



Farnham Road
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1st May 2008

Dear Parents,

NEW CASHLESS CATERING SYSTEM

I am delighted to announce that we are installing a new 'cashless' system for purchasing food and drinks at morning break and lunchtime. Similar systems have already been introduced in many schools, both locally and nationally, bringing a number of important benefits:

- ✓ A faster, more efficient service, so that queuing time is reduced
- ✓ Parents can pay by cheque (and, in the autumn, on-line) for their child's meals, cutting out the need for pupils to carry cash
- ✓ Parents can have increased confidence that dinner money is being used for the intended purpose
- ✓ Pupils entitled to free meals will have a daily credit automatically applied to their account, so that the entitlement remains completely confidential
- ✓ The system places a daily spending limit of £6.00 on each account
- ✓ The system can be used to encourage 'healthy eating'

The system will start in operation on Monday 9th June. Students and staff will be registered with an account during the previous week and full training on how to use the system will be given at the same time. **From this day, no cash will be accepted in the school dining hall.**

Some key questions about the new system are answered below. In addition, we have arranged a meeting open to any parents who wish to attend, to learn more about the 'cashless' system and to put any questions to me or the contractor implementing the system. This entirely voluntary meeting will be held on Thursday 22nd May at 6.30pm in the school dining hall.

What is a 'cashless' system?

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 by the system?

All students and staff will be registered by biometric measurement and photograph. The biometric measurement involves the measurement of a number of points on a finger. This information is then converted and stored as a unique number. Parents, staff and students can rest assured that the fingerprint information held cannot be re-converted back into an image of the fingerprint, nor can it be used by 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 pupil's name, tutor group and current balance held within the system. The server will then enter the selected food and drinks items into the terminal from an itemised keyboard, while the amount spent and the new cash balance will show in the display.

How is money entered into the system?

Initially, there will be two methods:

- a) By cheque payable to 'Guildford County School'. 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, with the pupil's name and tutor group clearly marked, and posted in the 'mail box' outside the school office.
If a cheque is to cover more than one pupil, the name and tutor group for each student must be identified, together with the breakdown of the total value to be applied to each account.
- b) By putting cash, notes (£20, £10, £5) and coins (£2, £1, 50p, 20p, 10p), into an automatic cash 'revaluation' terminal located in the dining hall. 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.

Later in the year we are also planning to introduce a third payment method – a secure internet site, accessible from the school's website, enabling payment by debit cards. We will let you have more details about this in due course.

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

By using one of the revaluation terminals. Activate the terminal via 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 limit of £6.00 will be set for all pupils and no food above that limit can be bought. On request, an individual pupil 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.

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

The system works exactly the same for all pupils whether they pay themselves or have a free school meal. All pupils 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 'healthy eating policy'. When the food is selected on the server's keypad, it will also register 'reward points' in recognition of pupils choosing balanced, healthy and nutritious food. This information can then be used for 'healthy eating' awards: individual / tutor group / year group / house.

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.

I hope this clarifies most of the queries parents might have about the new system. We are convinced the system will enable us to deliver a faster, more efficient service and help us to continue providing wholesome, healthy and enjoyable meals prepared on the premises at the lowest cost.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Costello

Peter Costello
Headteacher