



Parental debt recovery policy

CHAT Academies

October 2019

We have a strict policy of no debts on accounts.

Parents must ensure that payments are made promptly and their account is always in credit.

Our objective

To reduce the level of school debt with regard to school meals, clubs, trips and any other charging activity, CHAT Academies will take all reasonable measure to vigorously collect any debts and ensure that debts do not build as part of our requirement to ensure effective management of public funds.

It is not appropriate for our academies to carry the debt which could otherwise be spent on pupil's education. We will pursue outstanding debt after a pupil leaves one of our academies.

Making payments

All parents / carers must set up an account with our electronic payment system (e.g. *ParentPay*) through which they will pay for any school club or activity for which there is a charge. This includes charges associated with school dinners.

Office staff will be able to advise and assist parents who may have difficulties in setting up an account. The office will make alternative arrangements to collect payments should the electronic system be unavailable.

On the occasions where a refund has been approved, they will be issued back via our electronic payment system.

School dinner money

Where a pupil is not entitled to a free school meal, the cost of the meal is charged via our electronic payment system for each day the pupil attends the academy.

Pupil absence is recorded in line with our **Attendance policy** (available on our website). Where a child is marked as absent from school on the attendance register, parents will not be charged.

The academy office will monitor any accounts that are in debt.

Once a debt becomes a concern to the academy office, parents / carers will be contacted via texts / e-mails to remind them that there is overdue payment which must be settled.

If the academy office has not received a satisfactory update or payment after a week, the matter will be referred to the school's senior leadership team who will assess the next steps.

This may mean no further school meals will be provided to the pupil until the debt is cleared and the parent / carer will be expected to provide their child with a packed lunch during this time.

Should a parent / carer send their child to the academy with no packed lunch they will be contacted by the office in order to remind them to bring one in that day.

If the parents / carers cannot be contacted or do not provide a lunch, then the pupil will be provided with a basic meal however parents / carers failure to provide packed lunch over three or more days may be flagged as a safeguarding issue and will be referred to our safeguarding team.

Changing meal provision

Lunch arrangements can be changed on a half-termly basis.

Parents should notify the academy office at least five school days before the end of each half term if they wish to change their lunch arrangements from school dinner to packed lunch or vice versa (regardless of whether they are otherwise entitled to a Free School Meal) so that amendments can be made ready for the first lunch time after the school holidays.

Possible charges relating to packed lunch

Parents / carers whose children usually bring in a packed lunch will be contacted should their child arrive without one and will be reminded they need to arrange to bring one in that day.

Where parents / carers are contacted but are unable to return to the academy with a packed lunch, the office will give them the option of the academy providing their child with a school dinner for that day and the parent / carer will be charged.

Where parents cannot be contacted or do not agree to the alternative of a school dinner for which they will be charged, then the pupil will be provided with a basic meal. The frequency this occurs will be monitored.

Pupils whose parents / carers have chosen to provide them with a packed lunch where they would otherwise be entitled to a Free School Meal will be provided with a school dinner on the occasions where the packed lunch has been forgotten and the parent is unable to be contacted. The frequency this occurs will be monitored as changing meal provision to regular Free School Meals may be a suitable alternative.

Safeguarding

Our academies have a statutory duty of care towards its pupils and it should be noted that, where appropriate, families may be referred to our safeguarding team where the continued lack of payment or provision of a meal for their child causes a concern.