchtime.

Should a child arrive at School without a packed lunch or without payment for a School meal, the School will telephone the parent to see whether alternative arrangements have been made. The School is not obliged to provide a school dinner where payment is not forthcoming or where authorisation for free school meals has not been received, and some schools are known not to provide a meal in these circumstances. The School retains its discretion to refuse to provide a school meal in circumstances where there has been persistent non-payment. However, we regard this as a last resort. We do not wish our children to be in a situation where their learning or welfare suffers and the School will therefore act promptly to address such issues at an early stage and to work with families in order to prevent arrears of dinner monies from accumulating to a point beyond parents' means to settle.