

11 December 2025

Dear Principal,

You will be aware that the Education Authority (EA) recently set out a number of savings measures in response to a significant funding shortfall of around £300million.

As part of these measures, we indicated that **as of 1 January 2026**, the price of a school meal for a paying pupil will increase by 50p. As you will be aware, this is the first increase since 2017/18.

The increase will have **no impact** on those children entitled to a free school meal.

School preparations for increase

The school meal price decision has been well publicised, but it is important that parents are officially informed by schools ahead of the new term in January.

If you use a cashless payment system, please:

- Inform parents of the new price taking effect from 1 January 2026
- Update your Free School Meals system to the new allowance highlighted in the list of new prices below.

If you use cash payment from parents, you will need to:

- Inform parents of the new price taking effect from 1 January 2026

New prices as of 1 January 2026

Primary school £3.10

Nursery school or pre-school setting £3.00

Special school £3.10

Adult meal £3.99 (price for all schools)

We are grateful for your support with implementing the necessary system changes.

You may wish to share the attached infographic with parents through your communication channels.

“To inspire, support and challenge all our Children and Young People to be the best that they can be.”

Education Authority

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Yours sincerely,
Stephen Briggs
Education Authority Head of Catering Service

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