



SARACENS

HIGH SCHOOL

DEBT POLICY

Approved by Local Governing Body 27th June 2022

To be reviewed: June 2023

Principal: Dr. M. Stevens

Saracens High School

Corner Mead, NW9 4AS

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1. Aims

Saracens High School aims to keep debts owed by parents/carers for school meals and school trips as low as possible, so that the school budget, which should be spent on the pupils' education, is not used to pay for debts incurred by parents.

The Local Governing Body accepts that parents' circumstances may change and it is accepted that on occasion arrears may arise for various reasons. However, arrears cannot be allowed to accumulate such that there is a detrimental effect on other school activities.

School staff will do everything they can to support families in difficult times.

2. Expectations

Parents and carers must pay in advance for school meals using the school's online payment system through their child's Arbor account. For each new pupil at the school, the parents or carers will be asked to provide a two-week (£22.50) deposit for school dinners. During the admissions process, the school will work with all parents to review whether their child(ren) are eligible for Free School Meals. In exceptional circumstances, payment by cash or directly to the school's bank will be accepted.

3. Process for non-payment

Finance Officer

1. The finance officer sends a message on a weekly basis to any parents and carers whose meal balance is below £5. The list of parents and carers included is automatically generated by Arbor.

Queries are dealt with and parents who may be eligible for free school meals are encouraged and supported to apply online:

<https://saracenshigh.org/free-school-meals/>

The school will also apply on the parents' behalf following the receipt of relevant documentation.

2. Where debts rise above £45 (four weeks) the finance officer will send an individual email to the parent stating the amount of debt and requesting payment. This will be followed up with a telephone call. Payment plans can be agreed and flexibility will be granted to parents who are only able to pay monthly, provided the terms of any agreement are met.

The Trust Business Manager

3. If no response is received within a further week (debt levels £56.25), the Trust Business Manager will send a letter to parents or carers, requesting immediate payment and stating that if no contact is made with the school, or any attempt made to pay off the balance within a further 5 days (£67.50), their child(ren) will begin to receive school packed lunches, rather than hot meals, which will need to be eaten away from their peers so not to cause embarrassment for the child. This will continue to be the case until either the debt is paid off or an agreement is reached to repay the monies owed. Furthermore, during this period, a pupil may be refused to be permitted to attend any school trips. The debt still remains payable

by parents or carers until the matter is finalised to the School's satisfaction. Any relaxation by the school in enforcing the process for following up on debts does not discharge the parent/carers responsibility for payment for school lunches.

4. In exceptional circumstances (such as a pandemic) the LGB may direct the Finance Officer not to pursue a specific debt or debts generally for a fixed or indefinite period. In these circumstances the LGB will direct the Finance Officer when to recommence the follow up procedure.
5. Where parents or carers refuse to clear a debt of £67.50 or more, and the pupil does not qualify for free school meals, the Trust reserves the right to commence court proceedings to recover the monies owing, together with any costs that the school incurs in taking those proceedings. The decision to commence court proceedings will be taken by the CEO following consultation with either the Chair of the LGB or the Chair of the Resources Committee of the LGB. Until the debt is cleared the pupil will continue to receive school packed lunches and may be refused to be permitted to attend any school trip.

3. Support for families

The school takes a supportive approach to family circumstances which understandably may change. We frequently remind families how to apply for free school meals should their circumstances change. We make every effort, before a new pupil starts at school, to establish whether they are eligible for free school meals.

Should any parents experience a sudden change in circumstances, we are able to provide limited support from our discretionary financial support fund. Payments from this fund are authorised by the Trust Office. Payments are made by the Trust Office and records detailed for audit purposes.