



St Helens Council

SCHOOL MEALS ARREARS POLICY

23rd February 2011

Introduction

This policy provides guidance to help schools manage the collection of school meals income, and procedures to follow when debts arise if parents/guardians fail to pay for school meals.

General

- School meals must be paid for weekly in advance on a Monday morning (or first school day of the week if different)
- Cheque payments can be accepted but must be made payable to 'St Helens Council'
- Meals can be paid for in advance on a monthly or termly basis, if preferred
- Change should not be given to any parent/carer whose child is still in arrears
- Dinner registers must be updated accordingly for any children arriving late in a morning
- If a child has forgotten their packed lunch, schools should seek consent from the parent/guardian before providing the child with a school meal. In the event that consent cannot be obtained, it is a matter for schools to decide whether a meal should be provided. The cost of the meal will be charged to the school account, and therefore schools should seek to recover such cost from the parent/guardian.
- There will be a requirement for schools to send a list of all children in arrears at the end of each school term to the Council's CYPS Finance Section
- Milk money should be collected on a termly or annual basis, at the beginning of the term or academic year
- Refunds may be given where appropriate out of cash received providing they have been clearly recorded, authorised and receipted. Refunds should only be given in the following circumstances:
 - When entitlement to free school meals overlaps a period when the parent/guardian has been paying for the meals
 - When parents/guardians have paid for meals termly in advance and are subsequently in credit at the end of the term due to pupil absences

If payment has been received by cheque, please wait 2 weeks before giving any cash refund to ensure that the cheque has cleared at the bank.

Free School Meals

- Only children who are confirmed as being entitled to free school meals by the Education Benefits team should receive free school meals (confirmation either by inclusion on the official list or telephone call to Education Benefits)
- Once a child is removed from the official list the parent/guardian must immediately start to pay for their school meals or make alternative provision.

Leavers

- Child transfers to another school
 - Contact new school if within borough of St Helens and inform them of the level of arrears
 - If no payment is received within 10 school days of the child leaving, the debt should be referred to the Council's CYPS Finance Section.