

Use of Biometrics System for Cashless Catering

At Birchwood Community High School, we use a voluntary biometric recognition system for cashless catering.

This means students do not pay cash at the till points in the school dining rooms. Instead they use their finger print at the till to pay for meals from their online account. This account can be topped up online using ParentPay. Parents and carers will receive a separate letter with details of how to set up your ParentPay account before your child starts at school. Please note your child **cannot** bring cash into school to pay for school dinners. Students entitled to free school meals will have their entitlement added to their account each day.

For the first day of term, please make sure you have set up your parent pay account and your child has funds available to use in the school canteens. If your child wishes to have a snack at break time, this should be brought in from home on the first day.

The system records of every transaction made by your child and you to monitor exactly how much is paid in and what they spend each day. You can also monitor your child's available balance. You can view all of this information using your ParentPay account.

The minimum amount that you can top up your child's account is £2. Your child can regularly check to see how much is left by using the cash terminal.

There is a daily 'spend limit' programmed into the system of **£6**. This can be increased or decreased for an individual student by making a written request to the school.

In order to comply with the provisions of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 which came into force in September 2013, we need written permission from parents and carers in order for students and students to use the biometric system. The notes accompanying this letter give a more in-depth explanation of the use of biometrics in school and the advantages of cashless catering.

We do offer an opportunity to opt out for those students who would prefer to use alternative forms of identification. Please note that when your child leaves the school, or if for some other reason they cease to use the biometric system, their biometric data will be permanently deleted.

Frequently Asked Questions on Cashless Catering

What is a Cashless System?

Cashless catering is what school calls the software system which recognises each individual student, holds individual balances, records spending and money received online, records where money is spent, on what food, on any specific date and time of day.

How is money entered into the system?

- By using an online system called ParentPay. All parents and carers will receive a letter explaining how to get started using ParentPay.
- Free school meal allowances are added automatically each day
- Please note: Students **cannot** bring cash or cheques into school to top up their account.

How can students check what current balance is held in the system at any one time?

- By using the terminals in school. Students can place their finger on the reader to display the current balance.
- **Remember that parents and carers can check the current balance at any time using their ParentPay account.**

How do you help students budget if I pay £30 on ParentPay for school meals?

A daily spending limit of £6 will be set for all students and no purchases above that limit can be made. Parents and carers can request an individual limit of your choice to be set for your child. Please note that a daily limit will be applied to all spending across the day. Students have three opportunities to purchase food and drinks during the school day; breakfast club, break, and lunch.

What if a student does not have a sufficient balance to pay for a school dinner?

No student is refused a school dinner. The school allows students accounts to go up to £5 over spent at any time. Parents and carers will be notified and asked to bring the account back into credit as soon as possible.

What about students entitled to free school meals?

The system works exactly the same for all students whether they pay or are entitled to free school meals. The amount allocated for the free school meal will be made available in the system daily, and will only be accessible at lunchtime. Any under spend or missed dinner will be removed from the system at the end of each school day.

Parents and carers whose children are entitled to free school meals can still use ParentPay to top up their children's dinner money account.

Please note that all students entitled to pupil premium funding will receive £1 to spend each day at the breakfast club. This allowance is added to the system each morning. Any unspent amount is removed after the breakfast club is finished each day.

Will students have problems in using this system?

Some students may find it difficult to control their accounts for the first couple of weeks, but because of a daily spend limit, most learn this important life skill very quickly and will enjoy being in control of their account.

Can parents and carers see information on how the system is being used?

You can see all transactions made by your child using your online ParentPay account.

What if I do not want my child to use the biometric system?

We ask all parents and carers to complete the Biometric Consent/Objection form. The system is voluntary and school is legally obliged to provide an alternative. We do this by using card system.