

School Meals Procedure



Contents

Allergies, intolerances and special diets	2
Ordering forms and deadlines	2
Special meals and school trips	4
Paying for school meals	4
Pupil Premium Free School Meals	6
Leavers balances	6



Allergies, intolerances and special diets

If your child requires a special diet it is important to let us know as early as possible. Our catering team will contact you to arrange a meeting where they will discuss with you how we can cater to your child's dietary needs.

We will not be able to serve food to your child until after the special diet meeting when all applicable forms and permissions have been set up.

During the meeting, our Cook will talk about your child's needs and go through the school menu so that you can choose ahead of time what your child would like to eat each day. The food offered is the same as that which is offered to all children, but with adjustments for each child's special diet.

A finalised menu is produced and this lasts for the duration of one school term. Then the meeting is repeated at the end of each term in preparation for the new menu to be served after the summer, Christmas and Easter holidays.

As there are a comparatively small number of children in school who require a special diet, we do not require parents of those children to choose from the menu every three weeks.

If your child has a special diet and arrives at school with a packed lunch, we know that they will be having a packed lunch for that day. However, if they arrive without a packed lunch, we know that they will be having the meal previously chosen for that day from the set menu, and agreed at your meeting with the Cook.

Ordering forms and deadlines

Meals are ordered in advance using a form sent out via our communications platform ParentMail. The menu follows a three-week cycle and a new menu choice is sent out every three weeks.

Being a small school with a small kitchen, we don't have the storage space to over-order food for short notice choices. We need to get those numbers right to minimise waste. The only exception to this rule is the small number of children with special diets, who have a pre-planned, termly set menu so their meals do not need to be ordered by parents/carers in advance.

When it is time to complete the menu choices, you will receive a notification from ParentMail asking you to log in to complete the form. Then you can make your choices and submit before the deadline.

If your child always brings a packed lunch into school, we ask that you please be kind and complete and submit the form to let us know. If parents/carers don't complete the form it still has to be completed by someone in the office before the data can be downloaded from ParentMail and sorted into the dinner registers to use in class. This is fine when you only have one or two children's forms to do, but when there

are more, it takes up valuable time. It also means that you will be sent a text message advising you to send your child with a packed lunch and if you already know this, it's a waste of a text credit and we have to buy these from ParentMail. Therefore, we ask you to work with us to help reduce unnecessary spending.



If you know that your child will be absent from school before you complete the menu choices, please do not put them down for a meal on those days. We don't routinely charge for meals for children who are absent, as this is usually nobody's fault and unavoidable. However, sometimes an appointment is booked in advance and the child is also down for a meal on that day. There is not the facility in school or the spare time to cross check appointment or holiday forms with meal choices so we rely on parents/carers to do so, helping to keep costs and food waste down.

We don't generally accept any changes or additions to meal choices once the form has been submitted or if parents/carers forget to complete the form before it expires. Any changes or additions would have to be manually inputted onto the dinner registers, holding up the process and redoing work already completed. We monitor late submissions and there will be a £10 administration charge if you want your child to have school dinners but you have missed the deadline.

It is important that as many children as possible who would like to take a school meal are given the opportunity to do so. We have worked hard to make the process of choosing meals as simple as possible. We feel that we give as much time as we are able to give, recognising that everyone leads very busy lives, and also striking a balance between ordering in good time, and giving school time to process all of our children's meal choices.

On a usual meal cycle we send out the menu on a Wednesday, Thursday or Friday every three weeks. The form will expire at 8.00 am the following Wednesday. The form includes automated reminders that are sent every day for the first three days. When the form expires, you are no longer able to complete it. This allows time for us to download the information and format it into dinner registers for each class, giving the numbers to the Cook for her ordering.

If you miss the deadline you will receive a text message advising you that your child will need to bring a packed lunch for that three-week cycle. We will also not be able to change individual meal choices once made.

On some rare occasions the deadline may need to be shorter due to unforeseen circumstances or additional planning time needed for special meals. In those cases, we thank you for your much needed support in helping us to meet that deadline so that the Cook can place her order.



Thank you for your support with all of the above. As you know, meals are not something that the school profits from – in fact quite the opposite. School loses £1.25 for every universal infant free school meal provided to our key stage one children.

Schools will often factor a charge for the administration of meals into their fee passed on to parents, but as we are a small school and we do not benefit from the economies of scale that larger schools benefit from, we did not feel

that it would be fair to add that cost onto the meal charge. As a result, we have chosen to absorb the cost for administering school meals. This means that we have to work hard to protect the time it takes so that it doesn't take away from the other work we do in the office to keep systems running for our children.

Special meals and school trips

There are a number of exciting and delicious special meals held throughout the year. You will see these when you are completing the meal choices form.

If your child has a special diet you will be notified by email and the relevant dietary accommodations will be made by the Cook so that your child can enjoy the special meal too.

When there is a school trip or anything else that would have an impact on the usual lunch routine for some or all children we will endeavour to add a reminder of this to the menu choices form. A letter would go out to you anyway to let you know as part of the general communications around trips and events, but a prompt on the menu choice form helps too.

Paying for school meals

Key Stage 1 – Reception to Year 2

School meals are free to parents/carers for all children in Key Stage 1. This is due to the government subsidised scheme "Universal Infant Free School Meals" (UiFSM)

The government gives school a subsidy of £2.53 towards each UiFSM served, but this is not enough to cover what school pays our catering service for providing meals.

This creates a shortfall, because for every Key Stage 1 UiFSM we serve, school only receives a partial subsidy.

- We serve out approximately 50 UiFSM meals to Key Stage 1 children per day.
- We lose £1.25 per UiFSM Key Stage 1 meal that we serve.

- We therefore have a shortfall of approx. £62.50 per day.
- There are approximately 189 school days in an academic year
→ $189 \times £65 =$ a loss of over £11,813 per year for school, which is a really considerable amount of money.

We work incredibly hard to keep the cost of our meals down, but as a small school we do not enjoy the economies of scale that larger schools can achieve. The government says that it provides 'free' meals for all children in Key Stage 1 but, unfortunately, they do not do this and only subsidise schools. With the National Living Wage and food costs escalating, our cost per meal has gone up significantly over the last few years but the government has not adjusted its subsidy to reflect these increases.

As a result of this shortfall and its impact on school budgets, we decided to ask parents/carers of children in Key Stage 1 for a regular voluntary contribution. We ask if parents/carers would consider making a contribution of £25.00 (or whatever you can afford) towards the deficit we will incur with our UIFSM for each half term.

You are not obliged to do this in any way and information regarding who has and hasn't contributed is always confidential. It in no way impacts your child's meals if you cannot make a financial contribution and we completely respect that not all parents/carers are able to do this, especially during these challenging economic times.

Details of how to make a contribution are on ParentPay. This payment item is kept 'live' at all times and so can be accessed and a payment made at any point.

Thank you again for your immense support with this. In contributing towards the shortfall, it allows us to be able to put the money towards learning resources and activities for your children.

Key Stage 2 – Years 3 to 6

For children in Key Stage 2 there is a charge of £3.95 for each meal taken. Charges are applied to your child's school meals account twice weekly, usually on Wednesdays and Fridays.

School meals must be paid for in advance and you should check/top up your school meals balance regularly: maybe when the menu choice is completed as you will know then how much money to add. We only draw money down from that balance as meals are taken and if the balance remains unused it can be transferred to another payment item or refunded back to you.



If your balance drops below zero you will receive a text in the first instance to let you know that there is a negative balance. If the debt increases another text message is sent out. When accumulated debt becomes larger than two weeks' worth of meals taken, this triggers the formal debt recovery process whereby communication is sent out by ParentMail advising you that the debt could be passed to the local authority if not settled and asking you to send in a packed lunch for your child until the balance is settled.

We reserve the right to refuse to serve meals to the child(ren) of anyone who persistently lets their school meals balance drop below zero. As already mentioned, school meals in general leave the school in a financial deficit and the added workload and cost of continually needing to send out individual text messages and emails chasing debts is something that we cannot sustain.

If at any time you feel you are struggling to pay for school meals please come and speak to us as early as you can. Any conversations will be strictly confidential. We would also ask that you explore the option of applying for Pupil Premium Free School Meals for your child(ren) from North Yorkshire Council (see below).

Sometimes meals are ordered and then a child brings in a packed lunch instead. On these occasions we will still make a charge for the meal ordered that day. This is because space is at a premium and we have very limited room to store unwanted food until next time. The ordering of ingredients for meals that are cancelled on the morning of when they are due to be served leads to a lot of waste.

Pupil Premium Free School Meals

The Government is giving money to schools to help children from lower income families do their very best. This funding is called “Pupil Premium”. To find out if you could benefit, please visit this link: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/education-and-learning/free-school-meals>

For every child registered for Pupil Premium, Wistow School get £1480 this year. With this money we could purchase more resources to support more of our children with their phonic and numeracy development.

Even if your child is in Key Stage 1 and you don't currently pay for school meals yourself, school will still receive that valuable additional funding. When your child does move up into Key Stage 2 they will be able to continue receiving free school meals, saving you over £600 per year.

**Apply for Free School Meals
by scanning here**



Leavers balances

If you know that your child will be leaving Wistow School, please ensure that you have brought their school meals balance (and any other money owing) up to date before they go.

Part of our housekeeping process for leavers involves issuing any refunds due for school meals credit balances and this will happen automatically before your child is taken out of our ParentPay system.