



# **Rowlands Gill Primary School**

## **School Meals Payment Policy**

**Date: January 2017**

**Ratified by Governors: January 2017**

**Review Date: January 2019**





## January 2017

The policy has been written to help our school adopt a consistent approach to debt incurred by parents whose children take school dinners. The aim of the policy is to have a clear procedure for staff and parents.

The following will be at the centre of our policy.

- **Always keep the child's needs central.**
- **Start a dialogue as soon as possible.**
- **Assign a designated member of staff.**
- **Do not rely on letters, texts and emails.**
- **Recognition that DMD (dinner money debt) could be symptomatic of deeper problems.**
- **Ensure that families who are eligible for free school meals have an easy way to sign up.**

Rowlands Gill Primary staff will work with families to ensure non-payment of school meals is kept to a minimum. We will request parents accept support offered in relation to non-payment of school meals including working with staff, keeping school informed of circumstances within the home and providing children with a packed lunch if necessary to stop debt accruing. The money for non-payment of meals must be paid for out of the school budget and this impacts directly on the education of the children.

Payments need to be made in clearly marked envelopes with the child's name, class, amount and date the payment is for. We accept cash and cheques (made out to Gateshead County Council). Payments need to be made in advance - weekly, monthly, half termly or termly.

Staff cannot go into bags or personal belongings of the children so we rely on the children handing them in when reminded.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Gateshead County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Education%20and%20Learning/Schools/School-meals/Free-school-meals.aspx>

Apply by contacting school or the Benefits Service, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH. Telephone 0191 433 3729.



**The procedure below will be followed from January 2017.**

**1 Start a dialogue as soon as possible.**

Action by school. Week 1

A text will be sent out every Friday to parents who have not paid for the previous week. This ensures early indication to parents that there is an outstanding payment.

**2 Assign a designated member of staff**

Action by school Week 2

The School Business Manager will contact parents if no payment has been received and discuss options for payment. The SBM may suggest options including packed lunches, application for free school meals or support from the Family Support Worker. The SBM will explain the policy and further steps in the phone call.

**3 Recognition that DMD (dinner money debt) could be symptomatic of deeper problems.**

Action by school Week 3

A letter will be sent to parents if we have received no payments. (Appendix 1) The letter will ask for payment, offer support from the Family Support Worker and signpost families to support agencies. The SBM will follow up with a telephone call towards the end of the week to ensure they have received the letter.

Action by school Week 4

A meeting will be arranged between the Head Teacher and parents to discuss the outstanding payments. (Appendix 2)

*Example:-* Joe Smith does not pay dinner money on Monday 9/1/17.

Week 1 The office text parents on Friday 13/1/17 to inform them there is a payment missing.

Week 2 Parents send money in on Monday 16/1/17 – No further action.  
No money or contact received from parents- SBM contacts them by telephone on Friday 20/1/7 to request payment and discuss if there is support needed.



Week 3 Payment received – No further action.

No payment received- Monday 23/1/17 Letter to parents offering support from the Family Support Worker. (See Appendix 1) Telephone call to parents Friday 27/1/17 to ensure they received the letter.

Week 4 Payment received – No further action.

No payment received – Meeting arranged with HT to discuss debt.

## Appendix 1

Parent or carer of (Pupil Name)

(Address Line 1)

(Address Line 2)

(Address Line 3)

(Post Code)

Date: XX/XX/XX

Dear xxx

### School Meals provided to (Pupil Name)

I contacted you on DATE in relation to the outstanding payment and you advised XXXXXXX (summary of conversation). However, there is still an outstanding balance of £XX as of DATE for school meals. We need this amount to be cleared as soon as possible. You may find it easier to put NAME on packed lunches until the amount is paid and if this is your option please let school know.

If you are finding it difficult to pay we have a Family Support Worker who can visit and give support.

If you think you may qualify for Free School Meals, please contact the school office for further information. **Remember that Free School Meals are a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify, your child will then receive a School meal each day.** Additional information and an application form can be found on the Gateshead County Council's website or in the school office if you do not have access to the Internet:

<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/Education%20and%20Learning/Schools/School-meals/Free-school-meals.aspx>

A meeting with the Head Teacher will be arranged if payment if not received by Monday XXXXX.

If you have any queries regarding these arrears or wish to discuss the matter further please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,



Eileen Elliott  
School Business Manager

Support Agencies.

[www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)  
[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

Appendix 2

Dear xxxxx,

Re Outstanding payments for school meals for XXXXXXXXXXXX.

I would like to meet with you to discuss the outstanding school meals payments owed for XXXXXXXXXXXX. The amount now stands at £xxxx.

The meeting will discuss options open to you in relation to how we can proceed to support you in this matter.

I am able to meet on DATE at TIME if this is suitable.

Please contact the office as soon as possible to agree or amend the date and time.

Yours faithfully,

Hannah Martin

Head Teacher