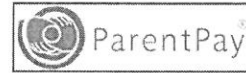


From: ParentPay [ParentPay@emarketing.education.co.uk]  
Date: 12/07/2016 21:52  
Subject: ParentPay - we owe you an apology



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Dear Parent,

**We owe you an apology...**

We are always trying to improve the ParentPay application and the release on the 8th June was intended to do just that, with a particular focus on helping parents on lower incomes.

However, we know from the calls and emails we have received that the recent release has confused a small percentage of parents or upset others who don't like the changes, or who have found it harder to complete certain tasks. We estimate around 5% of users were affected.

This has been made worse by the fact that, for reasons unrelated to the release, the system has experienced slow running during busy periods on a number of occasions during the last month. Having planned, based on trials, to provide support to 1%-2% of our 1.7 million parents following the release, we have at times struggled to cope with the much higher than anticipated support load, and have been unable to answer many parent support requests in a timely fashion.

We are very sorry if these problems have caused you any difficulties or inconvenience. This was never our intention and we are committed to putting this right.

We have assigned additional team members to respond to support requests and have made a number of upgrades to our systems to address the performance issues.

We've listened to feedback from parents and schools and started work on a series of improvements. We are changing ParentPay to restore the ability to pay for a basket of items and are simplifying the payment process for first time users.

We will be working on these changes over the summer and aim to release these upgrades in stages from late August into September.

We'll be in touch again over the summer with the details of what you can expect to see and when. You can find out more about the [recent release and what's coming soon](#).

In the meantime, thank you for your support and patience.

Yours sincerely

Clint Wilson

Chief Executive, ParentPay

P.S. There were some minor short term changes, released this evening, [details are available online](#).

[www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com)

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### Why we introduced changes

We commissioned research to discover what else parents wanted from ParentPay. We wanted to help families on lower incomes, give more flexibility in how parents pay, and support schools in becoming completely cashless.

Many parents wanted to maintain a single balance on ParentPay, giving more control to allocate money for different school items at different times. Some families saw this as a great way to help with household budgeting. Households on tighter budgets asked for a lower minimum payment amount, especially for school meals.

Parents asked for: a one-click payment to make paying school faster; a way to spend money from school refunds, without needing to make another card payment; and a better mobile experience.

Schools asked us to make it easier for them to collect small amounts from parents.

The changes underpin the introduction of new payment methods such as bank payments, as well as auto top-up from card and from bank accounts.

### Achieved so far

Since release, 95% of parents have successfully used ParentPay, paying over £50 million to schools. Over 60% are choosing to load funds into their parent account, benefitting by making payments more quickly with 'one-click pay' from *My Account*.

More than one in three families are choosing to maintain a balance, providing more flexibility and help with household budgeting. Parents, many of whom previously had to pay £20-£30 in advance for school meals, can now pay as little as £2 a time onto ParentPay.

Schools can cost effectively collect smaller amounts and now receive money paid faster than ever.

### Not everything went well

Despite our best intentions, we fully accept the recent release has not been a complete success and may have proved challenging for a small percentage of users.

Some parents have expressed concerns they are finding aspects confusing or less intuitive, or that particular tasks are taking more time. There have been some short bursts of slow running affecting some users.

We have identified that about 5% of users have struggled in some way with the new system.

Our previous usability testing had suggested less than 1% of our 1.7 million active parents might have some difficulties. We capacity planned to deliver support to between 1% and 2% of users.

The higher number has meant at times we've not been able to respond as quickly as we'd like to parent support requests.

We are very sorry for the inconvenience this may have caused you and would like to thank you for your support and patience over recent weeks.

### User feedback gathered

Please be assured we are listening and responding to feedback from parents. It's vitally important to us that all parents can quickly and easily pay for school items. Parent feedback includes:

- **Paying for multiple items** – some parents would like an easier way to select and pay for multiple items without topping up their account first;
- ***My Account* concept** - some parents found *My Account* (the parent account) confusing and mistakenly thought they had to maintain a parent account balance;
- **Paying for meals** - some parents found *My Account* (the parent account) confusing including the difference between their parent account and their child's meal balance.

### **Initial response**

Staff were re-directed to provide support to schools and parents; including extensive parent support with an extended out of hours' service on evenings and weekends.

Some initial short-term improvements were made to screens, providing additional prompts to signpost parents and guide them through the new process.

We have made hardware infrastructure changes, which we hope will address the performance issues. We continue to closely monitor the platform and will respond further if required.

During w/c 11 July we'll make more minor changes to assist parents paying for school meals. In addition, *My Account* is becoming 'Parent account', reducing confusion with school meal balances.

### **A new release is coming soon**

Starting two weeks ago we began developing substantial enhancements to address the key issues highlighted by parents, which we plan to **release from late August into September**.

We are re-designing the home page to ensure every user can complete their key tasks quickly and easily, without needing to grasp new concepts.

The basket will be re-introduced to make it simpler for parents to checkout multiple items, without adding funds to the parent account first.

The benefits of using the Parent account for faster 'one-click checkout' will be made clearer.

Usability testing by parents and schools will continue throughout the summer and we expect to be ready to deploy the release starting at the end of the summer holiday continuing into September. It won't be available to all users in one go, but released to groups of schools at a time.

We'll update you again later in the summer and let you know when you can benefit from the latest enhancements.

### **Our focus on delivering value**

In the last 12 years we've helped millions of parents send money to school quickly and securely. Schools have saved hundreds of thousands of hours previously lost to unnecessary administration.

We've collected over £1.7 billion for schools, much of which would otherwise have been carried to school in the pockets of our most vulnerable citizens.

Our dedication to making life easier and safer for schools and parents has not diminished and we care passionately about delivering real benefits to our users.

The recent changes have allowed us to lower the minimum payment amount, give greater flexibility and control to parents, and help families on tighter budgets.

They are the foundation to deliver even more value to parents and schools, such as auto top-up and auto-payment of school meals. New account load methods will increase flexibility and choice for parents and, over time, reduce operational costs for schools.

We'll keep working hard to get things right for all our parents. In the meantime, we appreciate your patience and support in providing this service to you.