



Leek First School

Dinner Money Policy

Last reviewed: September 2026

Renewal Date: September 2027

Introduction

Leek First School 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 of pupils at Leek First have the choice of paying for a school lunch for their child or providing a healthy packed lunch. All school meals are prepared on the premises by Miquill Catering and meet the stringent guidelines laid down by the government regarding the provision of healthy school meals. We provide two choices of main course each day alongside other daily options and work on a three-week menu cycle which changes in October and April each year.

Cost of School Meals

School meals are available to children at a cost of £3.20 per day or at no cost to those in receipt of Free School Meals or Universal Free School Meals. Further information on the entitlement of free school meals may be obtained from the school office or online at [Free school meals | Staffordshire County Council](#)

School meals MUST be paid for in advance.

Any revision to the price of meals will be notified to parents/carers at least half a term prior to the new charge taking effect.

Payment for School Meals

As our school is cashless all payments should be made online via your Arbor account, if you require details on how to access your account, please contact Mrs Roberts in the school office on 01538 714905 or lfs.office@ttl.org.uk. The school will ensure that all dinner money is collected in accordance with the School's Financial Regulations which are periodically inspected by audit.

Management of School Meal Debt

To protect the school's budget and ensure that funds are used for the benefit of all pupils, the Governing Body operates a zero-debt approach to school meal payments. While the school recognises that occasional difficulties may arise, it is important that the cost of unpaid meals does not place an additional financial burden on the school's resources.

If a child arrives at school without a packed lunch or payment for a school meal, the school will contact the parent/carer via the school's communication app or by telephone to establish whether alternative arrangements have been made. In exceptional circumstances, and where it is considered to be a temporary situation, the school may provide a meal for the child.

Where a school meal has been taken without payment, a message will be sent to the parent/carer detailing the outstanding balance and requesting immediate payment, together with payment for any additional meals required during that week.

The school will take prompt action to address any outstanding debt at an early stage to prevent arrears from increasing. Parents/carers are expected to work with the school to resolve any payment issues as they arise.

Where the outstanding debt exceeds £20 for an individual child or family, a formal letter will be issued advising the parent/carer that school meals can no longer be provided until the debt has been cleared. Parents/carers will be required to provide a packed lunch for their child(ren).

If a child arrives at school without either a packed lunch or payment for a school meal, the school office will contact the parent/carer and request that a packed lunch is brought to school or that the outstanding balance is paid in full before 11:30am.

The school is committed to supporting families where genuine financial difficulties exist and encourages parents/carers experiencing hardship to contact the school at the earliest opportunity to discuss available support and payment options.

Monitoring and Recovery of School Meal Debts

At each meeting of the Governing Body Finance Committee, the Headteacher or Office Manager will provide Governors with details of all outstanding school meal debt exceeding £20 per family, together with an update on any action taken to recover the debt.

The aim of the School Dinner Money Policy is to prevent significant debt from accruing and to avoid the need for costly legal intervention. However, the school reserves the right to pursue recovery of any outstanding school meal debt and may inform the Local Authority where parents/carers are failing to provide a suitable lunchtime meal for their child.

Where necessary, the school may initiate legal proceedings through the Small Claims Court to recover outstanding balances. In such cases, parents/carers will be responsible for any additional costs incurred, as well as the original debt. Recovery action may continue after a pupil has left the school if any monies remain outstanding.