

Tuesday 7th January 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Better Lunchtimes



I am writing to share that we are changing the way we run our lunchtimes. We are working with Better Lunchtimes to make lunchtime even more enjoyable for children and staff. Our vision for lunchtimes is:

Lunchtimes at Woodston are a calm, happy time for children to enjoy family-style dining. They show respect and compassion when playing with their peers, and they have access to organised play opportunities, supported by highly-trained staff.

To help us achieve this, we are making changes to lunchtimes both inside and outside. These have been recommended by Better Lunchtimes, who have supported thousands of schools across the country in using this approach. They came into school, observed our lunchtimes inside and outside, and wrote a very detailed report with their recommendations.

How do we create a Better Lunchtime Inside?

Inside, the aim is to create a positive lunchtime experience in a calm environment, where pupils don't feel rushed and have time to enjoy their meals. The idea is to create a restaurant-like feel where children sit as 'families' and enjoy a meal as a social time together. **So how can this be achieved?**

- Set sittings** - Children in each sitting to remain at their table in the dining space from start to finish (25 minutes). We have provided resources to encourage conversation at the tables and suggestions of quiet games that can be played in pairs or as a whole group.
- Allocated seats** - Children to sit at allocated seats for 'family dining' experience. Teachers have created family groups using their knowledge of the children in their class. This means there are no worries about where to sit, or if they will find a place next to someone they want to talk to. They know exactly where they will be and who will be with them.

- ❑ **Mixed tables** - Ensure packed lunches are mixed with school dinners.
- ❑ **Reduced queues** - Children are sent up for food a table at a time. Just like in a restaurant, we ask that children wait for all of their family group to have their food before they begin eating.
- ❑ **Overflow tables** - These are reserved for children that haven't finished their lunch in the given time. This is to ensure they are not rushed to finish eating.

How do we create a Better Lunchtime outside?

Outside, the aim is to create a positive lunchtime experience where staff are engaging with pupils, leading activities for a more enjoyable break. **So how can this be achieved?**

- ❑ **Zone the playground** - The outdoor space is clearly separated into different areas. E.g. Balls, equipment, free play, wellbeing and trim trail when it is dry. Children flow between the zones during their break. In the equipment zone, we have one type of toy each day to keep it interesting for the children and to make sure the toys are used safely and correctly. The wellbeing zone has an outdoor library and beanbags to relax and chat.
- ❑ **Allocate staff** - One staff member is allocated to particular zones so that they become an expert in that area and model the play activities we want children to learn and enjoy.
- ❑ **Radios** - Staff have radios to communicate with each other so they don't need to leave their zone.
- ❑ **Wet lunchtimes**- Outside is replicated inside! Children choose a zone and they go there for that half term. Hopefully this will be a rare occurrence! So if they choose wellbeing zone, on a wet day, they know where they are going.

I hope this information is useful. If you would like any further information or you have any questions, please speak to me- I am available at the start and end of every day.

Yours sincerely,



Laura Brough
Assistant Headteacher