



St Gabriel's CE Primary School

School Meals Arrears Policy

Our Vision Statement:

Our aim is to nurture children with the confidence and self-belief to achieve their best;
to have the courage to think for themselves;
to be resilient in their learning and ambitious in their hopes and dreams;
to live in harmony, respecting others;
to search and question throughout life's journey;
to find personal faith;
and to learn about the Gospel of hope and love found in Jesus Christ.

Seeking to nurture:

SelF**-belief** **Cour**A**ge** **Res**I**lience** **Ambi**T**ion** **H**A**rmony**

"Stand firm... be courageous" 1 Corinthians 16:13

Reviewed: Autumn 2025

Next Review: Autumn 2026

This policy concerns the collection of school meals money and the approach to be taken in the cases of debts arising when parents/carers fail to pay for school meals.

General Information

School meals are paid for via the SchoolMoney payment system. We ask that school meal payments are paid in advance where possible, or at the very latest at the end of each week. The current cost of school meals are £13.00 per week (£2.60 per day).

We aim to work with parents as much as possible and ensure that communication is open between the office and all parents/carers. If difficulties arise when managing the cost of school dinners, then it is advised that all parents contact the office to discuss the best way debts can be cleared to prevent further build up of money owed to school.

Procedure for Collection of Arrears

We do understand that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons. However, in order to ensure the amount owed remains manageable for parents, we cannot allow arrears to accumulate to more than two weeks.

Texts are sent out each week to remind parents of outstanding dinner money on their child's account. If payments are not made, then the school office will contact parents via the phone to discuss the amount owed and agree a date of when payment can be made. If payment has not been settled by the agreed date, school will then discuss the possibility of moving children to packed lunches until all debts have been cleared.

Free School Meals Entitlement

If parents/carers believe that their child(ren) may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals, they should register online at <https://www.blackburn.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-meals>. School is unable to seek this information for parents and thus cannot confirm Free School Meal entitlement unless the form has been submitted to the Local Authority. They will then send you confirmation as to whether you are eligible under the criteria. Once this has been confirmed, please let the school office know.

All children from Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals. However, if you believe you are eligible for Free School Meals beyond the ordinary infant entitlement, then please register online. Pupils becoming eligible for free school meals under the benefits-based criteria from April 2018 to August 2026, will continue to receive FSM until the end of the 2025/26 school year – this applies regardless of any change in household circumstances, including an increase in earnings above the eligibility threshold.

From the start of September 2026/27 academic year, it is the DfE's intention that all protections will be discontinued, alongside the extension to the eligibility criteria for FSMs. From this point, households must meet the eligibility criteria to be entitled. The DfE does not expect rechecks of eligibility to be carried out more than once a

year to prevent families experiencing a sudden loss of entitlement during the school year. This guidance will be updated in due course.