

Dear Parents/Carers

We want to take this opportunity to provide you with really important information about your school meal service and reassure you that we have everything in place so we can continue to feed children safely on their return to school in September.

At Shire Services, we are aware of the many challenges faced by parents over the past four months including home-schooling, providing meals and helping to ensure your child/children have been kept busy and positive.

We want to take this opportunity to reassure you that our food provision continues to be healthy, nutritious and above all else, safe in the unprecedented environment we find ourselves in. From September, schools will welcome back pupils and as they are reunited with their friends this should help improve their mental wellbeing. Shire Services want to contribute to this by providing them with delicious nutritious food, in a safe environment, from day one.

We appreciate how many changes schools are having to make to keep children and staff safe and we are working with them to offer the best food solution according to their individual requirements. We also need to make sure it's still an enjoyable experience for all.

We have produced a summary of what we are doing behind the scenes to reassure you as you head into the summer break:

- We have used guidance from Shropshire Public Protection, Shropshire Council corporate health and safety and Government guidance from www.gov.uk. to ensure that working practices used within the kitchen and dining rooms adhere to Covid-19 guidance.
- Public Protection have confirmed that all our normal food safety practices, that we already have in place are appropriate during this pandemic. There is no need to put into place any additional measures other than social distancing and ensuring frequent handwashing continues.
- Public Protection have also confirmed that the use of gloves is not necessary because washing hands for 20 seconds in hot water with soap kills the virus on your hands and prevents the spread of COVID-19 and is far more effective in catering than the use of gloves.

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Fresh DINING



- As a guide, there is no requirement to use disposable plates and cutlery as these will be sanitised using our normal washing facilities within the kitchen.
- If the dining room is being used in school, it will be sanitised after each sitting.
- Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we have had to simplify the menu but have made sure to keep dishes that are healthy and popular.
- Our teams are carrying out specific return to work and COVID-19 training and will be certified “fit to work” before returning.
- We are also reviewing payment methods and ordering processes to ensure we are providing the safest method possible.
- All allergen information will be available within the school kitchen if required.

We are experts in feeding school aged children and are really looking forward to providing your child with their school meal when we return in September. We also look forward to welcoming all the new starters to school.

We hope this information has helped to make your decision about school food easier and look forward to meeting your child / children in September.

If you have further questions regarding these measures, please email shireservices@shropshire.gov.uk.



Fresh **DINING**



Why having a freshly prepared school lunch is important for your child

The school day is long and energy demands are high, both physically and mentally. Having a healthy balanced meal at lunchtime is great for energy and vital for a child's health and development. Research has shown a school meal helps pupils concentrate in their lessons, therefore enhancing their learning ability.

Shire Services serve balanced and nutritious food.

Our lunches provide a nutritious range of food that differs every day and will entice your children's taste buds. Opting for a school meal will take the pressure away from parents/carers having to provide that balance and variety with a lunch from home.

School lunches are a good choice.

In the current Covid-19 climate, it is deemed safer for schools to provide lunches rather than have packed lunches being brought in.

Surveys carried out on the contents of children's packed lunches have revealed they rarely meet all the food-based standards set for school meals.

Vegetables and salad in particular are largely absent from packed lunches while snack foods such as crisps and confectionery are common.

Lunchboxes tend to contain higher amounts of saturated fat, added sugars and salt and lower amounts of vitamins and minerals than recommended.

School meals, on the other hand, have been transformed in the past decade and have to comply with strict government nutritional guidelines. You can therefore be confident that your child will receive a nutritious healthy meal.

Shire Services food facts

- Meals are freshly prepared
- Produce is locally sourced
- Eggs are free range
- Fish used on our menus are Marine Stewardship certified (MSC).
- We do not add salt to any of our meals.
- We use Belton organic cheese.
- All puddings are made using reduced sugar recipes and fresh fruit is available daily.

Free school meals

School Meals are FREE to all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Your child may also be entitled after Year 2. This also provides extra funding to your school. You can register your child for Free School Meals if you receive any of these benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018, your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

To apply for free school meals please visit: www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals

We understand that there may be some families that have had a change in financial circumstances and may now be entitled to apply for Free School Meals. The above website helps you to establish if you can claim.

Cashless payment systems

Some schools have cashless payment systems for the payment of school meals. Pupil accounts can be topped up ready for the new school term, helping to minimise cash handling. Check if this is available at your school.

Fresh DINING

