

Little Heath School Proposal to Reduce Lunchtime

Duration and Adjust the School Day

For Consultation – April 2026

Introduction

Little Heath School is consulting on a potential adjustment to the structure of the school day from September 2026, including a reduction in lunchtime from 45 minutes to 35 minutes, alongside an earlier finish time of 3.15pm for students who do not have interventions or same-day sanctions.

This proposal remains under consultation and no final decision has been made. The purpose of this document is to outline the rationale for the proposal, summarise findings from the lunchtime trial, and invite structured feedback from parents, staff and other stakeholders.

Outcome of the Lunchtime Trial

As part of our due diligence, a two-week lunchtime trial was carried out to test whether students could be served, eat and clear the restaurant comfortably within the proposed shorter lunchtime.

The outcomes were consistently positive:

- All students were served and finished their lunch within the new proposed lunchtime window
- On one trial day, both the Snack Shack and Sixth Form Cafe were closed, deliberately placing additional pressure on the main restaurant
- Even under these conditions, all students were served successfully
- Culinera, our catering provider, reported no reduction in the number of students served during the trial period
- Queue times remained short and efficient under the existing staggered service model

These outcomes demonstrate that restaurant capacity and service speed are not a barrier, allowing the school to proceed confidently to a wider consultation phase.

Rationale for the Proposed Change

1. Student Outcomes and Opportunity

- An earlier finish supports improved attendance and engagement in after-school academic intervention.
- It creates more opportunities for extra-curricular activities and enrichment.

- Publishing 4.00pm as the official end of the school day allows greater consistency and clarity around interventions and same-day sanctions.

2. Lunchtime Supervision and Student Experience

- Behaviour incidents and first-aid cases are most commonly logged in the final ten minutes of the current 45-minute lunch.
- Observations show that very few students choose to sit and eat for more than around ten minutes, with most moving on to social or outdoor spaces.
- The reduction focuses on removing largely unproductive time, not seated eating time.

3. SEND and Inclusion

- The experience of lunchtime varies for SEND and neurodivergent students.
- While some benefit from longer downtime, others find unstructured lunchtime environments more challenging than lessons.
- The SENCo and SEND team will be closely involved in reviewing impact and ensuring appropriate support is in place.

4. Staff Wellbeing and School Systems

- Earlier finishing supports staff wellbeing and provides greater flexibility for meetings and planning.
- The structure strengthens consistency around intervention and behaviour systems.

5. Local Context

- Little Heath currently has one of the longest lunch breaks locally.
- Many neighbouring schools successfully operate lunches of 30–40 minutes, including schools with similar student numbers and contexts.
- While we do not seek to follow others automatically, this provides helpful comparative context.

Traffic and Community Considerations

Some parents have raised concerns about traffic and overlap with local primary school finish times.

These concerns are valid and will be explored further through discussions with colleagues, nearby schools and transport partners. Any change must be safe, workable and considerate of the local community.

What Is Not Being Proposed

- Tutor time will not be reduced, due to statutory PSHE/RSE delivery and its central role in pastoral support.
- Curriculum time will not be reduced.

Next Steps and Feedback

Thank you to parents who have already shared thoughtful feedback via email.

For the remainder of the consultation, we kindly ask that all feedback is submitted via the Microsoft Forms link. This allows us to collate, analyse and respond to views consistently and transparently.

Thank you for engaging so constructively with this process.