



April 2024

Dear Parent/Carer,

## Information on the Cashless Catering System at Willingdon Community School

We are pleased to inform you that we have a cashless biometric system for the catering service at Willingdon Community School which has been in operation here at Willingdon for a number of years, and has proved very successful and popular with both students and our parents/carers. We are sure you will appreciate the advantages the system offers the parents/carers and students of the school by enabling the delivery of a more efficient, faster service which allows our catering contractor Chartwells to provide healthy meals, at the most cost effective price.

All of our new Year 7 students in September will be informed of, and given training on how to use the cashless system, as no cash can be accepted at the actual food counter 'Till Point'. Year 7 students are also provided at the start of term with the opportunity to test our cashless system outside of the usual first and second break peak periods to ensure they are comfortable in using the cashless facilities, which they will find very easy to use!

In readiness for your child starting in September, for your convenience and to assist us in our administration of the service, a method of on-line payment is also available. As well as providing your child with dinner money to bring in, we are also able to offer our parents/carers the option of "ParentPay", an on-line facility for the direct payment of school meals and other school items such as uniforms, trips etc. More information on how this works is available on the school website.

With regard to the school meals cashless system that is in operation in the Dining Hall, any amount of money can be paid into your account held within the system; money spent on food will be deducted from the account and students can check by using the "revaluation" terminals to see how much money is left. The Chartwells Catering Supervisor is also able to provide parents/carers with a report detailing each item of food served, each credit made to the system, for any time period and show a current balance. There is a daily 'spend limit' programmed into the system of £6.00. However, this can be decreased for an individual student by parents/carers making a written request to the Catering Supervisor.

Should you wish your child to continue to be responsible for bringing their own 'dinner money' to school, the facility for accepting cash payments for the day or a number of days will of course, always be available. However, all cash will have to be entered into the system by using the automatic cash "revaluation" terminals, located in the dining hall or near to the staffroom, and cannot be used to buy food directly at the food counters.

The revaluation units are programmed to accept **£20-£10-£5 notes** as well as **£2-£1-50p-20p-10p coins**. The units are not programmed to accept coins of less than 10p and the school and kitchen staff do not have the means to change these small amounts so please be mindful of this when sending your child in with their dinner money. Nor will staff be able to change large notes into smaller denominations if your child doesn't want to put all the money into the revaluation terminal.

The School has adopted the "biometric" method of providing cashless catering, and additional information on this facility is accessible via the school website. To summarise the benefits of the biometric system, it is faster without the need for handing over cash or school meal cards, so there will be less queuing, and also because some students do have a tendency to forget or lose their school meals card, or forget their pin code number (which are the alternative methods used in cashless catering systems). The Biometric system works by the student swiping their finger past a reader at the till. However, the School and Cashless catering provider will not retain any students' fingerprints or biometrics on any computers or any other records. Each student's fingerprint image is taken and used to create a mathematical algorithm, but the image is then destroyed and the only information stored is the student's name and their code number. The

numbers cannot be reinterpreted back to a fingerprint image. This technology is widely used in primary and secondary schools and fully meets Data Protection regulations. We have been pleased how popular the system has been since being installed five years ago, with well over 99% of students at Willingdon Community School, using the full capabilities of the cashless biometric system.

Due to legislation requiring your consent in writing (or by way of response via an email account clearly stating your name and that of your child) we require our parents/carers to sign and date the reply slip below where indicated, **and return the slip to the school either on, or before Wednesday 26th June (parents evening)**. Alternatively you may just prefer to electronically send in your consent by email to [biometric@willingdonschool.org.uk](mailto:biometric@willingdonschool.org.uk) You could even hand it in to a member of our staff when you bring your child in on their taster day in July. **Whichever method you choose, it is important that we have this consent before your child starts in September, otherwise they will not be able to obtain any items from the school meals service at the start of the term.**

If, however, you do wish to opt your child out of the biometric scanning system, please can you notify the school via the reply slip, or by email as soon as possible, and that you would like a pin code to be issued to your child, which would need to be remembered by them, and entered at the till point, on a daily basis.

I am confident that our new students, parents and carers will continue to embrace the benefits from our cashless biometric catering service, which will enable your child to access a healthy, balanced school meal.

Yours sincerely



Andy Webb  
Business Manager  
Willingdon Community School (working in conjunction with Chartwells, our school meals provider)

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**Cashless Biometric Catering – for the attention of Reception (PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY)**

We/I have been informed that Willingdon Community School is offering biometric finger scan technology for the purchase of catering and I am willing to have my child/children participate in the process.

**OR**

We/I have been informed that Willingdon Community School is offering biometric finger scan technology for the purchase of catering and I do not wish my child/children to participate in the process.

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Please print name of Student                      Tutor Group (if known)                      Please print name of Parent/Carer

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Signature of Parent/Carer                      Date