

ST FRANCIS' PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

EA are looking to 'rationalise' their services across NI in a bid to save money where possible. What this means for us is that they will consider the possibility of closing any school kitchen where the number of children receiving dinners falls below a sustainable threshold. Instead, meals would be brought in from another school rather than made on site and we would lose 'snack' provision.

There are a number of factors at play our circumstances: the boiler the kitchen currently relies on was due for replacement over 4 years ago and if it ceases to function EA have informed us that they do not have the budget to replace it; and our dinner numbers have fallen with fewer families accessing and taking their school meal entitlement and fewer families booking dinners.

In a bid to redress this our catering team have offered to provide meals for another rural schools with no kitchen facilities but this is only a temporary solution.

The financial constraints placed on the education sector are having a significant and detrimental effect on the school experiences of children across Northern Ireland and despite our best efforts, we as a school cannot shelter our children from the impact of these cuts without your help.

To date, you have risen to the occasion by supporting our fundraising efforts. I am regretful to have to ask, once more for your assistance:

- **Please consider availing of the excellent meals our team provides, if possible, even once a week.**
- **If you are already entitled to school meals assistance, please book your child in for dinner.**
- **If there is a possibility that you are entitled to school meals assistance but you have not applied, please do.**

<https://www.eani.org.uk/financial-help/free-school-meals-uniform-grants/apply-for-free-school-meals-uniform-grants>

School meals entitlements also determine our access to funding from other sources – extended schools, wraparound care and bursaries from charities with a school meal entitlement threshold.

Ultimately, we need to make every effort to fight to retain our on-site meals served by our talented catering team. Your children already have fond memories of Pauline's home-made cakes for dessert, 'The Roast Dinner' served on Thursdays and salad options with every meal; they enjoy warm scones at break and celebration meals for special dates and sacraments. We do not want our pupils to lose out as EA try to rationalise their work force and prioritise spending. We need to safeguard the heartbeat of St. Francis' PS: our pupils deserve the very best, and with our current catering team, that's exactly what they get.

With my very sincere thanks for your support to date,

Mrs S. McKeown