

School Meals

Parents and carers are responsible for providing a lunch for their children. This may be provided in the form of:

- Parents paying for a school meal (Nursery, and Years 3-6)
- Universal free school meals (for Reception and Years 1-2)
- Successful application for Free School Meals
- Packed lunch from home (all year groups)
- Lunch at home (in special circumstances)

The school meals service at Essendine School is currently managed by Chartwell Ltd.

The cost of a school meal is £2.15 per day (from 1 September 2021)

In order to manage the service, families are required to commit to one preference, either school meals or packed lunches for each half term. Changes may only be made on the last day of one half-term or the first day of the next, and the office must be informed of this. A Change Form must be signed and will be retained by the school. A copy will be given to the parents as confirmation.

Families will continue to be liable for the cost of school meals if the office is not informed. Parents will have a confirmation receipt as evidence of their having done so. We may ask you to produce this in cases of dispute.

The charge to parents for the school meals will be equal to the actual cost to the school.

We would expect to receive payment weekly.

Debt Management

The school is unable to tolerate debt, as any debts incurred then have to be paid from the school budget, which is given to us by the government to pay for the children's education. There is no funding to subsidise school meals and doing so affects the whole school community. Due to an unacceptable level of arrears in the past, the school now has no option other than to adopt a less flexible approach to dinner money payments.

- The school is not obliged to provide a school meal where payment has not been made or where authorisation for free school meals has not been received. We will act quickly to address such issues at an early stage, in order to prevent arrears of dinner monies from mounting up to a point where families will find it difficult to pay.

- Families are expected to pay weekly. This will be closely monitored, and where non-payment reaches two weeks, parents will be contacted by telephone.
- If after this telephone call, the school meals are not paid for by the beginning of the 3rd week, we will no longer be able to provide children with school meals and a packed lunch must be provided until the arrears have been paid.
- If children come to school without a packed lunch, parents will be telephoned to either bring one in or take their child home for lunch.
- In exceptional cases, the school may choose to continue to provide meals where parents have advised us of some particular difficulty, but this will be considered on an individual basis and is not a right.
- The school may be able to provide lunch occasionally to children not routinely taking a school meal, but only where the meal is paid for in advance.
- The school will work closely with parents in working out a form of payment plan to help resolve the situation if requested to do so.

We hope that by implementing this debt management policy we are able to help parents manage school dinner money better, reduce the debt to the school and ensure that the funds granted to pay for the children's learning is used in full for that purpose.