



Hodgson Academy Cashless Catering System and Facial Recognition Information

School Meals Payment System

Hodgson Academy operates a cashless catering system for all school meal purchases. From September 2026, the Academy will operate a dual identification system, allowing students to access their catering account using either:

1. **Facial Recognition Technology** (for students whose parents/carers have provided consent), or
2. **A Personal PIN Number** (for students who do not wish to use Facial Recognition or have not opted in).

Both methods provide access to the same cashless catering account and balance, ensuring that all students can purchase food quickly, securely and efficiently.

How the Cashless Catering System Works

The cashless system recognises each student individually, holds account balances, records payments received, and tracks purchases, including the date, time and items purchased.

Money can be added to catering accounts electronically through ParentPay.

The system applies a standard daily spending limit of £6.00, although individual spending limits may be arranged on parental request. Any changes to spending limits require parental authorisation by contacting admin@hodgson.lancs.sch.uk.

Students receiving Free School Meals use the same catering system as all other students. Their daily allowance is automatically credited to their account and can also be supplemented through ParentPay if required.

Option 1: Facial Recognition

What is Facial Recognition?

Facial Recognition provides a quick and secure method for students to access their catering account at the point of sale. Rather than entering a PIN, students simply select their food and look at the camera when prompted by the cashier.

This technology is used solely as an identification method for school meal purchases and is intended to reduce queue times and improve the lunchtime experience.



How Facial Recognition Works

The process involves four stages:

Consent

Students can only use Facial Recognition where parental consent has been provided through Arbor. Staff cannot activate Facial Recognition for students who have not opted in.

Capture

At the till, the system captures an image of the student's face. This image is used only for verification and is not retained or stored.

Collection

The system measures unique facial characteristics and converts them into a secure mathematical identifier. This identifier is stored on an encrypted database and linked to the student's cashless catering account.

Identification

When making a purchase, the cashier activates the system, which verifies the student's identity and accesses their catering account. No facial image is stored during this process.

Security of Facial Recognition

The biometric information is encrypted using AES-256 encryption. Only the mathematical identifier is stored, not the student's photograph, and the stored information cannot be used to recreate an image of the student's face.

Biometric information is held on secure school systems and is not shared with third parties. Parents may withdraw consent at any time, and biometric data will then be deleted.

Option 2: PIN Number

Students who do not wish to use Facial Recognition, or whose parents/carers have not provided consent, will continue to access their catering account using their personal PIN number.

When a PIN number is entered at the till, the system displays the student's name, photograph, tutor group and current account balance to catering staff. Food items are then recorded against the account and payment is processed.

Students who forget their PIN should report to Reception, where the number can be provided.

Students must not share their PIN with others. Any attempt to use another student's account will be treated seriously and dealt with in accordance with Academy behaviour policies.



Dietary and Account Safeguards

The system can support students with specific dietary requirements, food allergies or medical conditions by preventing restricted food items from being purchased through the till system.

Parents and carers can also access account information and transaction history through **ParentPay** and **Edulink**, providing visibility of balances, spending and purchases.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is Facial Recognition compulsory?

No. Facial Recognition is entirely optional. Students who do not opt in will continue to use their PIN number to access their cashless catering account.

Can students still buy school meals if they do not use Facial Recognition?

Yes. All students can purchase meals using either Facial Recognition (where consent has been given) or their PIN number.

Is any facial image stored?

No. Images are captured only for verification and are not retained. Only an encrypted mathematical identifier is stored.

Is the system always recording students?

No. The system is not live. The camera can only be activated by catering staff during a catering transaction.

What happens if consent is withdrawn?

Parents and pupils may withdraw consent at any time. The biometric identifier will be deleted, and the student will continue using their PIN number to access their catering account.

Reviewed by: Lee Jenkinson, Deputy Headteacher

Approved by: SLT

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This document supersedes separate guidance relating to cashless catering identification methods and should be read as an overview of the Academy's dual catering authentication system.