



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL
“Realising the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community”

2nd December 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

SCHOOL DINNER MENUS – January 2021

I am sure that you are fully aware that life in school continues to be far from normal. Due to the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic we continue to adhere to our COVID secure risk assessment supported through a range of protective measures and systems of control. Your children continue to be amazing in spite of this 'new normal' and I would once again like to thank you for your continued support, understanding and prayers.

This term there has been a huge impact on our ability to deliver a normal school meal catering service as we strive to promote social distancing, preserve the integrity of class 'bubbles' and allow us to maintain an enhanced level of hand hygiene and cleaning during the course of lunchtime. I feel we have risen to this challenge in finding a safe and efficient solution which allows us to cater for over 300 children in the space of our lunch period, between 12 noon and 1:10p.m.

However, we are mindful that we all want to see a return to a more varied school dinner menu with an increase in choice of hot and healthy options each day. Therefore, we have been working closely with our catering staff to put together a new 2-week rolling school dinner menu beginning from the start of the spring term whilst looking to not compromise our protective measures which keep your children and our staff safe.

Next term all children will continue to be required to eat their school dinner or packed lunch in their classroom at their designated tables and within their protective bubbles. If your child orders a school dinner this will be delivered to each individual classroom along with appropriate cutlery. By continuing to eat in their classrooms we are able to maintain our protective bubbles and do not have mixing of children by using communal dining areas. Our intention still remains that as guidance is updated and further restrictions revised we will look to reinstate a full catering service as soon as possible.

The new menus will commence on **Monday 4th January 2021**. Allergen information is available from the School Office upon request.

Together with this letter you will receive **two copies** of the two week school dinner menu plan – one for you to keep for your information and one to be returned to school, indicating your child's menu choices for each day of the two week cycle. As you will see, there is a range of hot school dinners planned with a main option and a vegetarian option for each day. Please look at these menus with your children – there are lots of tasty dishes to try!

Please return **one** menu plan, marked to show whether your child wants the main or vegetarian option on each day. **If you do not return a menu plan we will assume you are providing your child with their own packed lunch each day.** The following points should be considered:

- School dinners **must** be paid for via our online payments system 'ParentPay' (www.parentpay.com). **We no longer accept cash/cheque payments made through the School Office** and paying via ParentPay will greatly assist us in this. It is also easier for you to manage your payments.
- The cost of school dinners for 5 days is unchanged at £11.50 (£2.30 per day) and we would encourage you to manage your payments through ParentPay so you are always in credit. The minimum payment on the ParentPay system is £11.50 but you are able to pay any amount you wish above this level. We cannot allow parents to fall into arrears and school meals must be paid for **before** they are taken.



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- If you are entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) you will not need to pay via ParentPay and the school has a list of children currently in receipt of FSM. If you think you may be entitled to free school meals please read the entitlement information contained in this letter, visit the school website or speak to a member of the School Office staff.
- The new menus will begin on Monday 4th January 2021 and continue on a 2 week rolling cycle. We will repeat your child’s menu choices unless you inform us otherwise in writing.

In preparation for the start of these new school dinner menus, please ensure that your completed menu plan is returned to school by the morning of **Thursday 10th December 2020** at the very latest, in order that we can place orders for the correct quantities of food.

Criteria for free school meals (FSM) eligibility.

If you are able to prove that you are in receipt of the following benefits you may well be able to apply for free school meals.

To be eligible you must be receiving one of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (not Working Tax Credit), with an annual income below £16,190
- Pension Guarantee Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance, income related
- Support under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999
- Working Tax Credit run-on, paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit, with a household income of £7,400 or less (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Applications for FSM must be made online. Further information as well as guidance on the application process can be found at www.essex.gov.uk/educationawards

If you are eligible for free school meals, and your circumstances change in any way (such as changing address or school, and registering another child) you will need to contact the Local Authority via educationawards@essex.gov.uk and advise them of these changes.

Thank you for your support, patience and understanding at this very challenging time.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Dean Moran
Headteacher