

## LIFE Education Trust

### Mid-Essex Schools' Debt Policy

**Ratified: February 2024**

**Review date: February 2027**

LIFE Education Trust has adopted a strict NO DEBT policy.

#### **Debt relating to the school meal service**

If debts are incurred, then the school budget has to pay for them. This means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents. Every parent will agree that this is unacceptable and we request that all parents give this policy their full support. If parents believe that their children may qualify for entitlement to Free School Meals please contact School Food Support Service, Free School Meal eligibility checking service on 0116 3056588 or 0116 3057093, alternatively visit [www.schoolfoodsupportservice.co.uk](http://www.schoolfoodsupportservice.co.uk). This allowance is a statutory right and it is important that you use it if you qualify. Help is available with your application either at the school office or by contacting any of the above numbers. Parent/s must pay in advance for the school lunch by booking at ParentPay.com

Children will not be provided with a school lunch unless it is paid for, except those that are entitled to free school meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a meal. However, this debt must be paid for as soon as possible and future meals must be paid in advance before any meal is provided. If the debt is not cleared, parents must either provide a packed lunch or take the child home for lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the school office will phone the parent to ask them to pay online immediately. Otherwise they must provide sandwiches before lunch time or arrange to take their child home for lunch.

If payment of the debt is not received by the end of the half term, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt. Social services may also be informed that these parents are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their children at lunchtime.

#### **Debt relating to clubs**

All clubs must be **paid in full by the end of the term in which they are taken**. The clubs are booked in advance by the parents and then added to Parent Pay. Parents are able to pay in instalments throughout the term. Parent/s must pay using Parentpay.com.

If clubs are not paid for in the term they are taken, your child may not be able to participate in clubs the following term. If payment of the debt is not received by the end of term, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings against parents to recover the debt.

We hope that by implementing this policy, we are able to help you, as parents, manage your payments better and at the same time, ensure that our available budget is used to enhance your children's learning. The chasing of debts is extremely time-consuming for our staff. Time spent checking debts and sending out letters takes our staff away from other duties at school that would benefit all children. We request that all parents and carers work with us by making regular payments, in advance, for all our services.