

## **Bad Debt / Non Payment Policy**

As from 16th March 2018, Ysgol Bryn Gwalia have adopted a clear NO DEBT Policy relating to the school meal services and Extended Services which includes all the Out of Hours Child Care Clubs the school offers. The clubs are the Fun Club breakfast Club, Nursery Plus, Playgroup and After School Club.

We request that all parents/carers and staff give this policy their full support.

### **School Meal Services.**

The current school meal service relates to meals at lunchtime and this service is no different to any other business and the meals Ysgol Bryn Gwalia provide have to be paid for. Parents/carers should be able to relate to the situation that they cannot take their child to a restaurant and expect a meal without paying; the same applies at school.

At present if debts are incurred due to non payment for school meals, then money has to be allocated from the school budget to pay for them. Therefore, this means that money which should be spent on the children's education is used to pay for debts incurred by parents.

The Free School Meal (FSM) system is available for parents who are in receipt of certain state benefits. If a parent thinks they may qualify for FSM entitlement, they should contact the school office for further details or contact the School Meals Services in housing benefit office at Flintshire County Council. This Free School Meal service is a statutory right for qualifying parents and we support parents to access it. Their child will then have a school meal each day.

The consequences of non payment of school meals results in a time consuming exercise for the office staff. They find themselves having to pursue payments/ outstanding debts either by letter, phone call or in person. This process has to be handled with confidentiality and discreetly and occasionally it can have a negative affect on our relationship with families.

The Governing Body of Ysgol Bryn Gwalia acknowledge that a 'zero-tolerance' approach is the fairest system. We understand that it may be viewed as a strict stance as there has been a culture of debt tolerance within school. However, going forward, changes must be implemented. We are sure that all parents/carers and staff will support the school with this policy as it will ensure all the school budget is spent for the benefit of all our pupils.

We will ensure that parents are aware of this policy by:

- A letter to parents
- Reminders on Twitter
- The school website
- A copy of the policy in our induction pack when staff/children join the school

### **Payment for School Meals**

Parents/carers and staff must pay **in advance** for school lunch by sending in cash or cheque (made payable to Flintshire County Council) in a marked envelope. Payment must be made on a Monday.

No-one will be provided with a school meal unless it is paid for, with the exception of students who are entitled to free school meals. If a parent genuinely forgets to pay in advance, the school may grant a debt allowance of one meal. However, this debt must be paid by the following morning and future meals must be paid in advance before any further meal is provided.

If a debt is not cleared, parents/carers must provide a packed lunch. In a case when a debt payment is not received nor a packed lunch provided, the School Office will phone the parent/carer to ask them to come to school with the money or packed lunch before lunchtime.

If a member of staff has taken a meal which has not been paid for they will be sent a reminder detailing how much is owed. If no payment is received within one day, a letter will be issued.

### **Out of Hours Child Care Clubs:**

#### **Fun Club Breakfast Club / Nursery Plus / Playgroup and After School Club**

Ysgol Bryn Gwalia offers an extensive range of Out of Hours Child Care Services and is registered with the Care Inspectorate Wales. We offer our clubs to support all our parents and carers in order to offer affordable childcare and play opportunities for our children. All parental fees are used for the purchase of new resources and equipment, snacks and provisions, insurances and staff wages. Funding is given from the Assisted Places Scheme and Flying Start for those parents who are eligible. We are not funded from the school budget or Flintshire Education Department.

If any parent believes they are eligible for funding then they should contact the Senior Club Supervisor / Person in Charge.

### **Payment of Club fees.**

Fees are to be paid either in advance or on a daily/weekly basis and no later than the Friday of each week. Payment should be made directly to the Senior or Deputy Club Supervisor at the session the child/children attend. Non payment of fees by a Friday will result in a Reminder letter being sent detailing the outstanding amount and requesting payment within 5 days. The Club Supervisor will aim to speak to parents personally within this period. Your child/children will not be allowed to attend the Club after this period until full payment is received. If the debt continues then the matter will be referred to the Head teacher and a letter will be issued. This will then be forwarded to the Governing Body and a second letter issued requesting you to attend a meeting with the Head Teacher and detailing the consequences of non payment and a final date by which payment must be made.

Payment must then be made within one week of this final letter/invoice being sent out and can be paid in cash, cheque or bank transfer to the Senior Club Supervisor.

All parents are welcome to come and speak to us in confidence regarding any matter relating to the outstanding fees during this time and the school will work closely with parents/carers and staff in working out a form of payment plan to help resolve the situation.

### **Consequences of Non Payment for Services**

If payment of the debt is not received, the Headteacher reserves the right to begin legal proceedings through Flintshire Legal Services to recover the debt. Social Services may also be informed that these parents/carers are not carrying out the responsibility of care by not providing food for their child at lunchtimes or accepting responsibility for their children's Out of Hours Child Care. It is **not** the responsibility of the school to provide a free lunch for pupils who are not eligible for Free School Meals. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to provide a meal, either a school lunch or a packed lunch. Furthermore, it is not the responsibility of the school to provide free childcare outside the statutory school hours under the registered umbrella of Bryn Gwalia Fun Club.

### **Conclusion**

We hope that by implementing this debt policy for school meals and the Out of Hours Child Care Club we are able to help parents/carers and staff manage their school debts effectively, reduce administration time and costs involved chasing non payments and at the same time ensure that school budgets and Bryn Gwalia Fun Club finances are used correctly for the education and development of all pupils.

## **Office Procedural Guide for Bad Debts Policy**

At each level of escalation the following checks must be made:

Check 1: If staff, were they on duty? If student, is the child FSM, are the dates correct? Re-check register to ensure attendance at Child Care Club.

Check 2: Is there a possibility that payments have not been credited?

Check 3: Has the person/parent made contact?

**Level 1 Indicator:** An account goes into debt.

Checks 1 – 3.

Does this person/parent normally pay on time, is this just a one-off?

**Action for Level 1:** Text / letter reminder or Bryn Gwalia Fun Club Reminder sent & First letter from Headteacher Appendix 2

**Level 2 Indicator:** A lunch is requested again without the debt being paid or a packed lunch provided or has a child attended a Child Care Club without a debt being paid.

Checks 1 – 3.

**Action for Level 2:** Personal contact

Someone will phone the parent/carer to ask them to either bring money or sandwiches to school before lunchtime. Staff will be contacted to provide money by 10am or school lunch will not be provided.

The Senior Club Supervisor / Person in Charge will speak to the parent/carer responsible for the payments

**Level 3 Indicator:** Non-compliance with any of these options.

Checks 1 – 3.

**Action for Level 3:** Send a Second Letter, Appendix 3

The headteacher will send a second and final letter.

**Level 4 Indicator:** The parents/carers / staff member consistently do not comply with any of these options.

Checks 1 – 3.

**Action for Level 4:** Matter To Be Referred to Legal Services for Debt Collection & Social Services where appropriate



