
14th December 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: Work to keep school meal price increase as low as possible for West Sussex families

West Sussex County Council has had to make the difficult decision to increase the cost of primary school meals following work to keep the price as low as possible for families amid rising costs.

From 3rd January 2023, the cost of a daily school meal will increase by 19p, from £2.52 to £2.71, across all primary schools supplied by Chartwells and Easy Lunch.

This rise will not affect families whose children receive Universal Free School meals*, or those who receive means-tested Free School Meals*. The price of secondary school meals is not set by West Sussex County Council so will not be affected by this change.

The decision comes as school meal providers in West Sussex and nationally are experiencing huge financial pressures due to the rise in inflation and the cost of food.

We understand how disappointing this decision will be for those who will see a price increase, and the difficult timing of this news when costs are increasing throughout our daily lives.

We want to assure you that this not a decision the County Council has taken lightly and comes only after we exhausted all options with providers and did everything we could to keep the price increase to a minimum.

We're continuing to work with providers to put into place measures to help keep costs as low as possible while maintaining food quality and standards for your children and young people.

At the same time, we continue to offer a range of support for the most vulnerable children, families and households and I encourage anyone who is struggling to seek the support available. Please see the additional information provided below.

Your sincerely,

JOHN FIGGINS

Head of Catering Services

Cost of living support

If you live in West Sussex and need help or support in relation to the cost of living, please visit www.westsussex.gov.uk/costofliving, where you'll find information on a range of topics, from money management to energy saving, food and household costs, job seeking and benefits guidance, to how to access further support.

***Additional information**

Universal Free School Meals are available to every school-age child attending a government-funded school in West Sussex (maintained, free schools and academies), up to and including year 2, irrespective of family earning.

Free School Meals are available for low-income families so children are provided free meals throughout their primary and secondary education. Parents can apply on the WSCC website <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/free-school-meals/>

The Council have also supported all Free School Meal children with supermarket food vouchers during each school holiday since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. This provides financial support to around 18,500 eligible children.