

School Food Champions Programme



Case Study # 3

Good school food – everyone's business

Results from the DfE School Food Champions (SFC) Programme show that the majority of the secondary schools that participated increased their school lunch uptake by at least 5%.

The Programme, which saw the food teacher become the Champion, focused on embracing good working relationships between the SLT, curriculum and canteen. In many pilot schools, this led to a higher profile for the important role and impact of the canteen, a shared common goal (pupil health and wellbeing), better understanding of pressures, limits and constraints, and more pupils taking lunch.

The power of quick-wins

To achieve increases, quick-wins were implemented in schools after their initial audit of needs. Schools were encouraged to try new approaches and share ideas, as well as use tried and tested solutions. In particular, the following quick-wins were utilised the most:

- themed meals, such as Sombrero September, Chinese New Year;
- open evenings, allowing parents/carers try different options;
- clearer menus on display, so all pupils could see what was available, including pictorial menus in some SEN schools;
- rewards for pupils taking up meals;
- taster pots for new dishes, encouraging pupils to try new foods;
- make school lunch compulsory for all new Year 7 pupils, with parents/carers having to opt-out;
- better promotion of what was on offer.

Pupil voice through cooking

A core aspect of the pilot was the work linking the curriculum to the canteen. The food teacher challenged pupils to create and cook a range of dishes that could be sold in the canteen – meeting food standards. Catering staff judged pupil dishes, helping to enhance their standing in the school community, and in many schools pupils helped to cook and serve their dishes. Pupils were motivated by seeing their dishes on the menu.

The bottom line

Increasing school lunch uptake means more pupils purchasing from the school canteen – meaning greater cash takings. This pilot shows that where the entire school works together, embracing a positive approach to school food culture, lunch uptake does increase by at least 5%. In the 88% schools that recorded this increase, 28 additional meals were served per day in each school.

What Works Well

- The School Food Champions approach helped increase uptake by at least 5% in many of the schools.
- Collaboration was important, with SLT providing support and the caterer helping with data on school lunch numbers
- Engaging with pupils to create menus, hold theme days and showcasing skills, events and celebrations throughout the year.

A Champion's voice

Pupils from Welland School created a fantastic range of dishes, sold in the canteen.



Learning

The School Food Champions showed that teaching and canteen staff can actively work together to help increase school lunch uptake. Key learnings included:

- leadership from the SLT is required to set the whole school agenda;
- helping schools know the number of pupils having a school meal each day helps to set a baseline, from which progress can be measured;
- joined up work between the curriculum and canteen works – provide opportunities for pupils to create school lunches, judged by the catering team;
- schools need to embrace a whole school approach to food and health into the values of the school/academy;
- value the experience and dedication of the catering team – working with them makes a difference.



How to achieve this in your school

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

- discuss the SFC approach with the food teacher/s and SLT – they may not be aware of this innovative way of working;
- get the 'green light' from the caterer – the programme can help to raise your profile, increase pupil number and increase takings;
- be open to change – pupil voice has been shown to make a difference – get involved, try new things (learning from mistakes on the way!);
- look at the other case studies in the series – show these to other members of staff;
- 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' and develop plans over time, working with the entire school;
- 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

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