

# School Food Champions Programme



## Case Study # 8

### Pupil voice: listen, change and engage

The School Food Champions (SFC) pilot programme engaged with over 60 food teachers in secondary schools throughout England. Overall, this innovative programme helped to increase healthy school meal uptake by at least 5%. In the 88% schools that recorded this increase, 28 additional meals were served per day per school. The SFC programme successfully brought together SLT, the food teacher, pupils, parents and the catering manager to make effective change.

#### Listen

One of the first approaches used by SFC was to undertake an audit of school needs. While other stakeholders were also consulted, the voice of young people was important in order to understand any issues and barriers, as well as embrace their ideas and suggestions. Strategies included:

- surveys in tutor time or for homework;
- discussion and feedback through School Councils or School Nutrition Action Groups (SNAGs);
- monitoring choices at lunchtime;
- offering pupils tasting pots;
- pupils creating dishes and menus, as part of their food lessons.

#### Change

A key success was the willingness of the canteen manager to implement change and having a positive attitude. This particularly worked well in schools where pupils were set the challenge in lessons to create new dishes and menus, with the support and backing from the canteen manager.

There was openness to having pupil ideas on the menu, which helped to link the curriculum to the canteen. Recipes were shared and the canteen manager judged a number of school lunch cook-offs by pupils. Change occurred due to work on both sides – the canteen embracing pupil ideas, and pupils eating more school lunches.

#### Engage

Engagement across the pilot schools increased, including:

- regular food discussions at School Council/SNAG meetings – not just a one off;
- pupils engaged in understanding food standards when creating dishes and menus;
- pupils creating dishes in lessons to sell in canteen – direct pupil voice and action, with pride in achievement;

#### What Works Well

- Link food provision and the curriculum together – enable pupils to create and cook meals in lesson which feature on the lunch menu.
- Curriculum/canteen collaboration to effect change and behaviour.
- The food teacher becoming a vehicle for change in their own school community, not outside programmes prescribing a solution.

#### A Champion's voice

Not only did Welland Park School create dishes and menus, pupils worked in the canteen too!



*Pupils cooked and served their own creations, and even cleaned away.*

- canteen staff and teaching staff working better together towards a common goal, more pupils taking a healthier meal at lunchtime.

### Learning

The programme showed that having the food teacher actively involved in increasing school meal uptake worked. Key learning included:

- active collaboration and partnership working throughout the school, e.g. SLT, canteen staff, food teacher, pupils;
- building mutual trust, respect and understanding between the food teacher and the canteen manager;
- pupil voice and motivation raises through the approach and they are more willing to try new ideas and participate (positive use of role models);
- promote pupils dishes on the menu widely – if it's a success, make it a regular event;
- pupil voice is powerful – it helped many of the pilot schools increase their school meal uptake.



### How to achieve this in your school

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

- update Schemes of Work and lessons to include creating tasty school meals;
- make a connection with the canteen (or the food teacher) and suggest the idea of pupils creating dishes for the menu;
- get the canteen talk to pupils about the constraints of cooking school meals and food guidelines they need to follow;
- encourage pupils to be creative and get cooking, maybe as a competition;
- involve canteen staff in judging pupils dishes and menus –helping to build trust and understanding;
- tell everyone – use newsletters, the school website and social media;
- serve the dishes, celebrate success and start again – there's more than one food class in a school!



### Get in touch

For more information, go to: [www.schoolfoodchampions.org.uk](http://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.