

Ickford News

In previous weeks, I have tried to explain the packed lunch situation and the time permitted for children to eat their lunch. However, some further questions have arisen via the recent parent survey so, I shall try and explain the hot lunch dilemma in more detail.

I am in favour of having a hot lunch option in school and have experience of running a school kitchen in a school with almost 500 children. In that school we opened up a kitchen that had been forced into closure by Harrow Council, employed our own Chef and support team and managed to produce excellent meals for every child. I must however point out that, regardless of the choice, the healthy menu and the ease, a large proportion of parents would not take up the offer and preferred to send their children in with a packed lunch. As I know well, you can't please everyone.

In my time at Ickford, we have looked at the logistics of providing a hot meal to the children and researched various different solutions several times. Obviously, we have no kitchen facility and we have no dining hall so it is a very difficult place to start.

An opportunity to tackle the issue arose when the Government announced that all children in KS1 would be entitled to a free school meal. I spoke to the DfE and expressed my willingness to comply but requested advice and support as to how we might find a solution. We had a number of site visits from the DfE and they concluded it would need a significant amount of money, necessitate changing the sports hall into a dining hall and kitchen and require the appointment of several more staff. When I asked about financial support, the DfE representative shuffled some papers and disappeared into the sunset!

At that time, I shared the idea of converting the sports hall into a dining hall with the parent body and they were unanimously against the idea. The view was that the children benefitted more from the sport offer and the chance to play games and use the hall at break times and during PE lessons. Subsequently, the funding from the DfE amounted to enough to buy a jacket potato oven, a dishwasher and some plastic plates. As Nick Clegg, from whom the idea originated, disappeared, so did any pressure from the DfE.

Nevertheless, this does not mean the school meal project was abandoned. Though we could not provide hot meals, we did agree with a supplier to provide free packed lunches for the children in KS1 in order to relieve the parents of the daily task of making lunches. Unfortunately, the lunches were not popular and the take up so low that the supplier would not deliver to Ickford.

We have also investigated the option of having hot meals delivered each day but it is impossible to overcome the problem of where to eat them and how to manage serving them and clearing up after them. Hot meals in classrooms would, in my opinion, not only leave a lingering smell but would also mean lots of children moving around the building carrying hot plates of food. It would require the employment of more staff to serve meals and to clear up and more staff to supervise children as we would not be able to move them to one room. Consequently, most of the lunch break would be taken up with children obliged to remain in classrooms waiting for all children to finish their lunch and clear away and recreation time would be significantly reduced. I would envisage a situation where, once the novelty of a hot lunch had worn off, most parents, having been nagged by their children, would change back to a packed lunch option so that their child could spend less time indoors and more time outside.

With regards to current arrangements in school, they may not be ideal but they are the best we can do to keep as many people as possible happy. The children get time to eat with their friends and still have plenty of time to play. All children in need of more time to eat are asked to go into one classroom where they can spend more time eating. It has to be Class 1 because the youngest children tend to take the longest to eat and it would be too difficult to expect these children to move to another classroom. It has to be one classroom because we need to have supervision outside when the children go to the playground and field and have neither the number of staff nor the money to employ more in order to supervise each classroom where slower children remained. To those who complain and to the one who said there was a 'stigma' attached to moving to Class 1, I can only say please sit at my desk and try finding mid-day supervisors to work for an hour per day for pocket money or try explaining an accident in a classroom because children were left unsupervised. Every child knows the routine at lunchtimes and I check on a daily basis that they are all happy, fed, looked after and enjoying a break time.

I continue to look for ways to provide meals and I am in talks with architects and builders trying to work out whether we could design and build suitable facilities. At the same time, I am under pressure to try and build more classrooms in order to ensure that we can continue to provide school places for children in our catchment area. If I am honest, both projects require so much funding, I am doubtful whether they can be achieved in the near future. I shall keep trying to lead the school successfully in to the future but until such time as a higher authority feels, as I do, that Ickford is a model that should be expanded, then I can only see those that are unhappy with packed lunches and mixed year groups having to make their own difficult decisions.

In other news this week, I hope to welcome back all of our Infant children on Monday and I am keeping my fingers crossed that we will not suffer another Covid blow before term ends. We managed to have a small group of parents present at the Year 6 music recital on Wednesday and it was such a pleasure to see some parents here again witnessing the achievements of the children. The music was superb and every child in year 6 shone. Mrs Shackleton continues to be a formidable Music teacher and Mr Shackleton has been a great asset to the school this year.

I am keeping everything crossed that neither the weather nor Covid will conspire against us to bring the curtains down on Sports Day next week. If 60,000 can be at Wembley, surely 100 or so can be at Horspath.

Enjoy the football and have a good weekend.

Mr Ronane



Important- Sports Day T shirts

This year all children will compete in their PE kit and we will provide coloured bands to denote houses. Please do NOT send them in coloured T shirts.

Ickford News from the office



This Week's Celebration Assembly

Hall of Fame:

Music Award:

Louis Raeburn

Isabella Cooke

Ryan Roberts

PE Award:

Aiden Barnes

Iyla Hitchcock

Frankie O'Kennedy

James Kendall

Megan Jones

Finlay Addis

French Award:

Jake Fletton

Latin Award:

Alfie North

Headteachers Award:

Iyla Hitchcock

Jago Miller

Alfie North

Dates for your diary...

13 th July	Cricket Engagement Day
13 th July 9:15am	Latin Assembly
13 th July 7pm	Class 4 & 5 Play
14 th July	Sports Day
14 th July overnight	Year 6 Camping
16 th July 9:15am	Leavers' Assembly
16 th July	Last day of Term

School Lottery

A winner within school every week!

If you would like the chance to win, and support the school, please click on the link below and get signed up!

<https://www.yourschoollottery.co.uk/lottery/school/ickford-school>



Breakfast Club

Please remember to book your child's place for breakfast club with the school office by Friday at midday for the following week. Entry to breakfast club will be via Gate A by the Recreation Ground.

Sponsors



On behalf of all the children and teachers I would like to give sincere thanks to SAS Wireless for their incredibly generous sponsorship of Ickford Sports. Look out for their Logo in the future.



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