

Dear Parent and Carers

Our aim as a school food provider is to deliver great food at affordable prices for our pupils and parents. The cost-of-living crisis continues which we are all experiencing in our own lives, with prices in supermarkets and other daily costs rising almost weekly. This has in turn impacted on the prices we pay for food supplies and the wages we pay our teams. We wanted to contact you to let you know what we are doing to try to limit the impact on pupils and parents while continuing to provide the best possible standards and service.

The two main issues we are facing as an industry are food inflation costs, currently at 16% and increased staff wage costs of nearly 10%.

Food inflation

This is predominantly driven by the war in Ukraine, which is not only a terrible humanitarian crisis, but has also significantly damaged economies across the globe and has had a real impact on food availability. The food supply volumes have dropped and so have driven prices up. The latest food inflation figures reported show a 16% increase in the cost of the food we buy.

Staff wage increases

The Government has increased the minimum wage by 9.7%. This is a positive move that will mean our teams are better able to address the cost pressures they are under. This is more than 3% higher than last year's record rise, so great progress but clearly creates its own challenge from a funding perspective.

We have looked at all options to address these cost increases and to minimize the necessary tariff increases such as changes to suppliers and adding some new product lines. However, we must not allow these pressures to impact on the quality of the food, nor the portion sizes we provide. We have also absorbed some of the cost increases, however we are also implementing a tariff increase of **5% from April 2023**. Whilst we appreciate that this is never going to be good news, we hope you will understand that it is significantly lower than the inflation rates as detailed above. We will not be applying the 5% tariff increase to main meals, meal deals, salads and fruit products.

As always, we will continue to encourage open and honest dialogue with our clients, pupils and parental groups to ensure we have a joined-up approach during this challenging period. We have a potentially difficult time ahead to navigate through, but I would like to personally give you my commitment to continue to serve food of the highest quality, that represents good value for our pupils, parents, and schools.

Kindest regards

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