

September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers

As you join our school I would like to outline our position in respect of school meals and packed lunches from home.

In the past we have always promoted our school meals, there are several reasons for this as explained below;

- All children in our school are entitled to free school meals through the government universal free school meals (UFSM) offer – In the current climate, getting anything for free is a real rarity and we know how expensive food is currently, so we would like our parents to take advantage of this offer while it continues. Why pay out for additional food for packed lunches when your child is entitled to it and we are here to provide them for free?
- We are a healthy school and we know 100% that Pabulum provide healthy, nutritious, well-balanced meals for our children. There are always hot meals, vegetarian meals, pasta or baked potatoes and sandwiches on offer each day, as well as freshly baked bread and a full salad cart to choose from. Pabulum provide adapted and allergy-free menus for children that need them.
- We want our children to experience different foods and flavours, so if they are reluctant, they can join our 'tasting table' where children can sample smaller portions and build their confidence with food. We are sure that we can offer something that your child will enjoy.
- I would also like to stress that while the funding from the government offer allows us to keep our kitchen running, something many schools no longer have, it is in no way a profit-making scheme and all monies received go straight back into providing the high-quality meals that our children enjoy every day. It would have a huge impact on the Hamstel schools, both infant and junior, if we no longer had our kitchen provision on site.

However, we are mindful of the fact that many parents would also like to have the choice to provide a home packed lunch instead of adopting the free school meals.

We are happy for this to happen but we ask for your support in following the guidance stated below;

- a) As a nut-free school, we do not allow nut spreads i.e. peanut butter, Nutella or any chocolate spread in any packed lunches, due to the presence of children with severe nut allergies. If these are sent into school, they will be rewrapped and sent back home to you.
- b) We hold healthy school status so it is important that we ask you to provide a healthy, nutritious packed lunch for your child. Please limit highly processed foods, sugary snacks, and sweetened foods. **Packed lunches should not contain bars of chocolate or sweets.** Miss Golding, our healthy school's coordinator has put together a helpful guide for a healthy packed lunch. We hope you find it useful.
- c) Water will be provided so please do not send in drinks from home with the lunch.
- d) Think about portion sizes suitable for the child's age, activity level, and appetite. Bite-sized or finger-friendly foods are often easier and quicker to eat.



- e) Pack foods that your child will actually eat — otherwise it goes to waste. Get children involved in choosing or preparing items — they're more likely to eat them and consider variety across the week. Should a child be reluctant to eat their lunch, our staff will advise you in the normal way.
- f) Please use a sealed plastic lunch box or lunch bag to store food with easy-to-open containers, especially for younger children. Please do not send glass or breakable containers into school.
- g) Use leak-proof containers to prevent spills and cross-contamination.
- h) Food will not be refrigerated, so please avoid items that will spoil quickly or go soggy. Ice packs can be used to keep foods cooler if required.
- i) **It is vitally important that all packed lunch boxes are labelled with your child's name and class.**

(Please note that the school do not take any responsibility for broken or damaged lunch boxes/bags/ice packs etc).

Lunch boxes should come into school through the classroom, where they will be placed on a trolley and taken over to the hall. The children will eat their lunch in the Infant Hall but will sit on a different table to allow us to organise them efficiently around those children having school meals. You can let us know your child's lunch choices by choosing them on the Arbor app, including a home lunch option. Instructions can be found here <https://support.arbor-education.com/hc/en-us/articles/6956696271261-Meal-Menu-choices-on-the-Parent-Portal-or-Parent-App>

Finally, should our lunchtime team notice any issues with a child's school lunches, they will send a slip home in the lunchbox advising you of the problem. This can then be discussed further with our office team if further clarity is needed.

More information on health lunches can be found on [Packed lunches Dec17.pdf](#) (communitydentalservices.co.uk)

I hope that all of the above makes our expectations clear but should you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Best regards



Mr. Roche

Principal

