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Is there a local authority level policy on pupils who have incurred debt on their lunch/meals or catering account?

No policy exists only guidance for schools. The Debt management process is available under reference 26354 at the following link:
<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/homepage/10467/freedom-of-information-foi-disclosure-log>

Details of any policy or procedure at either the school or local authority level regarding pupils who have incurred debt on their lunch or catering account.

Please see the Debt management process at the link above – this is the original process set up at the time of Parentpay rollout.

What, if any, restrictions are put in place regarding a school pupil's access to a meal if they have a debt in their lunch/catering account.

No restriction is put on pupil access to a meal even if they have debt.

The total amount of school lunch debt in the local authority area.

The annual school meals income is around £1.9 million. As at December 2021 the total debt was £40,497.01

Please note that Secondary schools operate a “pay as you go” policy so there is no associated debt.

The number of pupils with school lunch debt

1,315

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The school lunch debt recorded for the past five years, broken down by year.

We only have this data for the last 4 years:

31/12/2018	£45,913
31/12/2019	£41,171
31/12/2020	£66,732
31/12/2021	£63,730

How far back in time does the local authority's school lunch debt extend?

The ParentPay system was introduced into schools during 2017. We do not have information prior to this.

When, if ever, debt on lunch or catering accounts is written off.

The last debt write off took place in 2018.

Does the school or local authority refer families with lunch or catering debts to money advice or other similar local services?

There is information on the CEC website offering debt advice including an online link and a telephone number for further support <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/benefits-grants/advice-shop/1>