



CHUTER EDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Background

The Collaboration School Dinner Money Debt Policy has been adopted to ensure a consistent and fair approach to debt incurred by parents/carers whose children take school dinners.

Provision of School Meals

Parents/carers of pupils within the collaboration 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 Nottinghamshire County Council School's Catering team and meet the stringent guidelines laid down by the government regarding the provision of healthy school meals. We provide a main course each day* and work on a three week menu cycle which changes in October and April each year.

**Daily menu choices are subject to change without notice.*

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 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 <https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/education/school-meals/free-school-meals-and-milk>. If a child's entitlement to free school meals expires or the parent/carers personal circumstance change, the parent/ carer must provide a packed lunch or make payment in advance for a school dinner. Any parent/carer requesting help with registering for a free school meal claim can request assistance from the school office team who will be happy to help.

Families that are moving into Nottinghamshire and are registered as Free School Meals in another Local Authority **must** make a new application to Nottinghamshire County Council. Entitlement does not automatically transfer from other authorities. Failure to apply could incur meal charges if meals are taken prior to a successful application, which you will be required to pay in full. We are not able to back date FSM claims.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a current rate of £2.95** 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

or

- B) The child qualifies for Free School Meals entitlement and the school has been notified by Nottinghamshire County Councils Grant 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 October 2024 – subject to change each year.*

Payment for School Meals

Dinners may be paid on a weekly, half termly or termly basis online via ParentPay. Any parent/carer requiring help with registering for online payment systems can request support from the school office.

The school will ensure that all dinner money collected is banked in a timely manner in accordance with the Schools Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by Nottinghamshire County Council's audit department.

Management of School Meal Debt

To ensure that the school budget is not adversely affected by the cost of school meal debt the Governors considers the fairest system to all families is to present the 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 children and not 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 contact 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 has a school meal which has not been paid for, a Dojo message 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 to the Head of school or Business Manager. The school will support families as much as possible in these circumstances. However if parent/carers make no attempt to contact or co-operate with the school the parents/carers can expect no further assistance from the school.

When the debt exceeds £14.75 (five meals) for a child, a ParentPay message (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 lunch for a maximum of five days which will be charged for.

If the debt exceeds **£29.50** (ten meals) for a child and/or action proves unsuccessful in securing dinner money arrears, the school will inform SLT. The school will then send a final letter/ParentPay message (Appendix B)

Monitoring and recovery of School Meals

At each meeting the Governing Body Finance & Personnel Committee, the Executive Head teacher, Head of School or Business Manager will provide Governors with details of any outstanding dinner debt over **£29.50** per child and the current position with regard to such debt. The aim of the school's dinner money policy is to support parents/carers in minimising any opportunity for debt balances to build up.

The school does, however, reserve the right to begin legal proceeding to recover outstanding school meal debt and inform the Local Authority that parents are failing to provide a child with a suitable meal at lunchtime.

Where necessary the school, along with support from the Local Authority, will utilise the small claims court in which case parents/carers will be liable for all costs incurred in addition to the original debt. Such measures will be taken even after a child no longer attends the school if they have not paid all money owed.

Approved by Governors 12.3.2025

To be reviewed Spring Term 2026