



# Telford Infant School

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Dear Parents and Carers,

## SCHOOL LUNCHES

As you are aware due to the adaptations the school has had to make in order to fulfil the government guidance around full school opening the children are currently being offered hot and cold deli bag lunches rather than the usual choice of two hot meals. This decision was taken in July when the revised government guidance was issued, with the view to reassessing the situation should the school not be in a position to lift restrictions after October half term and resume normal lunchtime arrangements.

Now that it is clear that the school will have to continue to operate under COVID-19 restrictions for an extended period of time the Senior Leadership team are evaluating what has been in put in place so far across all aspects of school life so that we can develop our systems and processes wherever possible. The provision of lunches is included in this and discussions have already taken place with our Educaterers Area Manager and school cook.

School is an exceptionally busy place at the moment so the intention was to contact parents about this when we have we have finalised arrangements. However, as there have been several queries from parents related to school lunches in the past few days I am writing today to answer these.

### **Why is the school offering deli bag lunches which do not provide the same nutrients as the usual cooked dinners? Can my child have a jacket potato, pasta, rice?**

When we discussed options with our catering contractor, Educaterers, in the summer the school was given the option of deli bags as a solution to providing a hot or cold lunch that children could eat easily in their classrooms. This would not be the school's preference in the long term but at that point it was not known what the COVID-19 situation would be in the Autumn.

Educaterers are committed to ensuring healthy, nutritious meals and although under the current arrangements we are not in a position to provide a more traditional cooked dinner our school kitchen team do follow strict nutritional guidelines.

The options of jacket potatoes etc. were not offered to us by Educaterers in the summer when planning lunches for this half term but this is being considered as part of the current school lunch review.

### **Plenty of other local schools are offering hot dinners.**

The vast majority of Primary phase schools within our local consortia in North Leamington are currently offering deli bags, this includes Telford Junior School. I work very closely with other local Headteachers and the provision of hot dinners is proving a challenge for most of our schools at this time.

### **Why can my child only have one piece of salad or fruit?**

Children are not limited to one piece of food from the daily platter of vegetable sticks and fruit. In the first few weeks of term there was excessive waste from the platters so the quantity was reduced slightly but there is still plenty for all and our school cook and midday supervisors monitor this on an ongoing basis.

There is also always plenty of fresh fruit available in school provided by the government's free fruit scheme.

### **When will hot dinners resume?**

We are currently investigating how the provision of hot dinners can be managed and if we can devise a workable solution that does not contravene the current COVID-19 Risk Assessment we will put this in place.

This may appear a straightforward task but the hall cannot accommodate over 250 children across the various bubbles and we want to avoid staggered lunch times and any reduced teaching time. Eating in classrooms is an option, however Reception classes do not have enough chairs and tables for each child. The usual flight tray system of serving lunches would also not work due to the logistics of children carrying lunches from the hall or Midday Supervisors delivering meals to the classrooms but we think we have identified a way to overcome this.

As already mentioned above our intention has always been to review provision from October half term onwards and we started exploring options as soon as the government made it clear that schools would not be able to lift COVID-19 associated restrictions in the short term.

### **Why can't my child swap between packed lunches and school dinners whenever I choose?**

The school asks parents to keep their children on either packed lunches or school dinners for at least a week at a time. The main reason behind this is that the school kitchen has to order food in advance and the school feels strongly that food waste should be kept to an absolute minimum. My understanding is that Junior children are able to choose on a daily basis as numbers involved are significantly lower as parents pay for lunches.

Additionally in the past children have forgotten to order a lunch saying that they have brought in a packed lunch that day when their parent has asked them to choose a dinner. Equally, children have fancied and ordered a lunch despite bringing in their lunchbox. Therefore this request avoids children becoming upset and reduces admin and parents' time following this up.

I hope that the above answers the questions that some of you have emailed in. The school understands that the provision of deli bags as opposed to hot lunches is not a sustainable option and as always we continue to work our hardest to overcome the current challenges and to do the very best that we can for the children. Further correspondence regarding any changes to school dinners will follow as soon as the school is in a position to do so – this will be before half term.

Yours sincerely,

*SA Oustayiannis*  
Mrs Siân Oustayiannis  
Headteacher

