

Sacred Heart Academy School Nutrition Program Meal Charge Policy

Sacred Heart Academy recognizes that healthy, nutritious meals are an important component to student readiness and ability to learn. The Academy will not deny any student access to school lunch, even if their school meal account has a zero or negative balance. However, unpaid charges place a financial strain on the Cafeteria Department and on the school's operating budget.

Purpose

To ensure compliance and fairness to all who participate in the school lunch program, the meal charge policy establishes standard procedures for methods of payment, charge availability and collection methods.

The goals of standardizing procedures are to:

- Treat all students with dignity in the serving line regarding meal accounts
- Support positive interactions with students, parent(s)/guardians and school staff to the maximum extent possible
- Encourage parent/guardian to assume the responsibility of meal payments and to promote self-responsibility of the student

Policy

Families are encouraged to apply for free and reduced-price meal benefits. Applications are available in the elementary school office, and utmost confidentiality is maintained regarding these forms. Any family that repeatedly falls into a negative balance will receive a communication encouraging them to apply for free or reduced-price meal benefits.

Families are encouraged to prepay for meals by the week or month, and money is accepted in the school or parish office. Sacred Heart Academy will accept payment in the form of cash, check or credit card. Checks should be made out to Sacred Heart Academy. Parents are asked to keep hot lunch checks separate from other school checks they might be sending.

Families will be notified of the Meal Charge Policy annually, and the policy will also be posted on the school's website. Students with a negative account balance will not be denied a reimbursable meal nor provided an alternate meal.

Negative Balances

On a weekly basis, e-mails are sent out to the parents/guardians of students who have a negative lunch account balance. The lunch account bookkeeper may also 1) make follow-up phone calls and/or send additional letters to parents, 2) assist families in applying for free or reduced price school meals, and 3) refer accounts exceeding a certain dollar threshold to the elementary assistant principal for further action.

In cases where there are no mitigating factors and the parents have not made payments in an effort to reduce the negative balance or fail to bring the student's account in good standing, Administration may take the following action:

- Refer the account to a collection agency

- Initiate a claim in the court system
- Prohibit a student from participation in graduation exercises

Checks Returned for Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF)

If a check is returned by the bank for insufficient funds, the payment will be reversed from the family account and the parent/guardian will be notified. Any bank charges incurred by Sacred Heart Academy will also be charged to the family account.

Remaining Balances

Any positive balance on a family's account at the end of the school year may:

- Remain on account to be used in the following school year, or
- Be refunded to the parents with written request.

Refunds

For any family whose children will no longer be attending Sacred Heart Academy (due to withdrawal or graduation), a refund will automatically be issued if the account balance is \$25 or greater. For accounts under \$25, a refund will only be issued upon written request of the parent or transferred to another family's account upon written request. After six months, unclaimed funds will become the property of the Academy, Cafeteria Department.