

FAO: The Head Teacher

12th January 2022

Dear Head Teacher,

Re: School Meal Service – Product Availability & Staffing Update

Firstly, I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year, and trust that you had an enjoyable Christmas break. As we start the new academic term, I want to provide you with a further update on my letter dated 13th October 2021 relating to the challenges being faced by the food industry.

Issues surrounding the global supply chain continue to be highlighted in national media reports and Cityserve continue to experience disruption to service in some schools due to specific product availability and delivery issues. However, we have been working extremely closely with our food supply partners and therefore I hope you have experienced minimal disruption thus far?

As well as food availability, the most critical challenge continues to be the widely reported staff shortages in the whole of the food and hospitality sector - which includes the school meals service. This has intensified recently as a result of the Covid 19 Omicron variant and Cityserve, along with most other food service suppliers, are currently experiencing an unprecedented reduction in staff availability. The Omicron variant is a more contagious strain and therefore spreads more quickly than previous variants. This is further compounded with this dominant variant being associated with flu like symptoms, which in itself, necessitates isolation from kitchen workplaces. Covid related absences are now nine times more than what we experienced in November 2021.

With this in mind, we are asking you to please bear with us as we continue to mitigate these challenges by reviewing and acclimating staff rotas, primarily to ensure children receive a school lunch. We will continue to hold our supply chain to account and will relentlessly strive to keep to as normal service as possible, however in these exceptional circumstances we will value your support in accommodating changes where necessary. These changes may take the form of a changed/reduced menu from the ones advertised

at short notice, as well as changes to staffing compliments where necessary. In extreme cases this could also necessitate possibly transporting a lunch in from a neighbouring school if required.

I assure you that everyone representing Cityserve and Birmingham City Council is doing their utmost to provide you with the best school meal service possible during these extraordinary times. Whilst reacting to these national and global issues, which are of course beyond our reasonable control. Our main priority is and always will be to ensure our children continue to be fed.

On behalf of Cityserve and the Council, I would like to personally thank you for your continued support and understanding, and we will continue to update you as the situation evolves.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dale Wild', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dale Wild
Head of Service

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