

**Councillor Victoria Cusworth – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member
for Children and Young People**

Riverside House
Main Street
Rotherham
S60 1AE

Email: victoria.cusworth@rotherham.gov.uk

*Email the Council for **free** @ your local library*

Our ref
VC/LH

Please Contact
Councillor Victoria Cusworth

Direct Line
07359 106527

17th June 2026

Cllr Paul Thorp
Elected Member

Via email: paul.thorp@rotherham.gov.uk

Dear Councillor Thorp

Questions raised at Council Meeting – 20th May 2026

Thank you for raising your questions at Council regarding catering provision, including at Oakwood Academy.

At this stage, we have not yet been able to formally confirm the detailed menu and current provision directly with the Academy. However, based on the information available, their catering is stated to comply with Red Tractor standards. This means that all meat used is from animals that have been stunned prior to butchering, in line with UK welfare requirements.

By way of clarification, the distinction between pre-stunned halal meat and traditional UK butchery relates to the method used at the point of slaughter following stunning. In both cases, the animal is stunned beforehand. Under pre-stunned halal methods (which are now the most commonly used in the UK to meet welfare standards), the animal is stunned and then the throat is cut in accordance with halal requirements, before being processed mechanically.

Under traditional non-halal UK methods, the animal is stunned and typically dispatched using a captive bolt (a mechanical bolt applied to the head), followed by bleeding and then standard mechanical processing.

Whilst non-stunned halal slaughter can occur in some limited circumstances, the Red Tractor assurance mark referenced by Oakwood requires pre-stunning. This means that, if halal meat is being served, it would be sourced from a pre-stunned supply chain that meets UK animal welfare standards.

In terms of the wider point raised, it is lawful for a school to provide halal meat and/or vegetarian options only, provided that food standards are met and there is suitable choice available. This approach is not uncommon, particularly where schools aim to provide a menu that is suitable for the widest range of pupils.

The more significant issue you have highlighted relates to communication. It is important that parents and pupils are clear about the nature of the food being provided so they can make informed choices.

As Oakwood Academy is an academy, responsibility for catering sits with the Trust rather than the Council. Food standards, including the provision of a healthy and balanced diet sits between the Academy and the Department for Education.

I would be happy to discuss with you further and invite officers to explain the process if you wish to do so.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Victoria Cusworth
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services
Labour and Co-op | Kilnhurst and Swinton East Ward
Peer Mentor and Member Peer | Local Government Association Labour Group