



# Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg

## Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung (Local Authority for Schools and Vocational Training)

Hamburg, November 2021

Dear parents, dear pupils,

All Hamburg schools offer their pupils free education and care in the afternoons. In no other federal state are there so many all-day programmes; moreover, parents have to pay high participation fees in almost all other federal states. The largely free and good Hamburg offer is well received: Around 85 per cent of all primary school children stay at school in the afternoon. Hamburg has thus been offering a service for years that is not to be introduced nationwide until 2029.

A good lunch is part of the all-day programme. Around 15 million school lunches are produced each year by 58 different catering companies, the so-called caterers, and served to the pupils in the school canteens. Each school selects a caterer on its own responsibility and agrees on the range, variety and quality of the lunch with them within the framework of a contract.

Since 2012, the maximum contribution of parents for school meals has been limited to 3.50 euros. Owing to cost developments in the catering industry, the parental fees have to be adjusted and increased to 4.00 Euros on 1 February 2022 for the first time in ten years. This price adjustment corresponds to the increase in consumer prices over the last ten years by an average of 1.2 per cent per year. We ask for your understanding. Furthermore, almost two thirds of all primary school children receive generous subsidies for lunch from the Federal Government and the City of Hamburg and thus do not have to pay the full price. Your school's caterer will inform you about the next steps in the next few weeks.

The City of Hamburg and the Federal Government will continue to finance more than half of the total cost of school lunches and ensure that many pupils receive lunch at school for free or at reduced prices. For example, in January 2020, shortly before the start of the Corona pandemic, more than two-thirds (around 40,600 children) of around 60,400 pupils at state primary schools received school meals subsidies. That is where it will stay:

- Children whose parents receive social benefits such as unemployment benefit II, housing benefit or BAföG (financial aid under the Federal Training Assistance Act) receive school meals free of charge. That is about one third of all children and young people.

- Primary school children whose parents have a lower income pay reduced prices. Siblings also pay a reduced price at the primary school. This staggered price reduction is unique in Germany.
- To ensure that lunch remains affordable, the City of Hamburg has built new or extensively renovated more than 270 school canteens since 2011 at a cost of around 250 million euros and makes them available to catering companies free of charge. In addition, the City of Hamburg assumes the costs for energy and water. Without this additional expenditure by the City of Hamburg, all lunches would be around 90 cents more expensive.

The price adjustment ensures clear quality standards for future lunches:

- The caterers are obligated to ensure the quality standard for good school meals of the “German Nutrition Society” (DGE).
- At least 10 per cent of the food used comes from organic farming.
- Seasonal and regional foods are increasingly used.
- In addition to meals, raw vegetables are offered daily and fruit at least three times a week.
- There is no extra charge for any special food that may be required for children (e.g. allergies or diabetes).
- The children are regularly given the opportunity to give feedback to the school and the caterer on the quality of the lunch.

Dear parents, dear pupils, price increases are not nice. But I’m sure you understand that after ten years, the prices for school lunches have to be adjusted to the cost development for the first time. The City of Hamburg and the Federal Government will continue to provide generous subsidies to ensure that all children can participate in lunch.

With kind regards



Thorsten Altenburg-Hack  
State School Board