



# Ark Victoria Academy

## School Meals Debt Policy

A School Meals Debt Policy for Parents has been written to help Ark Victoria adopt a consistent approach to debt. It provides clarity and consistency in managing debt and will also help parents clearly understand what is expected of them.

The school meals service is no different than any other business and the meals must be paid for by someone. The system that works best is a 'zero tolerance' approach. Although this will be tough to implement it will become easy to maintain once parents realise schools can only offer free meals to children whose parents qualify for FSM entitlement. Every other meal must be paid for. Ark Victoria's ParentPay system highlights debt immediately so keeping track will be easy.

### Debt policy implementation

#### **Key information**

- All parents are provided with a copy of the debt policy when their child joins the school.
- All school lunches must be paid for in advance.
- No child should be sent to school with no money in their account or cash in hand and expect to be given a meal.
- Parents who don't want their child to have a school lunch, should provide a healthy packed lunch.

#### **Level 1 – Child's account goes into debt**

Check the following first:

1. Is this a FSM child, are dates correct?
2. Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?
3. Does this parent normally pay on time, is this just a one off?

#### **Action 1: Send a 'Gentle debt reminder'.**

This letter is already set up in Parent Pay.

#### **Level 2 – Child comes to school again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch**

Check the following first:

1. Has this parent made contact?

#### **Action 2: Personal contact.**

Someone will phone the parent to ask them to either bring in the money by cash or pay online or bring sandwiches to school before lunchtime.

#### **Level 3 – The parent does not comply with any of these options**

#### **Action 3: Send a strong debt letter**

The Headteacher will send the final letter. Templates available in ParentPay

#### **Level 4 – The parent consistently does not comply with any of these options**

**Action 4: The option of writing off the debt may be considered but this will be the last resort and only if the debt is under £50 and no further meals will be provided.**