

1 March 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

Following the February half term break, our school catering provision moved to a new, third-party, contracted partner – Aspens Catering.

Although they have only been working with us in school for two weeks, we have of course been aware of concerns that some students and parents have raised about certain food items Aspens have offered on their menu. We would like to reassure parents that we have treated these with the utmost importance and the senior leadership team at the Academy, alongside Aspens Catering, launched a full investigation into the processes and procedures around food preparation and provision in school, in order to look into these in more detail.

As a result of this investigation, we can categorically reassure parents that no unsafe food is being served from our kitchen. In particular, no uncooked or raw chicken is being served, which is a common allegation we have heard, which we believe has been fuelled by inaccurate comments being made on social media.

To underline the points made above, an anonymous report was made to Bradford Council's Environmental Health Team, we assume as a result of these concerns, and they arrived in school to undertake an unannounced inspection of our school kitchen on Thursday 29 February 2024. I am pleased to advise parents that this inspection was a complete success, with no concerns found or raised by this independent inspector about food or hygiene standards and safety at Appleton Academy, and we once again retained our 5-star food standards rating.

School catering at the Academy, and the performance of our third-party contractors, is also regularly audited by an independent catering provision expert. These external audits have never rated our kitchen as anything less than excellent. Furthermore, the same catering team that has worked at the school for a number of years remain in place. Although the contract has changed, this team moved with it to the new provider. This is an experienced and expert group of staff, who's only interest is in providing your children with a nutritious school meal that they enjoy.

It has been difficult for a number of these colleagues to have to read and listen to false and hurtful comments that have been made about school meal provision during the last two weeks. Many of these staff live in our community and come to work each day to do their best to provide children with a good school meal and they have continued to provide the same excellent service that they have always given to our children and young people.



We accept that there have been some challenges in Aspens' first couple of weeks in school and that there have been some genuinely held concerns amongst students and parents. We are very sorry that this has been the case and we would like to thank those parents who have spoken to us about this directly, and who have provided thoughtful and considered feedback.

We are addressing these concerns in a number of ways with our catering provider, including through an information session with Aspens, for parents, next Thursday 7 March 2024 at 11.00am. If you would like to come along and try samples of the food being served in school, meet our catering team and ask questions and receive information from them, please email [info@appletonacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@appletonacademy.co.uk) in the first instance. Places at this session are limited and we would ask that you only attend if you receive confirmation that you may do so. For those we cannot invite into school on this occasion, there will be other sessions to come in the near future and Aspens will also be present for parents' evenings etc.

In addition to this, from Monday 4 March 2024, all students will be able to request a small, free, taster pot of our main meal options, from our catering staff, which will allow them to try food before they buy it and ensure that they know they will enjoy this.

I hope we have been able to provide some reassurance to parents on this matter and that you understand how seriously we have taken these issues. If you or your child have any continuing concerns about school meal provision, we would ask that your child either addresses this with staff in the dining hall at break or lunchtime, so that we can deal with this immediately, or that parents email [info@appletonacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@appletonacademy.co.uk) outlining the issues, and we will look into the matter and report back to you quickly.

We look forward to restoring everyone's trust in our school meal provision and assure you once again that our meals meet the nutritional guidance set by government, are being prepared safely and in compliance with statutory food standard requirements and they will remain good value for students and parents. We would also like to thank the many parents and students who have contacted us with their positive feedback on the food they have enjoyed during the last two weeks.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Helen Jones".

Ms H Jones  
Executive Headteacher