



Friday 3rd May 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

School Meals Update

I hope this finds you well. I am writing to provide an update on the new school meals system now that this has been in place for three weeks.

As a busy working parent myself I absolutely understand that this is something else to have to think about, so I would firstly like to thank you all for your patience and cooperation as we have moved over to this new system. I thought it might be helpful to explain some of the reasons for this change.

For as long as I can remember, each year on our Annual Parent/Carer Survey, parents have feedback that more flexibility would be welcomed in terms of being able to alternate between packed lunches and school dinners on a daily basis, with the previous system of having to sign up for a half term of one or the other being restrictive. Indeed, 61% of parents who completed the survey in the Autumn Term asked to be able to swap between packed lunches and school dinners.

With the introduction of free school meals for all Key Stage 2 children with effect from September 2023 (as announced by the Mayor of London), we have seen a huge increase in the numbers of children having school dinners this academic year, but as the meals are now free, on many days, children were bringing in packed lunches when school meals had been ordered for them. Since September 2023, we have seen more and more food going to waste. Prior to this new booking system, we were averaging ten bin bags full of food scraped from children's plates every day! We were also becoming concerned about children being hungry in afternoon lessons because they did not like their school dinner.

Additionally, as our cohorts are changing, with more children coming from a range of backgrounds and cultures, as well as an increase in the number of children with allergies, it became evident that we needed parents' assistance in pre-selecting their child's meal. We noted that many children did not know what to choose or in some cases, even what the options were and so the service was hindered. Our new system ensures that more children eat a meal they like, and move through the servery more efficiently, getting out to the playground and having a more enjoyable lunchtime experience.

We do know, of course, that with many new initiatives, there are always 'teething problems'. For example, we had asked Cypad to set up ten weeks of advanced bookings, but currently this is only set up for three week blocks. We are working with them to rectify this. You may have noticed that you now no longer need to select a dessert. Hopefully this will make the pre-ordering process a little faster. While our cook needs to



Harbury Road Carshalton Surrey SM5 4LA

Telephone 020 8643 4428
office@barrowhedges.com



**Pupil Premium Awards 2016
Local Winner**
Primary schools with published KS2 results



know specific numbers for the main meal, there's always plenty of choice for dessert – fresh fruit, cheese and crackers and another option (e.g. crumble or cake) each day.

Please be advised that you are able to change your meal selection after this has been made, as long as this is done by no later than the weekly cut-off (Thursdays at 12 noon). Similarly, you are able to cancel a meal if you wish, but this must be done by the same deadline.

Thank you once again for your support with this – we can certainly see the benefits here in school.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louise wood".

Mrs Louise Wood

Headteacher