CASHLESS CATERING SYSTEMS

A Cashless Catering System uses information technology, which removes the handling of cash at the point of sale and speeds up the food service. Schools can choose a system that meets their specific requirements with a pupil recognition system of their choice.

Research has showed the perceived benefits of having a cashless catering system for:-

Pupils:-

- Reduces queuing time by speeding up delivery at the point of sale
- Removes stigma for free meal pupils by protecting their anonymity at the point of sale
- Removes cash from pupils pockets so reduces the opportunity for bullying or theft
- It's easy to use

Parents:-

- Can pay by cheque or notes directly to the catering manager which ensures the money is used to purchase a school lunch or breakfast/break.
- Can pay on-line and access information about their child's account
- Can request a report on the eating habits of their child
- Can set a daily spend limit.

Schools and Caterers:-

- Cashless systems can deal with large volumes of customers within the fixed time constraints of the school day.
- Can help schools to reschedule their lunch time arrangements to gain maximum efficiency from the installation a cashless system
- Increases school meal uptake and raises additional income which could fund the purchase of the cashless system.
- Cashless suppliers will advise, configure and install a system and support with training, backup and after sales service from engineers and give on-line support.
- Reduces the opportunity for bullying and theft by removing cash from school
- Enables nutritional reporting
- Can integrate and with link with other management systems.
- Pupil Identification Solutions Explained

Biometric Fingerprint Scanning

Fingerprint recognition technology is a more recent advancement in unique identification for cashless catering systems. Here, an image of the student's fingerprint is taken and registered. The image is converted into digital data (usually an alphanumerical code) using a secure cryptographic method. This becomes the unique identifier, which is only decipherable to the biometric 'reader'. The initial fingerprint image is not retained or stored. When a student wishes to access their account, they place their finger on the biometric reader. The stored fingerprint digital data is matched and the unique account is accessible.

This system has 'sensitivity and security issues' from parents and students alike. One of the main causes of concern initially can be the fear that biometric fingerprinting is akin to police/criminal fingerprinting and that a 'record' is being retained for the future. However, according to interviews with biometric providers and catering providers alike, once the operation of the system has been explained and understood the majority of students and parents give their permission for schools and authorities to change to biometric. Where a student/parent decides to opt out, pin numbers are provided as an alternative option, ensuring inclusively.

Methods of Topping up Pupil Accounts

By Cash

Depending on individual cashless catering system providers, and schools, both parents and children who prefer to pay by cash can do so through the use of Revaluation Units Cash Loaders. These provide users with the ability to check their balance and load cash onto their accounts in a simple and accessible way. Transactions are instantly credited and balances instantly adjusted. Account Balances are held on a central PC so that loss or damage to a swipe card does not result in loss of money for the user.
Revaluation units are typically located on the school premises, in dining areas, entrance halls or secure lobbies. Parents with multiple accounts are able to select the account they wish to credit.

By Cheque

Cheques sent into schools by parents and are credited to their child's account by school administration or catering manager

By Credit/Debit Card Payment

Via the internet using companies such as Parentpay® (there are other companies offering this method of payment)

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