



Happiness
Esteem
Achievement
Responsibility and
Respect
Truth
Spirituality and Service

Hilltop Infant School

Hill Avenue, Wickford, Essex, SS11 8LT
Email: hilltopinf.admin@heartsacademy.uk
Website: <http://hearts-hilltopinf.uk>

Tel: 01268 762531

Head of School: Mr D Chapman



Wednesday 10th October 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

Confirmation of School Dinners Initiative

Thank you very much to everyone who returned their slips regarding the new lunchtime initiative of giving children the opportunity and independence to select their own lunches daily.

I am pleased to inform you that the very positive result of this survey means that from 29th October children will be selecting their own dinner options from the school menu daily. It was wonderful to see so many parents/carers in favour of the idea and supporting the school as we move forward together to give all children the best opportunities possible.

'A good idea getting the children to make healthy choices on their own!'

'Good idea and happy for them to choose.'

'A great idea as children can choose what they fancy on the day.'

'I already talk through the menu with my child and choose together so this isn't a big change.'

'I think this is a great idea, give the children some independence.'

'Children should be able to feel like they can choose themselves.'

'We support change.'

Naturally we will still circulate the menu via our school website and attached to the newsletter as required so that you can explore the lunch options with your children at home and support them in selecting their lunch option.

Some parents/carers did include queries on their reply forms which were warmly invited and have been answered below. If you have any further queries, please feel free to speak with the office staff who will happily help assist you in supporting your child(ren) move forward with the new way lunch orders will be working.

Thank you again to all the families who helped us reach this decision and for your on-going support as always.

Yours Sincerely

Mr D Chapman



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Question and Feedback

Doesn't the junior school buy meals on bulk based on the 3-week menu given in by parents? How will they have enough food each day?

The way that dinners will be processed between both schools will not change. Although parents have previously filled in dinner options weeks in advance, the actual numbers of each dinner choice are not passed to the junior school until the register has been completed each morning on a daily basis. This will remain the same.

By children choosing themselves, wouldn't there be more waste than pre-ordering?

Please see above.

Can parents receive an update of what their child is eating daily?

We would encourage all parents/carers to support the development of their child's independence by talking to them before school about what option they may choose that day. Similarly, we would hope that the children can share what they had at lunchtime with their parent/carer. If you do have any concerns however, please do feel free to check with the class teacher or office staff who will be more than happy to help you. Although, they will not provide a daily update for every child. If a child has a diagnosed medical condition that requires additional information then the school will naturally meet with parents/carers to discuss options on how best to provide this information.

Can there be a sandwich option?

The idea of becoming a school dinner only school is to ensure that we give all children the opportunity to access a hot meal daily. This supports all families in our school community and hopefully helps support parents/carers design a balanced and varied diet at home. This initiative is also in place to help support families in our community with full time working parents/carers who may find it tricky to prepare a nutritious cooked meal daily and helps to alleviate this pressure. This decision also reflects the key government focus since 2013 when they initiated the 'Free School Meal' programme for all children until the end of Year 2.

Can Year 1 and Year 2 children still have a packed lunch?

Yes, Key Stage 1 children still have the option of bringing a packed lunch to school. The decision to become a school dinner only school is being introduced on a rolling plan commencing with the current Reception children and being continued for each subsequent cohort of children that join the school.

I'm worried that my child is going to eat exactly the same food every day. How will this be managed?

Again, this is going to be a joint effort between the school and parents/carers. We would hope that you will still talk with your children about what food choices they may make each day and support them in this. The school provides a wide range of lunch options daily/ weekly so there is not much chance of children eating the same food each day.

But what about jacket potatoes?

We do have jacket potatoes as a daily option for children to have for their dinner. The filling of these do change throughout the week giving children the opportunity to expand their diets. Again, hopefully with encouragement from home, staff and their friends, children will choose a wider range of dishes. Ultimately, potatoes are a very healthy food choice and one that makes up the main basis for many people's diets and remember they are packed full of great vitamins and nutrients.

Can you guarantee that my child will get the meal they choose each morning?

The school will endeavour to ensure that all children get the meal which they have chosen in the morning but we cannot promise that this will always happen. This is the same as current practice where we try our best to ensure the menu does not change but unfortunately there are times (just like at home) when things don't go according to plan e.g. the delivery is late, the planned food has gone bad, power cuts, accidentally dropping a tray of food, etc. All these things (and more) are accidents that can and do happen. What the school can promise, is that all children will always receive a meal every day. No-one will go hungry, even if they have to eat Mr Chapman's lunch!



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My child has diagnosed food allergies. How will they be supported?

All midday staff, class teachers and support staff and office staff are aware of all children with food allergies and will continue to support them in ensuring that there are safe food options for all. Teachers will happily support children with food allergies (with help from home) to make the safe choices each day. The office staff are always willing to support families with food allergies to identify and check the menu and what is safe for each child.

My child will forget what they ordered in the morning by the time they get to lunch. What will happen?

There is already a dinner band system in place at the school where children receive a wristband to denote which meal they have booked for that day. Children know to keep these bands safe and on their wrists to lunchtime. This system works very well in school and all children know what food they are having come lunchtime.

My child doesn't know what some of the food is. How will they know what to pick?

Children will be introduced to new meals throughout their time at school and staff are more than happy to spend the time explaining to the children what the meal is in a child friendly way. Reception classes will have picture cards to show the children each day to help them see what option they are choosing. Staff in other classes may use these as well when a new dish comes onto the menu or may take the learning opportunity to explore what the new dish is with children including what it contains and its origins. This could be a great activity to do at home as well but remember to remind children of our safety rules when going on the internet.

Can there be a starter as well as a main and dessert?

The main meal and dessert provides children with a substantial amount of food without the need of adding an additional course. The school also, unfortunately, does have to work within a budget which would not extend to including 3-course meals. Maybe, for special days/events in school this could be looked in to in the future.

Can there be a soup option?

A warm soup is a lovely idea to fill up the children's little tummies but the practicalities of having soup in the hall is a tricky one to manage. Again, we could look at having soup on special days when extra staff are available to support or we could even have a day when children have had a go at making soup for their friends.

Will children miss out on learning time whilst choosing what to have for lunch?

On the contrary, the process of children learning what food is available to them each day (including learning what new foods are as mentioned above) and developing their independence skill is a valuable learning opportunity in itself. Children will quickly learn this new routine in school after half term and will not impact into main teaching sessions.

How will the school support my 'fussy' eater?

We will continue to support those 'trickier' eaters as we always have done at school. In more serious cases we will also seek support from the school nursing team and F.A.S.T (Feeding And Swallowing Team) who will engage with assisting the family and school together. If you feel you would benefit from the support that could be offered by one of these teams, please speak with Mrs Alsford in the school office.

Will children be asked individually what they want for dinner?

Yes, children will all be asked individually what they would like for dinner as part of the registration process each morning.

Is a Halal meat available?

Yes, the school is happy to ensure that Halal meat is available to support all members of our school community. Please speak with the office team if you wish to have support in this matter.

Can sushi be a regular option on the menu?

The menu is reviewed throughout the year by both schools collaboratively. The choice of sushi is not one that has previously been considered as not many children tend to ask/eat this. Could sushi be the new chicken nugget?