

January 2009

Dear Parents

The 'cashless' system for purchasing food and drinks at breakfast, morning break and lunchtime was introduced at the school in September 2008. It is a faster, more efficient service, so that queuing time is reduced. Your child can register to use this service by visiting the Bistro, during any service times, as soon as they arrive.

Benefits:

- Parents can pay by cheque for their child's meals cutting out the need for students to carry cash.
- Parents can have increased confidence that dinner money is being used for the intended purpose
- Students entitled to free schools meals will have a daily credit limit automatically applied to their account, so that the entitlement remains completely confidential
- The system places a daily spend limit of £4 on each account
- The system can be used to encourage 'healthy eating'

Some key questions about the system are answered below.

At the heart of the cashless system is a software programme which recognises each individual student, holds individual cash balances and records expenditure and cash received. It also records where and when money is spent and on what food.

How are students and staff recognised?

All students and staff will be registered by biometric measurement and photograph. The biometric measurement involves the measurement of points on a finger. This information is converted and stored as a unique number. Parents, staff and students can be rest assured that the fingerprint information held cannot be re-converted back into an image of the fingerprint, nor can it be used in any other source for identification purposes.

How is the account used to obtain a school meal?

A biometric scanner will be used at each till, whereby a student (or member of staff) will place his/her finger on the scanner to activate the individual account. A display will show the server the student's name, tutor group and current balance held within the system. The server will then enter the selected food and drinks into the terminal from an itemised keyboard, while the amount spent and the cash balance will show in the display.

How is money entered into the system?

Initially, there will be two methods:

- a) By cheque, made payable to Hampshire County Council. Any cheque value can be paid into your child's account: you can pay for a term, half term, month or week at a time. Cheques must be in a sealed envelope, the student's name and tutor group clearly marked, and posted in the 'mail box' outside the school office. If the cheque is to cover more than one student, the name and tutor of each student must be identified, together with the breakdown of the total value to be applied to each account. If your child needs to use the credit on the same day, it must be posted in the box by 9am.
- b) By putting cash, notes (£20, £10, £5) and coins (£2, £1, 50p, 20p, 10p) into an automatic cash 'reevaluation' terminal located in the Winchester Block. After activation via a biometric scanner the terminal will show the current account balance. Cash is then entered and, finally a red button pressed to mark the end of the transaction.

How will students check his/her cash balance in the system at any time?

By using one of the revaluation terminals. Activate the terminal using the biometric scanner to display the current balance. There is no need to deposit any money, just press the red button to finish.

If we pay for a set number of school meals, can it be spent in one day?

No, a daily spend of £4 will be set for all students and no food above that limit can be bought. On request, an individual student limit of your choice could also be set, to include a school dinner and break time snacks.

What if a student or member of staff does not hold a sufficient cash balance to pay for a school meal?

No 'overdraft' facilities will be allowed on the system. Students and staff must have enough money in their accounts to purchase a meal. The set cost for a meal as set down by HCC is currently £1.90.

What about a student entitled to a 'free school meal'?

The system works exactly the same for all students whether they pay themselves or have a free school meal. All students can gain access to their accounts via the biometric scanners. The amount allocated for the free school meal will be entered into the system by the software daily and will only be accessible at lunchtime. Any under-spend or missed dinner will be identified by the system and will not be added to the next day's balance.

How will the cashless system help to encourage healthy eating?

After the new system has been operating for a while, we hope to enhance the school's health eating policy. When the food is selected on the server's keypad, it will also register 'reward points' in recognition of students choosing balanced, healthy and nutritious food. This information can then be used for 'healthy eating' awards: individual/tutor group/year group or CTT.

What data will be held on the system ?

Certain data will be held on the system to enable accurate operation. This will include the student's name, tutor group photo, account balance, meal entitlement and the biometric number. Other than the biometric number, this is data already held on the school's administrative systems. All the data will be handled under the guidelines of the Data Protection Act and only used by parties directly involved with the implementation of the system.

If you wish to find out more information please contact the Student Support Office.

Yours sincerely

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Headteacher