

Friday 27th February 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you so much for all of the support we've received regarding the new BPS Spring Challenge. Some parents may be surprised by me saying that as I'm aware that social media may suggest otherwise. However, after 5 days of the challenge, with systems now settling down a little and being refined, I can genuinely report the high levels of positivity and calmness than can be seen around the school during break and lunchtimes are unprecedented.

That's not to say that there aren't still tweaks to be made but the changes that can already be seen are great to be a part of and this has been commented on by pupils, staff and visiting professionals.

You'll find below answers to some of the questions that we've been asked which will hopefully give further clarification behind some of the changes but also address some of the rumours or misconceptions that may have made their way home.

For anyone who still has concerns around lunchtimes and the lunch hall, please come and visit the school next week. You're welcome to come in any day at lunchtime between 11:35 and 1:05 but if you'd like to ensure you visit when your child is in the hall we can advise you of a more specific time. Please book in with the office in advance so that we know how many parents to expect.

Many thanks,



Amanda Bradley
Headteacher
Bewdley Primary School

The children's free time at lunch has been reduced

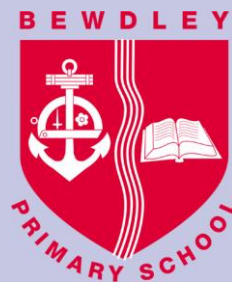
The children's lunchtime is still 50 minutes in total. Depending on how long they take to eat their lunch, most children spend around 35-40 minutes of this outside at playtime, providing the weather allows. For some children, this is split up with their lunch in the middle whilst for others it's all before or after they've eaten.

On Monday, when everyone was getting used to the new system, the timings were a little different but the time spent outside remained the same. For example, Year 5 didn't return to the playground after they'd eaten as they usually would because they were delayed going into the hall. However, they had all of their playtime before going into the hall. It was the same amount of time, it was just all before eating rather than split. From Tuesday onwards, the timings have been the same as before half term, give or take a few minutes.

Being outside in the sunshine is by far the best place to be and we encourage this as much as possible, with no intentions of reducing it!

The children aren't allowed to sit with their friends

The allocated seating isn't designed to separate children from their friends but the aim is to encourage children to mix with those they may not usually spend time with. Mixing with different children encourages them to build confidence, learn to communicate with a wider range of people and develop important social skills such as flexibility, empathy and cooperation. It also helps children understand that they can feel comfortable and safe in



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different situations, not just when they are with close friends. Over time, this supports resilience, reduces reliance on a single friendship group and helps children feel part of the wider school community. We have already seen new friendships being built and old ones being rekindled in just a few days.

We are aware that the seating has made some children feel very unsettled as they are not with a particular friend or with the friends that they would have chosen. The aim is that children will be friends with at least one person on the table but we know that there have been a couple of glitches in the system this week.

The seating will be regularly reviewed and will be changing again on Monday 9th March to allow another cycle of table friendships to develop.

The children aren't allowed to choose where to sit

The children have been given allocated seating. Because they know exactly where they're meant to sit, there's less jostling, wandering or arguing over who's 'allowed' to sit where and who makes that decision. It also means that pupils who might distract each other aren't sat together and we can place children where they're most likely to succeed.

Having a known seat has a calming effect, particularly for those who become anxious or overwhelmed in such environments. They don't have to worry about where to sit or who they'll end up next to.

Allocated seating also speeds things up, which helps staff spot gaps or issues quickly and sets a calm tone right from the start. For some children who come into the lunch hall directly from the playground, they previously found it tricky to switch out of play mode. By having the same seats, we're supporting those with additional needs—such as sensory sensitivities, hearing or vision needs or medical considerations. It ensures they can be placed where they're most comfortable and able to engage.

The children are feeling rushed in the lunch hall/have to move tables if they're slower eaters

The average time spent in the hall by most children is 10-15 minutes.

The children have as much time as they need to finish their lunch, with the exception of Year 6 who have approximately 20-25 minutes due to timetabling restrictions. Because of the allocated seating, most of the seats are in use for every session. Therefore, when a new year group comes into the hall, those seats will be being used by other pupils.

When approximately 90% of the children in a year group have finished eating, we'll ask children to shuffle over to a spare table. Although this helps logistically, it is also due to feedback from younger children who felt intimidated when older children came in and surrounded them on the table but also from older children who felt awkward having to eat with the younger children.

The children are having to stay in the lunch hall too long

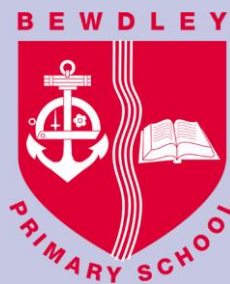
The average time spent in the hall by most children is 10-15 minutes. On Monday, we trialed waiting until everyone on the table had finished but it didn't work so we amended it. Children are now able to leave when they've finished their lunch.

The children are being made to wait in the hall as a consequence

If a child has not been ready, respectful or safe in the lunch hall, they may be delayed in returning to play time for a short time. However, we want the children to be outside getting as much fresh air as possible and don't want to delay this unless absolutely necessary.

The children have to ask to leave the table

Once the children have finished eating, they need to ask an adult if they're able to leave the table. The adult will check that they've left their space age-appropriately clean and tidy and will then be allowed to leave.





The children are waiting longer to have school-provided lunches

Rather than have one long queue for school lunches, the children sit down when they first come into the hall. The children are then sent up to get their food a table at a time. This may be perceived by the children as taking longer but they're just sat down waiting rather than being stood up in the queue. It also means that less children are wandering around carrying food at any given time.

The children have to clean the hall

When the children have finished their lunch, they'll ask an adult if they're able to leave. The adult will then check that they've left their area clean and tidy, to an age-appropriate standard. Cloths are available to wipe the tables and dustpan and brushes for the floors so that they can leave their section of the hall as they found it. Again, to an age-appropriate standard.

Adults are on hand to help with this but we think it helps children to develop independence and responsibility in a practical, everyday way. By clearing and tidying their space, children learn to take pride in their environment and understand that shared spaces need everyone's care. It also encourages respect for lunchtime staff and other pupils, helps keep the hall clean and safe and supports important life skills that children will use well beyond primary school.

The children aren't allowed to be loud and unrestricted in the hall

120 children in a school hall at any given time is never going to be quiet and we don't try to make that be the case. However we do encourage a calm environment and don't allow children to shout or run around the hall whilst they and others are eating.

The children have to ask to go to the toilet

Yes, this has always been the case.

The children aren't allowed back into school at break and lunchtimes to go to the toilet or get their coat

The children are allowed to go back into school to go to the toilet or get their coats. However, we encourage them to do so before they go out to avoid children keep going inside once out.

The children have to wear a band when leaving the classroom or coming in at lunch and breaktimes

To let adults know that children have permission to be out of class or in the corridors when they wouldn't usually be in those places we give them a band to wear. We've introduced the bands as they were far more hygienic than the previously used toilet passes.

This is having a negative impact on the children's mental health

The Wellbeing Squad has worked incredibly hard in their meeting this week to share pupils' opinions. They created a list of pros and cons that they thought had happened this week, following the launch of the Spring Challenge. We've combined this with feedback from other children in the school

Their Pros:

- It helps to widen your circle of friends
- It feels calmer and people are being polite
- The conversation starter on the board are good to get things going (sandcastles versus snowmen was a particularly animated one!)
- It's good to know what or and who you're going to be with and that you get used to this after the first day
- The water being on the table is great and encourages us to drink more
- People are taking more care to keep the hall tidy
- Having table leaders means there's less traffic in the hall
- Earning Positive Points for the class when doing a good job
- The hall is so much nicer to be in because it's so much cleaner, even if you're the last year group to be in there

Helping everyone to achieve their best

- *Their Cons:*
- Not being able to sit with all your friends
- There's less to say to unfamiliar people
- Not everyone pulls their weight on the table
- It's annoying when people at your table are being silly

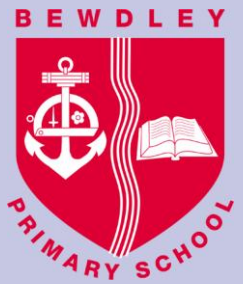
Wellbeing Squad's proposals:

- More conversations starters and some ideas for things to talk about such as riddles or Dingbats. The Wellbeing Squad are going to put some together some ideas for the board.
- Children to be able to propose a friend that they'd like to be with as a guaranteed person.
- Have a mixer before you meet your new table group so that you can spend some time together before your first lunchtime
- Introduce a yellow and red card system for children who are being repeatedly silly at lunchtimes

We'll continue to discuss these at next week's Wellbeing Squad meeting and see how we can begin to implement them before the next table change.

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