

Dear Parent / Guardian

School Meals – Direct Debit Scheme (Primary Schools)

Many parents have already taken the opportunity to pay for their child's school meals by Direct Debit. This option has helped parents, their children and their school – and has proved to be a popular choice for payment.

Payment by Direct Debit is optional – if you have not already joined the scheme, we are offering the option to parents to set it up at any point in the year.

Paying by Direct Debit is optional but we believe it has these advantages:

- a) It will help you – no need to constantly search for change each week/day or write cheques.
- b) Children will no longer need to carry money.
- c) It spreads the costs of the child's meals over an agreed period.
- d) The school can reduce its administration costs and therefore dedicate more time to how your child learns.

ABSENCES - Please take note that refunds will not be issued for absences from school. Absences from school for school meals/direct debit purposes are defined as 'pupils not being on site (at school) for a lunchtime meal' (e.g. absence due to illness, school trips etc).

The average absence for a child in a school year is eight days. Refunds will not be issued in normal circumstances as one free week each term has been incorporated into the scheme to cover more than the average absence.

Exceptional situations will of course be considered in certain circumstances on a case by case basis.

FREE WEEKS - Those paying by Direct Debit will receive one free week of meals for each term whilst the Direct Debit is in operation – a total of three weeks for the school year. **This is purely to cover the child's absences, school trips etc in the year, mentioned above as refunds cannot be obtained.**

What is a Direct Debit?

A Direct Debit is an instruction from a customer to a bank or building society authorising an organisation to collect varying amounts from their account, as long as the customer has been given advance notice of the collection amounts and the dates they are due. It is the preferred payment method for over 50% of the UK bill paying population.

What happens if I cancel my Direct Debit?

You may cancel your Direct Debit at any time. Please inform the school and the Income Team. If you wish your child/children to continue to have school meals – please send the money due directly to the school.

When will payments be collected?

Payments will be due on the **first of the month**. If this day falls on a weekend or a bank holiday, then it will be taken the next working day.

What happens next?

Once your Direct Debit Mandate has been received – the Income Team will set up an account and send out a pro-forma invoice informing you of the payment and reference details.

What happens if my Direct Debit is returned unpaid by my bank?

If your payment is returned unpaid - **the Council will not request any further payments and the Direct Debit will effectively be cancelled**. Please ensure that the amount due and the payment for any subsequent meals are made directly to the school.

If you wish to join the scheme – please complete and return a Direct Debit Mandate to your school or to the address written at the top of the Mandate.

Yours sincerely

School Meals Finance

If you wish to contact Warrington Borough Council regarding the School Meals Direct Debit Scheme please email

schoolmealsfinance@warrington.gov.uk.

or call School Meals Finance

Direct Dial: 01925 442966 / 01925 443011