

Brompton Community Primary School

School Meals Provision and Debt Management Policy



Approved by: **School and Governing Body**

Last Reviewed on: **September 2026**

Next Review due: **September 2027**

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Purpose

- To ensure all pupils at Brompton Community Primary School have access to healthy, nutritious meals which meet statutory School Food Standards.
- To set out clear arrangements for the provision of school meals (including free school meals, Universal Infant Free School Meals, and eligibility for benefits-related free school meals), the management of school meal accounts and debt, and procedures for collecting, recording and resolving unpaid meal charges.
- To protect the dignity of pupils and families in debt and to ensure a fair and consistent approach that supports attendance, wellbeing and learning.
- To clarify roles and responsibilities for staff, families, governors and the wider school community.
- To ensure compliance with relevant legislation and guidance, including:
 - School Food Standards (School food: guidance for governing bodies) and School Food Plan requirements
 - Department for Education guidance on charging and remissions
 - Childcare, Early Years and School Food regulations
 - Department for Education guidance on school meal debt and financial management
 - Equality Act 2010 (fair access and non-discrimination)
 - Data Protection Act / UK GDPR (for processing personal and financial data)

Scope

- Applies to all pupils at Brompton Community Primary School (Foundation 1–Year 6), parents/carers, staff, governors, caterers and volunteers involved in school meal provision or the management of meal accounts.
- Includes provision during the school day and any school-organised activities that include a meal provided by the school.

Principles

- Equity: All pupils are entitled to access healthy school meals irrespective of background or means.
- Dignity and confidentiality: Families will be treated with respect; processes will avoid public naming or shaming.
- Clarity and fairness: Expectations about payments and debt will be clear, consistently applied and proportionate.
- Prevention and support: The school will proactively support families to access benefits-related free school meals and will provide timely, compassionate support to families in difficulty.
- Financial responsibility: The school will manage public funds responsibly and ensure catering services are financially sustainable.

1. School Meals Provision

1.1 Meals model and standards

- The school operates its own catering facilities managed by NYES Catering Services.
- The school follows the statutory School Food Standards for all meals provided.
- Menus are planned to be healthy, culturally appropriate and balanced; ingredients will meet dietary and allergen considerations.
- Nutritional information and sample menus will be published on the school website and available on request from the school office.
- Special dietary requirements and allergies:
 - Parents/carers must provide written medical evidence (where appropriate) and complete the school's dietary/allergy form.
 - The school and caterer will maintain a record of pupil allergies and needs and ensure staff dealing with meals are informed.
 - Where medically necessary, school will provide appropriate alternative meals or require parents to supply meals in line with agreed protocols.

1.2 Free school meals and eligibility

- The school implements the following:
 - Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) for Reception–Year 2 (where applicable).
 - Free School Meals (FSM) for pupils eligible via benefits-based criteria. Parents/carers are encouraged to apply via the local authority and the school will provide assistance.
 - Pupil Premium registration: The school will encourage families to register for FSM where eligible to ensure access to Pupil Premium funding and related support.
- Responsibilities:
 - School will publish guidance and provide application support at admission, transition events, and via reminders.
 - Office staff will check entitlement and update records promptly.

1.3 Meal ordering and payment systems

- School dinners must be paid for via the Arbor account. Parents/carers are expected to pre-pay or maintain a credit balance unless the pupil is registered for FSM/UIFSM.
- Cash can be accepted at the office in some circumstances; where accepted, robust receipting and daily banking procedures will be used.

1.4 Packed lunches and outside provision

- Parents who provide packed lunches must adhere to the school's healthy eating guidance and must not include nuts where specified for allergy reasons.
- The school will designate an area for pupils bringing packed lunches.
- Where school trips include a meal, the school will communicate whether packed or school-provided meals are expected and any costs.

2. Debt Management

2.1 Fundamental approach

- The school will seek to prevent debt through clear communication, simple payment systems, and early support.
- Where debt occurs, the school will follow a staged, confidential, supportive approach with escalation only as necessary.
- Emergency provision: If a pupil arrives without a paid meal and without registered entitlement, the school will provide a neutral, non-stigmatising alternative meal for that day and will follow debt recovery procedures thereafter.

2.2 Trigger threshold for action

- When a pupil's unpaid meal balance reaches £40, the school will take action to address the arrears. Action at this threshold will follow the staged recovery procedure set out below and will be handled sensitively.

2.3 Roles and responsibilities

- Governing Body: approves and reviews the policy, sets strategic thresholds and ensures financial oversight.
- Headteacher: operational responsibility for policy implementation, ensuring dignity and safeguarding; reporting to Governors.
- Office admin team (named leads): Mrs Hodgson and Mrs Pennett are responsible for dealing with arrears and debts. They will manage reconciliations, communications and support families in a sensitive, confidential and solution-focused manner.
- School Business Manager: supports financial reporting and reconciliations as required.
- NYES Catering Services: provides daily meal numbers and liaises with the school on catering matters.
- Parents/carers: responsible for ensuring accounts are kept in credit or for applying for FSM where eligible.
- Pupils: expected to follow ordering procedures and respect the school meals environment.

2.4 Communication and billing

- Communications to parents:
 - Clear expectations on pre-payment, how to top up accounts (Arbor), cut-off times and consequences of non-payment will be included in admissions information, the school website, the home-school agreement and termly reminders.
 - Automated reminders will be generated by Arbor and supplemented by personalised contact from the office team where balances remain unpaid.
- Billing and records:
 - Records of meal accounts will be kept securely (following UK GDPR) and reconciled weekly.
 - All attempts to contact parents regarding debt will be logged.

- Template communications:
 - Friendly reminder (after first missed payment)
 - Formal notice (if balance increases/after multiple reminders)
 - Escalation letter inviting meeting and offering support (if debt persists or reaches the £40 threshold)
 - Final notice (before further action, including referral to local authority welfare/financial recovery where applicable)

2.5 Staged debt recovery procedure

- Stage 1 — Prevention and early intervention:
 - Automated reminders once account balance falls below the low-balance threshold set in Arbor (e.g., £5).
 - Offer support and signpost to FSM eligibility checks, local welfare support, or short-term assistance.
- Stage 2 — Personal contact:
 - If missed payments continue, Mrs Hodgson or Mrs Pennett will make a confidential telephone call to discuss the situation, offer support and payment options (e.g., benefits check, temporary credit arrangement).
- Stage 3 — Formal written request:
 - If debt persists or reaches £40, the school will send a formal letter outlining the amount owing, actions taken, proposed steps and inviting a meeting to agree a resolution.
- Stage 4 — Review and escalation:
 - If no reasonable arrangement is made, the Headteacher will consider further options: referral to local authority welfare, a payment plan, or third-party debt recovery as a last resort. All actions must take account of pupil welfare and safeguarding.
- Stage 5 — Emergency provision and safeguarding:
 - The school will continue to ensure pupils receive food in a dignified way. Repeated non-payment may lead to the school restricting non-essential services (e.g., trips, extracurricular paid clubs) where permitted, but the school will not exclude pupils from meals or education.
- Records and evidence:
 - Keep records of all communications, meetings and agreed repayment plans. Access to these records is limited to authorised staff.

2.6 Financial and legal considerations

- The school will work within DfE guidance and the local authority's recommended approach regarding debt recovery.
- Debt thresholds and recovery action are proportionate and take account of family circumstances. Legal recovery action is a last resort and must be authorised by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors.
- All debt recovery actions must protect pupil safeguarding and dignity.

2.7 Support, referral and signposting

- Families in need of support should contact the school office. The office team can offer support in partnership with the local Foodbank or by contacting local family services.
- The school will proactively identify families struggling with payments and signpost to local welfare, the LA, foodbanks, charities, and local family services.
- The school will support FSM applications and reassess eligibility at regular intervals.

3. Safeguarding, Inclusion and Equality

3.1 Safeguarding

- Managing meal debt must consider safeguarding: food insecurity can be an indicator of wider family needs.
- Where concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety arise, staff must follow the school's safeguarding procedures and involve the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as required.

3.2 Inclusion and equality

- Actions on debt must not discriminate against protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010).
- The school will make reasonable adjustments for SEN or disabled pupils, pupils with medical dietary needs, and other vulnerable groups.
- Pupil dignity: alternative meal arrangements will be provided discreetly.

4. Catering Contract Management (NYES as in-house caterer)

4.1 Operational obligations

- NYES Catering Services will ensure compliance with School Food Standards, provide daily meal numbers, manage hygiene and allergen practices and liaise with the school about menu planning, special diets and food quality.
- The school will monitor catering performance and meet termly (or as agreed) to review menu, quality and financial matters.

5. Charging and Remissions

5.1 Charging for school-provided meals

- FSM and UIFSM entitlements will be honoured in accordance with DfE and LA guidance.
- Where the school charges for additional meals (e.g., extra day care meals), these will be communicated clearly and invoiced in advance.

5.2 Remissions and hardship

- The school operates a clear, confidential remissions procedure for families in hardship and will, where appropriate, use Pupil Premium or other designated funds to assist vulnerable pupils.
- The Governing Body can approve exceptional support in line with financial regulations.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

6.1 Monitoring

- The office admin team (Mrs Hodgson and Mrs Pennett) will reconcile meal account records weekly and report to the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher will provide termly summaries of FSM take-up, debt levels and recovery actions to Governors (Resources/Finance Committee).

6.2 Evaluation

- Annual review of:
 - FSM take-up and Pupil Premium registration rates.
 - Debt trends and recovery effectiveness.
 - Customer satisfaction (pupil and parent feedback) and menu/nutritional improvements.

6.3 Policy review

- This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher and Governing Body or sooner in response to changes in legislation, local authority guidance or significant operational issues.

7. Record Keeping and Data Protection

- All financial and personal data held for meal provision and debt management will be processed and stored in line with UK GDPR and the school's Data Protection Policy.
- Access to individual debt records is limited to authorised staff: the Headteacher, School Business Manager and the named office admin leads (Mrs Hodgson and Mrs Pennett), plus other staff only where expressly required and authorised.
- Retention: financial records will be retained in line with the school's retention schedule.

8. Communication to Stakeholders

- The policy and summary guidance will be available to parents on the school website and through the school office.
- Staff training:
 - Staff involved in meal provision and debt management will receive training on systems (Arbor), confidentiality, dignity, and safeguarding referral processes.
 - Governor responsibilities and training:
 - Governors will receive briefing on school meal obligations, FSM, financial oversight and debt policy.

Appendices (templates and tools)

- Appendix A: Parent information sheet on school meals, ordering and payment (Arbor details and cash exceptions).
- Appendix B: Template reminders and formal letters for unpaid meal debts (friendly reminder, formal notice, escalation letter, final notice).
- Appendix C: FSM eligibility checklist and application support guidance.
- Appendix D: Dietary/allergy request form.

Related policies and guidance viewable on the school website

- Charging and Remissions Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection (GDPR) Policy
- SEN/Inclusion Policy
- Home–School Agreement
- Financial Procedures and Budget Management
- Behaviour Policy (for expectations around lunchtime conduct)
- Admissions Policy

Final notes

- Brompton Community Primary School is committed to fair, compassionate and transparent management of school meal provision and debt that protects pupil welfare and supports families. All actions must reflect the school's values and prioritise dignity, confidentiality and constructive support.
- Families in need of support should speak to the school office; the school can offer assistance in partnership with the local Foodbank or by contacting family services.

Appendix A:

Information from NYES Catering Services can be found here:

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-meals>

Information on how to add funds to a pupil meals account on Arbor

[Top up accounts and viewing payments in the Arbor Parent App – Arbor Help Centre](#)

Appendix C:

Information regarding Free School Meal Applications

[Free school meals | North Yorkshire Council](#)

Appendix D:

Special Dietary Request Form PDF

[parents-support-special-dietary-request.pdf](#)



Pupil Meals Outstanding Balance Agreement

Brompton Community Primary School Pupil Meals Provision

Notice of Outstanding Balance and Temporary Suspension of Future School Meals

Date: _____

Parent/Carer Name: _____

Child(ren)'s Name(s): _____

Dear Parent/Carer,

Our records show that there is currently an outstanding balance on your child's school meal account for meals taken by your child/ren.

Outstanding Balance: £_____

As outlined in the terms and conditions of our **School Meals Provision and Debt Management Policy**, all fees must be paid promptly to ensure the continued sustainability of the service.

Temporary Suspension of Future Meals

Until the outstanding balance has been paid in full:

- No further school meals may be booked and we request that you provide your child/ren with a nutritional packed lunch.
- Future meal bookings may be reviewed and, where necessary, cancelled by the school.
- Access to school meals may be suspended until the account is brought up to date.

The school reserves the right to withhold access to the school meal service where significant or persistent arrears remain unpaid.

Payment Arrangement

We recognise that circumstances can occasionally make it difficult for families to settle accounts immediately. If you are experiencing financial difficulties and would like to discuss a payment arrangement, please contact the school office as soon as possible.

Any agreed payment plan must be adhered to in order for future school meal privileges to be reinstated.

Reinstatement of School Meals

Once the outstanding balance has been cleared in full, access to the school meal service will be restored.

Parent/Carer Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that there is an outstanding balance on my child's Pupil Meal account and understand that future meals will not be permitted until the balance has been cleared or an agreed payment arrangement has been put in place and maintained.

Parent/Carer Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

School Representative

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please note: Failure to make payment or engage with the school regarding outstanding debts may result in the permanent withdrawal of access to the School Meal Service, subject to the school's debt recovery procedures.

The school will always endeavour to work with families to resolve outstanding balances in a fair and supportive manner.

