

# TRULY CASHLESS CATERING AT ST JOHN PAYNE SCHOOL

## GOING CASHLESS WITH ONLINE PAYMENTS

School Business Manager, Monica Morley and Senior Finance Officer, Sara Smithdale at St. John Payne Catholic School in Essex explain why their school went fully cashless and the lessons learned in the process.

Monica recalls: "Back in 2008, the time required for collecting, reconciling and banking cash and cheques was almost becoming unmanageable; we had to do something to tackle this issue. Parents already shopped and banked online so I couldn't see why they wouldn't also want to pay for school items online. Having spoken to other schools using ParentPay, I persuaded the School Leadership Team (SLT) that we should start to take online payments.

Within a year we saw benefits - with over £75,000 collected on trips and other items, we saved numerous admin hours which we put to good use elsewhere.

The ParentPay system was already giving us a good return on investment but as far as I was concerned, that was just the start, we really needed to exploit all the possibilities ParentPay offered."

## A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Despite an impressive start, around 60% of the schools total income was still being paid in cash for school meals.

To tackle this, the school invested in a cashless catering system which integrated with ParentPay. This enabled parents to pay online for school meals, as well as see what their children were eating and receive low balance alerts via email / SMS, helping to reduce the time needed to chase debt.

In 2009 the SLT felt it wasn't fair to insist parents 'had' to pay online, so a cash loading facility was provided for students to top-up their dinner balance.

Monica says: "It was a step in the right direction, but as far as I could see, our finance team and school caterers were still spending too much time on administration; time which could be better utilised on more productive tasks.

Around 40% of parents were paying online for school dinners but the rest still sent children to school with cash."

By 2010, Monica and her team felt the case to go fully cashless was strong. Parents enjoyed total transparency, ease of payment and peace of mind, while the school could continue to drive forward time saving efficiencies.

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### OBJECTIVE

Tackle time consuming cash collection and reconciliation

### SOLUTION

Introduce an online payment facility to suit school requirements and link with existing systems.

### OUTCOMES

Streamlined processes, reduced admin and time spent on associated tasks. Happy staff and parents.



The system was giving us a good ROI but that was just the start.

Monica Morley  
St. John Payne School

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# KENT SCHOOL GOES CASHLESS WITH ONLINE

For parents without a bank account or access to the internet, cash payments can be made in one of the local PayPoint stores. The whole solution was socially inclusive whilst enabling a cash free environment in school.

Sara adds: "Finance set about communicating a very convincing argument internally to go fully cashless and we already had ParentPay in place to achieve this. Most parents had used their ParentPay accounts for school trips and other items - so why not for all school meals too?"

## ISSUES TO OPPORTUNITIES

When the cash loader stopped working, queues of students were at the finance office again – a headache our staff thought they had long seen the back of.

Monica saw an opportunity: "Instead of rushing into a quick and expensive fix, we asked ourselves if we should really be spending money on upgrading the cash loading system, when we already had a proven solution that would eradicate the need for cash to be in school at all?"

Based on the success of online payments to date, SLT made the decision not to replace the cash loader and direct parents to use ParentPay to pay for school meals.

## A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Sara says: "We followed a 6 month plan provided by ParentPay and it worked brilliantly! When we told parents we only take payments online or through PayPoint, there were very few objections – in fact many welcomed it."

The plan emphasized the need to regularly communicate the benefits of paying online to parents. As a result, within 12 months the school collected over £130,000 of dinner money payments through ParentPay. Long queues in the canteen are now a thing of the past, encouraging more children to take school meals.

Monica wanted other schools considering going cashless to take this lesson away with them: "With any big change, communicating what the change will look like and the benefits it will have for everyone is key. Now, not a penny of cash is handled in school, benefitting staff, our parents and of most of all...our students."

## USEFUL TIPS

### 1. **AGREE A CASHLESS STRATEGY WITH SLT AND COMMUNICATE THIS TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

Your strategy could be something as simple as: From next term we'll be offering and encouraging parents to pay for items online, helping us reduce cash in school. Our aim is to be totally cashless in 5 years. Or your strategy could be more aggressive: All parents must pay online or through PayPoint from next term.

### 2. **HAVE A PLAN THAT CAN DELIVER YOUR STRATEGY**

Plan key timescales including an onsite system demonstration, getting sign-off by SLT/Governors, staff training and roll-out. ParentPay advisors can help you with this.

### 3. **RAISE AWARENESS AND INTEREST**

Central to your plan should be communication with parents and staff. Keep communication simple and positive. Our advisors can work with you to plan communications to suit your school. Aside from using your website, you could also use letters and emails as well as parent's evenings and events.

### 4. **SPARK ACTION**

Consider a promotion to encourage parents to pay online or through PayPoint. Eg: for a specific event or school trip.

### 5. **BE INCLUSIVE AND PROVIDE FOR CASH BASED PAYERS**

94% of parents prefer to pay online, but for those who don't or can't, sign-post them to PayPoint. There are over 33,000 local shops offering PayPoint across the UK.

### 6. **REMEMBER ALERTS AND REMINDERS**

Provide balance or new payment notifications via ParentPay's email and text system to increase early payments and drive uptake.

## GET STARTED, IT'S SIMPLE

Our experienced advisors are ready to help, they can answer any questions you may have; provide a quote for your school; or give a demonstration of our system. You can even arrange to see us in person; we'll visit your school and show you and your staff how it all works.

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