

**Depute Chief Executive and Director of Education:  
Lyndsay McRoberts**

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Our Ref: FM/SM  
Your Ref:  
Date: 19 March 2025

Dear Parents & Carers,

**South Ayrshire Council, School Meals Update**

I am writing to you today with an update on the meals provided in our schools and information on eligibility for free school meals.

Updated information on the eligibility criteria for free school meals in school session 2025/26, can be found on the Council's website, through the following web address:

<https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/article/59803/Free-school-meals-and-clothing-grant-application-25-26>

You can apply for free, two-course, school meals if your child attends a South Ayrshire Primary or Secondary School and you are in receipt of at least one of the qualifying benefits detailed on the website.

As the eligibility criteria for free school meals has recently been expanded to families with pupils in P6 or P7, who are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment, I would encourage you to visit the web pages and consider whether you may be eligible to make an application.

If you would like further information on eligibility for free school meals, or on the applications process, you can speak to an Advisor from the Council's Information and Advice Team at over 50 drop-in locations in schools and community centres across South Ayrshire.

To find out when an Advisor will be near you, please check the Information and Advice Team website through the following web address, or contact your school's office:

<https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/article/24032/Get-in-touch>

If you can't make it along to a drop-in session, you can speak to one of the Advisor's by either completing the digital contact/self-referral form, through the following web address, or by calling them on 0300 123 0900:

[Digital referral form - South Ayrshire Council](#)

I would also encourage all parents and carers to sign up to and use, the Council's 'ParentPay' online system for school meal ordering, and payment. You can access the ParentPay online, secure payment and ordering system, using the login previously provided to you by your school. Please contact your school if a replacement login and activation letter is required. Once signed up, you will find useful video tutorials on how to add children to a ParentPay account, top up balances and order school meals, through the following web address:

<https://parent-support.parentpaygroup.com/>

On the subject of **School Meal Debt**, some of the debt recently accrued by young people in our schools is in relation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> course that is available in ParentPay, when booking primary school meals. A free, primary school meal covers the cost of two courses, including a main course and a dessert. The 'starter' soup course is not covered under the cost of a free school meal if this is ordered as a third course, along with a main course, and a dessert.

As such, to simplify meal selection and ensure a smooth ordering process, we will be making an adjustment to the ParentPay system, in that the soup option will now appear in the dessert section. This change will help ensure that only two items are selected per meal, and will prevent any unintended charges being made. This change will commence after the 2025 Easter break and will remain in place until an upcoming enhancement is applied to ParentPay, which will better support our processes.

Continuing with School Meal Debt, new arrangements are also being put in place for young people who are not entitled to free school meals and who present at a school servery with zero credit in their ParentPay balance. Previously, along with a £5 overdraft facility being provided for all pupils with a negative ParentPay balance, as a gesture of goodwill young people have been able to choose the meal they want when in this negative balance situation.

Going forward, this will not be the case and young people not eligible for free school meals, who present at a school servery with no credit in their ParentPay balance, will receive a set lunch of a sandwich, a piece of fruit and a bottle of water. New procedures have also been put in place for schools to manage school meal debt within the ParentPay system. Head Teachers will contact parents/carers individually where debts are accruing or where they have concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lyndsay McRoberts". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lyndsay McRoberts  
Depute Chief Executive and Director of Education