

Headteacher - Justin Bartlett

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Monday 2nd September 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you well and that you all had a wonderful summer break. I am writing to inform you about an important change in our school's dinner arrangements that will take effect starting from Tuesday 3rd September.

As you know we took the decision last year to introduce a new behaviour system and policy which moved away from Smilie rewards, to children being placed in coloured houses and collecting house points for rewards at the end of each half term. We have been very pleased with how this has been applied with positive feedback received from both parents and children on the impact this has had on general behaviour and attitudes around the school, including our recent outstanding judgement given by Ofsted. However, having continued to monitor our lunchtime provision over the previous year we recognise that this is still an area that we feel could be strengthened further.

After careful consideration and feedback from both staff and governors, we have decided to update our dinner schedule and procedures to better serve our students and ensure a more efficient, purposeful and enjoyable dining experience. The key changes are as follows:

1. New dinner timings and sittings:

Reception and Key Stage 1 (Years R-2): 11:45 - 12:45

All children will eat in the dinner hall from 11.45-12.15 and will be outside from 12.15-12.45

Key Stage 2 (Years 3-6): 12:15 - 13: 15

Year 3 and 4 will eat in the dinner hall from 12.15-12.45 and then outside from 12.45-13.15

Year 5 and 6 will be outside from 12.15-12.45 and then eat in the dinner hall from 12.45-13.15

This will allow for less key stage 2 children to be outside at any one time which will give the children more room to run around and enjoy the lunchtime toys and space. A more structured time outside for both key stages will, hopefully, lessen the number of behaviour incidents which happen.



2. All children eating in the dining hall:

For a number of years our key stage 2 packed lunches and hot school dinners have eaten separately, we would like as many children to eat together as possible and therefore all children will eat in the dining hall from Tuesday.

3. House groups:

To further develop different relationships across the school and the coloured houses children will be sat together at an allocated table with other children from their coloured house across the other year group.

Children will still have the opportunity to play with their friends outside and will have the chance to mix with other children while sat the table.

4. Lunch table behaviour:

We have been aware for some time that the dining hall can be an overwhelming place for some of our children due to the level of noise. The long queuing, canteen style system, is often where poor behaviour choices have been observed. With this in mind, as the children enter the hall they will sit at their allocated table and those having hot school dinners will be invited, a table at a time, to collect their dinner from the servery. Once all the table has their lunch the children can begin eating. We are hoping that this efficient system will ensure children have as much time to enjoy their lunch as possible as well as developing further our lunchtime behaviour

Puddings for key stage 2 children will now be served by a member of the kitchen staff from the Pudding Bar; children will collect after they have finished their main meal. Key stage 1 children will still collect their pudding with their main meal.

The idea of Key stage 2 children eating from compartmented (canteen style) trays has not sat comfortable with us and therefore from Tuesday key stage 2 children will have a plate to eat their dinner from. Cutlery and water will already be on tables, ensuring that they are not having to carry too much back to the table.

We have also gathered data which shows some children (on a dry day), are taking no longer than 5 minutes to eat their lunch (compared to 20 minutes when it is a wet lunch) as they wish to get outside as quickly as possible. This has been observed both with our key stage 1 and 2 children, often finishing their lunch as they are walking up the corridor. Indeed, during COVID we noticed that the children were taking much longer to eat and enjoy their lunch when it was their turn to be inside, aiding improved digestion and also concentration in the afternoon. As a result, we have decided that children will not leave the dinner hall until at least half of their table has finished, with a maximum time being 30 minutes in which to enjoy their lunch and conversation with the other children on their table. To monitor this, children will ask permission from lunchtime staff to leave the table, thus ensuring that as much of their lunch is eaten as possible in the dining hall, rather than walking up the corridor.

We have also monitored on occasions the level of unacceptable mess following a lunchtime sitting, often with a lot of food being left on the floor, which I am sure is not tolerated at home, nor when families dine out. To minimise this the children will sit at the same table for each sitting, allowing lunchtime staff to monitor the level of mess. Once again developing our lunchtime behaviour expectations.



Lunchtimes can often be very noisy with children struggling to hear and hold conversations without shouting at each other. By sitting in 'family style' groups, research has shown that this reduces the noise level as children are talking rather than shouting at each other.

5. Enhanced Dining Environment:

- o Children will still have access to the salad bar, bread and pasta.
- o Fresh water will be available to the children
- o Cutlery will already be on the table when the children arrive

We believe these changes will significantly improve the overall dining experience for our students. Our goal is to provide meals that are not only healthy and delicious but also served in a timely and efficient manner, whilst continuing to promote good lunchtime behaviour and manners.

We understand that any change can bring about questions or concerns and we would be happy to address this via e-mails to the school office.

While every step of the new process has been carefully thought through, we know that when any new procedure or system is introduced there may be issues that were not foreseen and therefore we ask that both parents and children are patient in the first few weeks of implementation, while we find our rhythm with our new lunchtimes. During this period, we will of course ensure that every child has enough time to eat their lunch as well as regularly review the process and make any changes that we feel are necessary.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation. We are committed to providing the best possible environment for your children and believe these new arrangements will be a positive step forward.

Should you have any immediate questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school office.

Kind regards,

Mrs Thomas
Deputy Headteacher

