

January Newsletter



Balshaw's 
Church Of England High School

Dear Parents / Carers

Happy New Year. It was good to welcome back all of our students after the Christmas break. We had a lot of students falling ill in the final week, so Christmas came just in time. There's no getting away from the fact that January is cold, wet and at times feels never ending after the excitement, but also the expense of Christmas.

I just wanted to remind all families to reach out to school if you are struggling to get through the month as our PTA and Education Foundation have made support funds available for anyone in need. Everyone is finding rising costs a challenge. Inflation is affecting the costs of all aspects of life – the cost of food is no exception. Inflation in dairy products is around 25% from the same time last year.

Menu Prices in the Restaurant

We work very closely with our catering provider to keep food quality outstanding and costs as low as possible. Unfortunately, we cannot avoid the impact of food inflation and there will be a change in prices coming into effect on the 1st February. However, we have worked with Chartwells to ensure that you can get good value from your child. – read on to see how.

Getting the best value from the Restaurant

Price rises across the menus in school have not been across all items. We have a passionate commitment to ensuring that your child is able to eat healthily, heartily and economically. Therefore, with some subsidy from the school and co-operation with Chartwells, there has been no price increase at all on the healthiest and most wholesome food items:

- Main Meal Deal (main course and a desert): £2.40
- Pasta with sauce: £1.80
- Pasta with Cheese: £2.00
- Fruit Pot: £1.10
- Chicken Salad Pot: £1.60
- Tuna pasta pot: £1.69
- Toasties: £1.45
- Also: Yoghurt, Paninis, Milk (Yazoo) and others

The price increases have gone onto items such as pizza, biscuits, iced buns, Mini Cheddars etc. Therefore, as a parent myself, for the best value I would encourage my child away from pizza and sweet items to buy a main meal item. The worst value for money items are drinks. We have water fountains in school where your child can fill up a water bottle, or you could send a drink in with your child. They can then use the funds you put on their account for a meal.

I usually have a light evening meal having had a full lunch in school as I know that this is the best value way of eating. As your child will tell you: the food at the school restaurant is excellent and I highly commend you advise your child how to get the best value for their money.

Life as a male teenager

We know that 80% of teenage suicides are of males and we know that young men can experience feelings of isolation and struggle to express their emotions. Our societal stereotypes reinforce an ideal image of men as physically strong, bread winners, dominant figures - they would have us believe that the only emotion that it is okay to express is anger.

Into this confusing world of the young teenage male step figures like Andrew Tate. They appeal to these feelings of isolation and issues of self-identity, the desire to be loved and held by others.

Why do Andrew Tate's Arguments Appeal to Young Men?

Tate uses the 10-to-1 style of argument – making a number of reasonable points, ones that you might agree with before making a hateful and wholly unacceptable misogynistic comment. After tapping into the emotional feelings of isolation that young men have, he will then go on to present other arguments that are difficult to disagree with. For example, women are natural caregivers: they give birth, they feed and nurture babies; men are physically stronger than women. From these not unreasonable stereotypes he will then go on to promote violence against women and belittle non-alpha males. So, instead of empowering young men to connect with others in a meaningful and genuine way, Tate and others like him use teenage male vulnerability to fill their minds with misogynistic hate and damage them with an ideology that will only isolate them further as they grow up.

Combatting the culture of Misogyny

Our male staff have worked with boys in Year 10 and 11 last year to talk about positive masculinity and worked to combat toxic ideas about what it is to be male and how to develop respectful relationships. As parents and in school as educators we need to occupy the space that misogynistic cultures like those of Andrew Tate and the Incel subcultures are trying to dominate with ideologies that demean women and fool our young men into thinking that they have answers when they are simply promoting their media profile and personal worth.

We will be addressing these issues further down the school into KS3 as we are seeing these ideologies entering the discourse of some boys in school from their online diet. If you would like to find out more about these toxic ideas and how they are appealing to teenage boys, please read some of these online resources:

<https://www.research-live.com/article/opinion/why-we-need-to-understand-the-appeal-of-andrew-tate/id/5107712>

<https://www.votesforschools.com/teacher-toolkit/classroom-conversations/misogyny/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/aug/06/andrew-tate-violent-misogynistic-world-of-tiktok-new-star>

<https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/a-short-introduction-to-the-involuntary-celibate-sub-culture/>

Toxic Behaviour on Social Media

Increasingly schools are being used as a proxy battleground for social media feuds that take place outside school. Let me reassure all parents that any unkindness that takes place in school that is reported to us or seen is tackled immediately. We have a zero- tolerance approach to unkind behaviour.

Whilst we provide a safe environment for our students in school, I cannot control what children say and do to each other outside school in the care of their parents. It is no surprise that young people feel insecure and victimised by others when they are exposed to online cruelty, unkindness and threats. Please support the messages that we teach in school by checking your child's use of social media and act as role models in your online contributions. Our students are safe, closely monitored and supported if they ever experience unkindness in school. What parents allow their children to be exposed to outside school is beyond our control. I feel that it is important to make this point to combat any perceptions that might be created from unmoderated posts on social media to which we have no right of reply and are damaging to the understanding of the hard work we do with our students in school through the curriculum, assembly, drop down days, outside speakers and the Christian ethos and values that we hold dear.

Truth, Humility, Kindness, Patience, Respect, Love, Friendship, Forgiveness