



Friday 28<sup>th</sup> Sep 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

## **NEW BIOMETRIC CASHLESS CATERING SYSTEM**

We are pleased to announce that Simon Balle All-through School, in conjunction with our catering provider Herts Catering Limited, will soon be replacing the current dinner card system with a biometric cashless catering system. The new system will allow us to continue with the development of the school's meal service and will provide us with a more efficient, faster and ultimately better quality of service.

The purpose of this letter is to share with parents our thinking, and to outline exactly what this improvement will involve.

While our current dinner card system has operated satisfactorily for a number of years, we have had significant issues recently and there are a number of drawbacks which we would like to address. These include the speed of service at till points, moving away from a system reliant on cards which are easily lost or damaged and having to pay for replacement cards.

The advantages of the biometric system include being able to place a daily spend limit on your child's account, and recording allergen information against your child's profile. This would enable the system to provide a warning to the till operator should your child be attempting to purchase an item to which s/he is allergic.

The system will be in use for all students in Years 7 to 13, we are not proposing to introduce it for primary phase students yet as their hands can be too small for the biometric readers to work properly.

Many other schools operate a biometric system across the country and the feedback from them is resoundingly positive so we are confident that this is the right choice for Simon Balle.

We will also be using the biometric system for sixth form registrations; this information is currently captured manually and can be made more efficient through biometric registration.

### What is a 'biometric' system?

A 'biometric' system is one which identifies a person by a unique physical characteristic, in this case a thumb scan. It is worth stressing that this is not the same as a fingerprint. A scan of the thumb measures a number of reference points and turns this information into a digital signature; this scan is then destroyed. The digital signature is further encrypted and cannot be used to recreate the original thumb scan. There is therefore, no question of a print being taken which could be used for any other purpose, and parents should be assured that we adhere to the highest standards of data security for students.

Parental consent is legally required for biometric thumb scans to be taken and the school will seek this from you shortly. PIN numbers can be issued to students as an alternative if parents prefer not to use the biometric system. Please be assured that all data held will be GDPR compliant.

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The Simon Balle Academies Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with Company Number 8661539 and has a registered office at Mangrove Road, Hertford, Herts SG13 8AJ  
VAT Registration Number: 209-0575-18



## How would parents top up their child's dinner money account?

Either:

1. By using our existing payment system (Parent Pay) in the same way as they do now
2. Inserting cash in a 'cash loader' machine on site
3. If your child receives free school meals this will be automatically reflected on their account

## How would students pay for meals?

Students would identify themselves at till points by placing their thumb on a biometric reader or entering a PIN number. The till operator can see their available balance, whether there are any dietary restrictions in place for a particular student (e.g. wheat allergy), or whether parents have requested a daily spend limit to be set. The items being purchased are then entered via the touch screen by the till operator, with the corresponding amount deducted from the student's catering account. Information about the purchases made by each student is recorded on the system, and is available to parents on request.

## Timescales

We will be installing the new system in October half term with a view to going live on the first day back on 5<sup>th</sup> November. Students for whom we have received biometric consent will be registered on 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct in the school. If we do not have biometric consent, students will be issued with a 5-digit PIN unique to them on the same day. All existing dinner money balances will carry across to the new system.

You will receive an email in the next few days (or letter if this is your preferred means of communication) with a link to a form requesting consent for biometric registration of your child.

## Next steps:

The school believes that a biometric cashless catering system combined with ParentPay will deliver an efficient, straightforward and convenient way for parents and students to purchase meals.

For more information on biometrics, please do read the FAQ's attached to this email, they can also be found on the school website. For anything that is not addressed in the FAQ's please email us at: [admin@simonballe.herts.sch.uk](mailto:admin@simonballe.herts.sch.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Alison Saunders, Head Teacher

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