



SEATON VALLEY FEDERATION OF SCHOOLS

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Chair of Governors: Susan Dungworth

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Dear Parent/Carer,

I am writing to let you know about a few changes to the systems we use across the federation over the coming weeks and months.

Cashless Catering

The introduction of a cashless catering system at ACHS over 15 years ago, WMS in 2014 and then SSMS in 2018 has helped us to be more efficient by reducing the amount of cash that students need to bring into school. However, the software we have been using no longer meets our requirements, and especially given the new allergen regulations coming into force later this year, we will be upgrading to a brand new system in all three schools over the summer. As part of this process we will be taking new fingerprints of all pupils during the last three weeks of the summer term, so that the new software will be fully set up and ready to go when we return on Tuesday 7 September 2021. More information will follow in due course, as we will be seeking new biometric permissions from parents/carers before the re-fingerprinting exercise takes place. Please note that we don't actually store any photographs of your child's fingerprint - the system encrypts and stores measurements taken from your child's fingerprint and not the actual fingerprint itself.

Communication and Online Payments

The introduction of School Gateway in 2018 meant we could more easily communicate with you via email and SMS, while allowing you to make online payments for lunches, uniforms, trips etc. The vast majority of parents/carers supported this by downloading the School Gateway app, which not only led to improved communication but helped us make savings across the federation (in terms of reducing postage costs etc.) - which meant that money could be used to benefit our students instead. Many of you will also have taken advantage of the School Gateway app to view your child's timetable or to notify us of their absence. Like the cashless system, however, it is clear that School Gateway and the software which runs in the background no longer meet the needs of the federation, and we have already started upgrading our systems in readiness for a move to a new parent portal: MyChildatSchool (MCAS).



MyChildatSchool (MCAS)

We have chosen MCAS as our new parent portal, and it will become the 'one-stop shop' for information about your child at school.

MCAS will allow you to:

- send and receive school messages and updates
- make online payments for trips and lunches as well as seeing what your child had for lunch
- check your child's attendance and any relevant updates
- view your child's timetable (and exam timetable when they have one)
- update the contact details we hold for you and your child
- view merits and demerits
- track updates if your child is on report for support or behaviour reasons
- book appointments for parents' evenings
- view and download reports and assessment details

Many of these features will be available immediately, and those that aren't will be introduced over the course of the next few months.

Important Information

Bringing in so many systems that interconnect will inevitably cause some disruption, but by informing you now of the upcoming changes, I am hoping we can work together to keep any disruption to a minimum. There are two key dates you need to be aware of:

- **The final date for making online payments this academic year is Friday 25 June.** We will not be able to accept any online payments for lunches etc. after this date. If possible, please can you ensure that your child's lunch account has been topped up via School Gateway by Friday 25 June with sufficient funds for the final three weeks until the end of term. This is still the easiest way to pay for lunches, but I appreciate that not everyone will be able to make a three week payment - so if you can't, for whatever reason, your child can top up their account using the cash machines in school if necessary. Any balance remaining on your child's account at the end of term will be transferred to the new system ready for September 2021.
- **The School Gateway app will stop working after Wednesday 30 June.** We will be sending out a letter with your unique MCAS login codes later this week, but to ensure you don't miss out on any communications from school between now and the end of term, I would encourage you to download the MCAS app as soon as possible - search "MyChildAtSchool" in either the Google Play Store or the Apple App Store, and if you need it, further help and support can be found on the MCAS page on the federation's website (<https://svf.org.uk/my-child-at-school>). Once you have downloaded and logged in to the MCAS app, you will possibly receive some messages twice - this is to be expected, as during June we will be sending emails and SMS via both School Gateway and MCAS while everyone moves over to the new MCAS app. However, the final date you can access School Gateway will be Wednesday 30 June and so **from Thursday 1 July, we will only be sending messages to MCAS users, and you will only be able to send messages (including absence notifications) to us via MCAS.**

Many thanks in advance for your support with this transition to the new cashless system and MCAS parent portal, which will bring a number of benefits to the federation and to the way we communicate with you. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the main office via School Gateway (or MCAS once you've downloaded it!).

Yours sincerely

Ben Watson
Business Manager