



Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Llandrindod, Powys, LD1 5LG

QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Response by the Portfolio Holder:

1. With the introduction of the cashless system in schools from March 2016, parents can use the ParentPay online payment provider or make cash/cheque payments via Pay Point facilities in local shops. Parents are sent reminders via email or letter if their account balances go into debt. Parents have also been sent user guides from within the ParentPay system to set up their own automated alerts, which will automatically send them an email or text message when their child's balance reaches a minimal threshold. Parents with debt balances are sent weekly reminders with the debt balance and available methods to pay. There is also a contact number on the reminder to call, if they believe their child is entitled to school meals.

Schools have not been advised that the school meal debt will come from their budgets. The catering and cleaning manager pointed out in a recent meeting with the primary heads that this is the procedure other local authorities have taken. This has been misinterpreted by some cluster heads.

2. We understand that this is not the child's fault, and that parents must take responsibility for paying for their children's school meals. The service is drafting a new school meals debt policy, parents with any debt will be advised to provide a packed lunch for their child until the debt is cleared, this will be monitored at school site level and by the canteen staff. If the child does not bring a packed lunch into school, then the head teacher will need to make the decision to feed the child or contact the parent. Unfortunately, there are many parents with the ability to pay but do not. With the introduction of the cashless system we lost the face to face contact at schools with parents. Some parents are unfortunately taking advantage of this because they are just ignoring the email/letter reminders they are sent.