



19 September 2018

Dear Parents / Carers,

School Lunches FAQs

Further to my email yesterday, we have had several questions about school lunches so we have prepared a list of FAQs to address some queries. Please note that yesterday's email was sent to all parents and carers as we had not specifically identified children who had a meal which had not been ordered. Today, we have checked children having lunches against a list of meals ordered and will be contacting parents/carers direct where there is an issue.

1. What do I need to do if my child receives free school meals?

All children in Year R to Year 2 receive Universal Infant Free School Meals, which means their school lunch is funded by the government. In addition, some children who meet certain criteria in Year 3 to Year 6 receive Free School Meals.

These children's meals need to be ordered on Tucasi even though no payment is due so that we know how many children to cater for. Meals can be booked as far in advance as you wish and changes can be made up to midnight the day before.

Funding for Universal Infant Free School Meals (for YR – Y2) is based on the meals taken on set days throughout the year so if children are having meals that are not recorded, the school will not receive the correct funding. This then has an impact on our ability to afford other resources as meals still have to be paid for by the school.

2. What do I need to do if I pay for my child's school meals?

You must have credit on your account to order school meals so please top up your credit before booking meals. Meals can be paid for and booked as far in advance as you wish and changes can be made up to midnight the day before.

3. Do I have to choose what meal my child would like when I order?

No – the children choose their meal at the point of service. You only need to indicate on Tucasi with an 'M' that you child will be having a meal.

4. What should I do if I miss the midnight deadline for ordering a meal?

If you do miss the deadline, please provide your child with a packed lunch. In an emergency, please contact the school office before 9.30am and we will see if we can order the meal for your child. If you pay for school meals, the cost will be deducted from your balance or show as owing if you have no credit.

5. What should I do if my child has had a meal which I haven't paid for?

Please contact the school office as soon as you discover the error. We can add the meal taken to your account and you can then make the payment via Tucasi.

6. What happens if a child has no packed lunch and hasn't ordered a meal?

Of course, we will never let a child go hungry so will always provide a lunch if necessary. We will try to contact parents/carers before the meal is given but if we are unable to contact you, we will provide lunch and add the charge to your Tucasi account if applicable.

7. It takes a long time to order meals one day at a time - could it be made easier to enter meals on Tucasi?

We have already raised this issue with the Tucasi development team and will continue to press them to implement a block booking function.

8. When there are issues with the numbers, do the children get enough food?

One of the key features of the Aspens service is that they batch cook throughout service so they are able to be very flexible in responding to demand. Please be assured that all children needing a school meal receive the correct portions.

9. How do you check whether lunches have been booked correctly?

Every morning, Mrs Boulton prepares the lunch numbers for the kitchen using the meals ordered on Tucasi and making adjustments for children who are absent from school. Sue in the kitchen, monitors the number of meals taken by the number of plates used. If there is a large discrepancy, as happened yesterday, then Sue alerts us to the issue.

This system operates on a trust basis and usually works well. When an issue is identified, we put in additional checks such as teachers checking that children who haven't ordered a school meal have a packed lunch with them. Alternatively, a member of staff checks off names on a list as children come to the hall. As I'm sure you can imagine, this puts pressure on limited school resources and slows down service of meals, which is why we don't do this daily.

We kindly ask you to help us to keep double-checking to a minimum by remembering to book meals and reminding your children whether they are to have a school meal or a packed lunch daily.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

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