

School Food Champions Programme



Case Study # 1

Food provision and education – does it matter to my school?

There is a pressing concern about the level of childhood obesity in Britain. One in three children leaving primary school are overweight or obese. Therefore there is, and will continue to be, a focus on pupil health and wellbeing, and the pivotal role that secondary schools play.

Food provision and education are high on the political agenda: there are food standards for schools; cooking and nutrition in the National Curriculum; OfSTED inspection looks at health; and there is great interest in the impact of health and wellbeing on attainment. Increasing school meal uptake is seen as one factor that can support this important agenda.

A different approach

The DfE School Food Champions (SFC) Programme engaged with over 60 secondary school food teachers in secondary schools throughout England. The aim of this pilot was to increase school lunch uptake by having the food teacher as the champion for change.

The Champion

The Food Teacher acted as the Champion, with support from the SLT. They collaborated with the school community to embrace school food across the whole day – linking curriculum to canteen, ensuing pupil voice, engaging with parents and recognising the duty of ensuring pupil health and wellbeing.

Benefits of approach

The pilots suggest that there are a number of benefits to the entire school for implementing the School Food Champion approach. These include:

- utilising the passion and experience of the food teacher, who already knows the school, to be the champion and bring people together;
- improving relationships between the catering team and the school;
- using the curriculum as a vehicle to support pupil voice through lessons and collaborative work with the canteen;
- increasing school lunch uptake, which means more pupils having a better lunch and potentially more money for the school/caterer.

What Works Well

- Engagement from the SLT, providing support, monitoring progress and providing praise.
- Establishing a School Food Champion – a dedicated person to act as a figurehead for change, working with SLT and the School Council/ School Nutrition Action Group.
- Getting the school caterer on board at the start – more uptake equals more cash takings.

A Champion's voice

Pupils at Welland Park School created dishes in food lessons, which were then placed on the menu in the canteen.



Pupils helped in the canteen, helping to further raise the profile of 'pupil voice' and the importance of school food.

Learning

While the programme showed that in many of the schools school meal uptake increased, for some schools there were a number of barriers. Key learnings included:

- where the SLT did not fully engage, school meal uptake levelled or decreased – leadership from the top is required to set the whole school agenda;
- know the number of pupils having a school lunch every day, this will help to set a baseline – build into the caterers contract;
- have periodic updates from the SFC and caterer to SLT;
- link the curriculum to the canteen – provide opportunities for pupils to create school lunches, judged by the catering team;
- embed a whole school approach to food and health into the values of your school/academy;
- using staff that are already in the school, rather than using outside ‘experts’, can result in an increase of school meal uptake and enhance teachers professionally;
- one teacher cannot do everything – but working as a team, all pushing in the same direction, can make a difference.



How to achieve this in your school

To have this impact in your school, consider the following characteristics of good practice:

- ensure food education and provision is on the SLT agenda and appoint a School Food Champion;
- audit your food provision and education throughout the school, checking against the latest Ofsted inspection advice;
- review information management in your school – know your uptake and track it – from a baseline you can monitor your impact;
- have a School Council, School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) or similar group to feed into the process and allow pupil voice;
- share your approach via your school values to all – inform staff, pupils, parents/carers and the community about the work you are undertaking;
- embed the school food guidelines, set out by the School Food Plan, for the whole school day – if they are not followed, why?;
- start with ‘quick wins’ (such as theme days, Year of school food, rewards, pupils dishes in the canteen, tell parents) and develop plans over time;
- celebrate the approach, stand-out and make a difference to the pupils in your care.

Get in touch

For more information, go to: www.schoolfoodchampions.org.uk

Acknowledgement

The School Food Champions programme was funded by the Department for Education and run by the consortium comprising the Design and Technology Association, the British Nutrition Foundation and Eagle Solutions Services.