

# Notes for Parents on the THS Canteen Payment System

The school has two kitchens on site – one in the Sixth Form Centre and one serving the main school. Both operate a canteen-style service, offering a wide range of food and drinks at break and lunchtime.

Both canteens operate a cashless system. Each student has an individual account linked to the tills, and purchases are deducted from this balance. Students authorise transactions using either a fingerprint scan or a PIN number. Fingerprints are scanned and PIN numbers issued during the student's first week at school.

## Adding Money to a Student's Account

Parents and guardians can add funds in two ways:

### 1. Online via Arbor

When your child starts at the school, you will be given access to Arbor. You can use this system to deposit money into your child's canteen account using a debit or credit card.

### 2. Cash via Reval Machines

Students may bring cash into school and deposit it into one of the Reval machines located on site. They will identify themselves using their fingerprint or PIN, and the money will transfer directly to their canteen account.

Please note that the school cannot accept responsibility for cash lost before it is deposited into a Reval machine. For this reason, we strongly recommend using the online payment system where possible.

## Meal Costs

The current cost of a main meal deal (hot main with either a drink and snack, or a dessert) is **£4.20**.

A full menu and price list are available on the school website, and the canteen team are always happy to answer any student questions.

## Monitoring and Topping Up Accounts

There is currently no automatic top-up facility available through Arbor. Parents will need to log in periodically to check their child's balance and add funds as needed. Setting a weekly reminder may be helpful.

You can also view your child's food purchases through their Arbor account.

## Free School Meals and Sixth Form Bursary

If your child receives Free School Meals or a Bursary with meal allowance included, a daily allowance is automatically credited to their account each morning. Please note:

- The daily allowance will **not** appear in the Arbor balance.
- Any unused allowance is removed at the end of the day, and the full daily allowance is then reissued the following morning.
- The allowance does **not** roll over.

The daily allowance is sufficient to purchase a hot meal deal, but students may spend it on any available items. Some parents choose to top up the account to allow for breakfast purchases or additional items. This can be done via Arbor or the Reval machines. If a student spends more than their allowance, the additional amount becomes payable by parents or carers.

## Overdrafts and Managing Spending

While we are mindful of financial pressures on families, we also have a duty of care to ensure students are not going hungry.

If a student attempts to make a purchase without sufficient funds:

- Drinks and snacks are usually refused (water dispensers are freely available).
- If an unwrapped item has already been handled and cannot be returned, it may still be charged to the account.
- If a student tells staff they have not eaten lunch, they will be provided with a main meal, which will be charged to their account regardless of the balance.

If your child is finding it difficult to manage their spending (whether using a free meal allowance or parental top-ups), you may wish to encourage them to purchase one meal deal per day and avoid buying additional items at both break and lunchtime. If you do not wish your child to incur an overdraft, please discuss clear spending limits with them. We can add a note to a student's account requesting that staff do not allow overspending; however, we cannot guarantee this will always be possible, particularly during busy service times.

Students who are refused service may approach their tutor or a senior member of staff and explain that they have not eaten. In such cases, we will provide food and charge the account. Our priority is always to ensure students are not hungry. If you are concerned that your child is misusing the system (for example, claiming they have no food despite bringing a packed lunch), please contact their tutor so that we can monitor the situation more closely.

## Financial Hardship Support

If you are experiencing significant financial difficulty and are struggling to provide breakfast, or if your child has accumulated debt that you are unable to repay, please contact your child's Year Team. The school is committed to supporting families during challenging times and will do everything possible to help.