

A Brief Guide to Running a Successful and Sustainable School Meals Service

The actions and recommendations made within this support pack underpin the three main principles of the School Food Plan:

1. The Head Teacher must take the lead in delivering change.
2. The adoption of a 'whole school approach' and treating the dining hall as an integral part of the school.
3. Concentrating on the things children care about.

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Definition/Vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the delivery of a Whole School Approach by defining what your successful service 'looks like'. It should aim to be efficient, user-friendly and of consistent high quality. Include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current and future objectives for the service e.g. to ensure that the food provided is healthy, balanced and nutritious, to provide pupils with the appropriate amount of the energy and nutrients they need during the school day, to help develop healthy eating habits. For further information see www.schoolfoodmatters.com www.childrensfood.org.uk www.fooddudes.co.uk - How the service will become an integral part of school day. Any desired changes need to be made in the context of the whole school - not in isolation. - How the menu will be structured and how the meal will be made available to the children e.g. multi service points, self help areas etc. - Clear direction about how children's plates are to be filled e.g. once main course selected – appropriate vegetables and accompaniments automatically included on plate. Also, your expectation about what they should be encouraged to consume e.g. everything selected, a little of everything placed on plate etc. - The techniques to be used to encourage pupils to broaden their diet – both in the dining room and the wider school. - The level of flexibility around ordering and cancelling meals e.g. the pre-ordering and pre-payment systems to be employed, are pupils required to order five meals per week or can they pick and choose? To achieve optimum appeal for the customer, aim to give as much flexibility as possible. - How the dining area should be presented and maintained throughout lunch. - How the dining room is to be managed and the processes to which pupils will be subjected – how pupils will be seated, limitations on leaving the table and moving about the dining room, how they should obtain help if required, the queuing systems to be employed – including the length of time pupils are expected to queue, whether access to service counter will be rotated between classes etc. - The code of conduct for pupils, protocols in place etc. e.g. stay on-site rule for break and lunchtimes. - Your packed lunch policy – including the support (or limitations on support) available to those pupils bringing packed lunches. - Your policy on classroom rewards and treats e.g. not using sweets or confectionery and giving pupils access to fresh water throughout the school day. - Any intended participation with 'Cool Milk' register@coolmilk.com 0800 056 2146 or Food4Life www.foodforlife.org.uk www.nhs.uk/change4life or other recognised schemes. - How the service will be promoted e.g. mechanisms used, key messages to be shared. • To help inform your vision, use consultation to obtain the views of your stakeholders • Establish a forum with other schools to benefit from their experience and best practice. Familiarise yourself with the 'Best Practice' section of the School Food Plan website www.schoolfoodplan.com • Once defined, share your vision, in appropriate format and level of detail, with all stakeholders

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Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership is required. Whether the school operates its own in-house service or purchases catering from the local authority or other supplier, delegate direct responsibility for delivering healthy food provision to a member of the senior management team. Clarify the ongoing roles of all relevant stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governing body - Teaching and non-teaching staff - Lunchtime supervisors - Kitchen staff - Catering management - Pupils - Parents • The continuous involvement of, and regular consultation with, stakeholder groups will increase their 'buy in' and raise your overall chances of success.
Establishing the Required Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School Food Plan notes that, without exception, all the most successful schools encourage teachers to eat in the dining room with the children. It is accepted that this may require both a cultural or logistical shift but the end result is a unifying effect on the whole school and a raise in status for school meals. Pupils may have very limited exposure to adults enjoying eating freshly prepared salads and freshly-cooked vegetables or simply joining them at the table. If so, this action may have a direct impact on their eating habits. • On first contact with school, make your school meals policy clear to parents. The following could be useful statements to make: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The expectation at this school is that unless special circumstances apply, all pupils will take a school meal. - The school takes the same approach to teaching pupils to eat well as it does to teaching them maths or English. - Our dining room team will provide your child with positive encouragement to learn to enjoy new foods. - Should, on any occasion, the pack lunch that you provide fail to meet the guidelines, we will contact you directly. • The benefits of your policy – to pupils, parents and the school should be made clear. • Increasingly, children are very much the decision makers in the selection process and parents give greater priority to meeting their immediate likes and dislikes than to their longer term need to learn to enjoy and benefit from, a balanced diet. For this reason, the ultimate objective must be to create a culture whereby: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pupils would actually prefer to take a school meal and use their 'pester power' to influence parents on this matter. - Parents understand the full value of the school meal and consequently support the school to instil the discipline required by their children to learn to enjoy a well-balanced diet. • See Children's Food Trust/Learning Network – 'Involving parents, carers and children'.
In-house Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is legally responsible for the catering service that it provides. In order, should the need arise, to prove 'Due Diligence' it should make itself aware of all the legislation and management functions associated with providing the service and ensure that it has robust systems in place to deliver them.

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Catering Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The common management functions associated with school meals are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Menu production and analysis. - Establishing and managing supplier contracts. - Development of food production systems – risk assessment. - Managing health and safety systems. - Recruitment and daily management of catering staff. - Staff development – maintenance of formal training plan – identifying skills gaps, recording and evaluating success of training provided. - Setting financial targets, monitoring and managing production costs. - Maintaining light equipment and plant. - Crisis management – stock loss, equipment failure, covering for staff absence. - Setting and maintenance of operating standards. - Service development and promotion. - Management control systems - maintaining documentation/all appropriate records • Regular audits should take place to ensure that each function is actually being delivered. The audits can fall into two broad categories a) statutory responsibilities b) quality control. • The former should be based upon the principles of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points). The Food Standards Agency provides a system for small catering businesses called 'Safer Food, Better Business'. Find details at www.food.gov.uk . Further information about starting a food business can also be found at this web site. • The most relevant pieces of statutory legislation are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Food Safety Act 1990 - The Food Hygiene (England) Regulations 2006 - Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002 - Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 - The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 • Before you begin operating, contact your local authority environmental health department. They will help and advise you. It is also a legal requirement to register your premises with them at least 28 days before opening. • In terms of quality control, give priority to reviewing the service from the perspective of the customer. Purchase a meal. Is the service presented correctly? Did it open on time? Is strong customer service observed? How is the taste and appearance of the food? Is correct portion control in evidence? Are staff clean, tidy and dressed appropriately? Is the correct menu on display? Is the choice of dishes available until end of service? Does the appearance and ambience of the dining room comply with the agreed vision? • It may be necessary to put the contract out to tender. Government requirements and European Public Procurement Regulations state the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Services with a value of less than £10,000 – no formal tendering process is required. However, always ensure Best Value by getting at least three written quotations. Check that suppliers and contractors hold the required level of insurance - £10,000 - £75,000 – follow a tendering process inviting at least four quotes or tenders - £75,000 - £156,442 – follow a full tendering process. Contracts need to be advertised with either an open or restricted procedure used. Prescribed selection and evaluation criteria used.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over £156,000 - follow a full tendering procedure in line with European Union Procurement Regulations. Advertise the procedure in the Official Journal of the European Union as well as in local press and relevant journals. Prescribed selection and evaluation criteria used. • Use the experiences of other schools to help you draw up your catering contract. For details of organisations that can help you with contracting visit www.schoolfoodplan.com • The school should satisfy itself that the contract will deliver innovation, quality, security, peace of mind and reputational stability. The catering specification should accurately describe the service you wish to provide. The more detail the school provides, the greater the opportunity for a successful contract and the lower the likelihood of the contractor having to make additional charges. For example, within the vision, the school may feel that pupils should be able to serve themselves from a salad trolley, be able to return to the trolley several times over the course of lunch and that it should be sufficiently attractive to encourage them to do this. Therefore, the specification may need to include things such as the provision of separate dishes for salads, the level to which the salad trolley should be maintained until the end of service and the frequency with which the selection of salads should vary. Be prepared to negotiate on the detail. • Both school and contractor should recognise and meet their respective obligations under the contract. Onus should be placed upon the contractor to assist the school to increase the uptake of meals. The requirement to provide a written plan for achieving this could be included within the specification. Once the contract has been awarded, the contractor should be made accountable for performance against the plan. • The contract should be structured in such a way that the school is not penalised financially for either increasing the take up of meals or for not increasing the take up of meals. It should include the basis for increasing prices e.g. annually? By a fixed rate? Contractor to school? Contractor to parents? • Other points which could be included within a contract specification are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As with an in-house service, the school is legally responsible for the catering service that it provides. In order, should the need arise, to prove 'due diligence' it should detail all required management functions and legislative requirements associated with providing a catering service within the specification and ensure that the contractor has robust systems in place to deliver each of these. The school should satisfy itself that any potential contractor can fulfil the management functions adequately and after contract award, carry out regular audits to ensure that each is actually being delivered and that the school is receiving the level of service for which it is paying. - Evidence of a quality assurance system. - The access to and availability of contract managers e.g are they locally-based? - A requirement for financial transparency. Cash handling and banking arrangements - Details of who is responsible for the provision and maintenance of all the light and heavy equipment, furniture, fixtures, fittings and building fabric associated with the service. Be very specific on this issue. Take a similar approach to the provision and payment of utilities. - A requirement to assist the school to fund any capital costs arising from the increased uptake of meals. - The level of flexibility (and process required) to adapt centrally produced menus to meet the school's specific needs – while still meeting the Food Standards - The level of support required of contractor to assist the school in marketing and promoting the service. Given that the service belongs to the school (the contractor

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Dining Rooms, Dining Room Management and Staff	<p>will only ever be its selected means of delivery), in order to ensure that it complies with its general ethos and policies, should it (rather than the contractor) have prime responsibility for promotions? Note: where promotional literature is produced centrally by the contractor, before circulation, checks should be carried out to ensure that it accurately reflects the service offer provided by the school. Failure to do so will only generate customer dissatisfaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrangements for the disposal of kitchen waste. - Further points made throughout this guide can be used to further inform the specification. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school must fully recognise that it is the ‘customer’, and is purchasing a service that fully meets its specific requirements. It should behave accordingly. • Once the contract is up and running, time should be taken to clearly establish the parameters of the client/contractor relationship. The roles and responsibilities of each should be clear. Clear lines of communication should be agreed and the details of these shared with all appropriate stakeholders. For example, the school should understand those matters it should discuss directly with kitchen staff and those that require the involvement of catering management. • Work at the relationship. Avoid only speaking with/making time for the contractor when there is an issue or problem to be resolved. Meeting with them on a regular (but not necessarily frequent) basis will probably save school a lot of time and possibly money in the long run. Use the meetings to discuss the successes over the previous period and the areas that still require improvement. In this way, rather than operating in a ‘reactive’ state, the contractor can help inform your decisions and give you the operational and financial implications of any ideas you may have. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a shared vision of what a pleasant dining environment should be like. Aim to make it a showpiece for the school. Could a theme be developed – perhaps creating a link with features in the local area? Consider the actions that could be taken to make school meals a more enjoyable experience than having a packed lunch. • Provide an attractive, welcoming dining space that pupils would naturally want to use. It should be well decorated and lit and not too hot or cold. During their inspections children frequently commented to UIFSM advisers that they were not happy eating in a cluttered and untidy space. Get the basics right - staffing levels and rotas within the dining room should be such that hygiene levels are maintained throughout service – furniture and equipment used by pupils should be clean and well maintained and floors should be free from debris. • Make sure that lunchtime supervisors have sufficient time to put out and clear in furniture safely and have been trained in manual handling. If possible, avoid the institutional look created by long lines of tables. If space permits, change the position of individual tables to break up the lines. Try to mix in some round tables which facilitate a much better social experience. • Create a diagram to demonstrate the logical flow of children around the space from arrival - queuing, eating and self-clearing – so that those clearing empty plates do not conflict with those carrying full ones. • Through necessity, schools often have to store equipment in the hall throughout lunch. These items should be evaluated to ensure that they take up as little space as possible. The agreed storage system should then be shared with all appropriate stakeholders. Free standing mobile screens could be used to disguise the storage areas. If designed

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Kitchen Staff	<p>carefully, the screens could be used to support any agreed brand and colour scheme and perhaps assist in absorbing noise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many pupils consider noise levels within the dining room to be a major issue. It can make the dining room an intimidating space for some, especially younger users, and the lunch time experience an ordeal for others. In many cases, the noise is not created by poor or rowdy behaviour, it is simply a consequence of many conversations taking place in an area of many hard surfaces and finishes. Where noise is disproportionate, it is often generated by pupils queuing and moving between tables. Discourage lunchtime supervisors from trying to manage noise levels by either putting the entire dining room on 'pause' or requesting silence. Those well-behaved pupils who are enjoying social time with their friends while trying to consume a hot meal will resent the constant interruptions and will be discouraged from taking school meals in the future. Introduce a code of conduct for the dining room. Encourage lunchtime supervisors to target individual noisy pupils rather than 'punish' the whole room. Better yet, introduce fittings and fixtures which will help to naturally curb noise. • Pupils should be given reasonable time to enjoy their food. One of the things that they enjoy most about lunch is getting to spend social time with their friends. Therefore, avoid introducing systems which prevent friends from sitting together. When selecting the pupil management systems to be employed, always make sure that improving the dining experience for children takes priority over convenience and ease for dining room and school staff. • It is important to remember that for pupils, the lunchtime supervisors are very much the 'face' of school meals. Supervisors often feel under-valued and unimportant, and are left to define their own role and measures of success. Yet the decisions they make directly affect the schools ability to attract customers, generate income and to meet government performance targets. Any differing approaches to their duties can result in pupils getting mixed messages about, and different experiences of, the service. Provide clear job descriptions, training and reporting structures for lunchtime supervisors. With proper investment, they can become a major asset to the school and resolve many of the challenges associated with the provision of a lunch service • The School Food Plan recommends that kitchen and dining room staff are treated as part of the school team 'on a par with teachers and business managers'. They should be involved in meetings and be clear about school objectives and activities. It might be advisable for some formal channels of communication to be put into place. Regular (but not necessarily frequent) team meetings could be held by the senior school representative to discuss successes over the previous period those areas still requiring improvement. It would be helpful if representatives from the wider school attended these meetings. • In order to achieve a consistent service, establish contingency plans for staff absence. • Access the Children's Food Trust/Learning Network – 'Improving school dining at low or no cost' and 'Lunchtime supervisor training' http://learningnetwork.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/. Also the DfE publication 'Inspirational design for kitchen and dining spaces' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with lunchtime supervisors, provide clear job descriptions and reporting structures for each role. • A general rule is to allow one hour of food production time for every 10 meals produced. This will vary depending on the circumstances within each individual kitchen. Consider

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Menus	<p>building in a mechanism that will allow staffing levels to be adjusted in line with increases/decreases in meals numbers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school, or its contractor should have adequate plans in place to cover any temporary staffing shortages. Create a standby menu which can be pulled straight from the store cupboards and freezers. Make sure staff are sufficiently trained so that they can safely produce the meal in the absence of any key member of the team. When fully staffed, in order that the training is not forgotten, make sure that they change duties on a regular basis. • Staff must demonstrate high standards of personal hygiene. They must keep themselves clean and wear clean and washable protective clothing. They must report any illnesses to their line manager who will keep them off work or put them on duties that will not pose a risk to food for at least 48 hours after the symptoms cease. All cuts and grazes must be covered with clean, brightly coloured, waterproof dressings. • Staff must be trained, supervised and instructed in food hygiene to a level in line with the tasks they will be required to carry out. These issues should be covered in induction before staff actually start work. Assuming that they have the appropriate craft skills and knowledge of nutrition, various kitchen staff will probably need training in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Code of conduct - Customer service policy - Their role in meeting the school's objectives - Safe methods of working – food safety, health and safety, equipment training - Compliance with COSHH legislation - First aid/fire marshall - Accident and sickness procedures - Manual handling - Supervision/managing people - Data protection/freedom of information/safeguarding awareness - Documentation and administration - Provision of special diets • Details of suitable health and safety courses and further information can be found at <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - www.cieh.org - www.cieh-coursefinder.com - www.rsph.org.uk - www.rsph.org.uk/en/qualification/qualifications/centre-search/index.cfm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A hot meal should be available for every child in school. • Menus must comply with the Standards for School Food. On line training on the application of the standards can be found at www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/learningnetwork. The Children's Food Trust can also provide a menu checking service. Compliant menus can use their 'menu checked' logo – a useful promotional tool. • Menus should be responsive to emerging customer trends, minimise customer fatigue, allow for seasonal variation and take account of the production capacity of the kitchen – both in terms of equipment and staffing resources. To assist in achieving the goal of pupils broadening their diets, menus should contain a mix of familiar and new foods. • Adequate allergen information must be made available to all your customers. It is important that all staff associated with the service have a sensible attitude towards food allergy. If uncertain, they should seek further advice – never guess. An interactive tool on

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Food	<p>this issue features on the Food Standards Agency Website. www.food.gov.uk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain adequate contingency plans to provide continuity of service during any disruption of utilities and other emergencies – e.g. use of cold option, temporary use of paper plates etc. • Every effort should be made to cater for each pupil's needs but ultimately it is for the school to decide what is feasible. It is good practice to have all special diets documented to ensure that all the special dietary needs are met. • Sample menus can be found on the School Food Plan website • To further demonstrate best practice in your approach to menus, apply for the 'Children's Food Trust Award' www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/award <p>- Aim for minimum use of pre-prepared foods - at least 75% of the food you serve should be freshly prepared either in your own or a local kitchen. Where possible, serve produce grown in the school garden – even the smallest schools can grow herbs and salad leaves in tubs and planters. Promote these facts to both parents and pupils. Children will delight in having the vegetables that they have grown featured on the service counter or salad trolley. See http://www.growingschools.org.uk/ For details of other organisations that can help you with gardening clubs, visit the School Food Plan website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to the cook to see which vegetables she would like you to grow – so that they can be used in the production of the meals. • To retain appearance and optimum nutritional value, batch cook vegetables whenever possible. • The purchase of locally grown food and produce is recommended wherever possible. Talk to your suppliers to find out where the food actually comes from and how it is produced. Are your eggs from free range birds? Is your meat Farm Assured? Is the fish from a sustainable source? Follow the lead of the private sector by displaying interesting facts within the dining room and including them (along with any benefits to the consumer) within promotional materials. • Arrange for suppliers to come into school and give talks to the children. Discuss the different types of produce and the processes used to get from farm to plate. Use lunch times to teach them to learn and appreciate the differences between raw, freshly cooked, frozen and canned fruit and vegetables. • The Soil Association's Food for Life Catering Mark enables schools/caterers to show that they are taking steps to improve the food they serve, using fresh ingredients which are free from trans-fats, harmful additives and GM, and follow good animal welfare guidelines. www.sacert.org. Check the case studies on www.foodforlife.org.uk • Audits should be carried out to ensure that the food consistently looks appealing (both on the servery and on the plate) and tastes delicious. Hot food should still be hot at the point of consumption. Cold food and drinks should be cold and, where appropriate, chilled. The best form of audit is through regular consultation with pupils and direct use of service by senior management. High levels of plate waste can also provide a strong indication that there is a problem with the food. Where this is the case, to prevent pupils going home hungry, swift action should be taken. • When choosing suppliers it is important to vet their premises and delivery vehicles for appropriate standards of hygiene, ensure that they are registered with the environmental health office, evaluate their food safety management systems, look for an accredited QA system. Check that they can provide up to date specifications upon request. Ensure that

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Food Service	<p>their drivers are DBS checked. Consider using a buying group for your purchasing. This will help you achieve Best Value and, as factories and distribution centres will be inspected, achieve Due Diligence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep an eye on the market via trade exhibitions and journals, catering associations, Department of Education, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) advice and working closely with other schools – suppliers are constantly developing new options and solutions. • To generate economies of scale and therefore negotiate better rates, minimise the number of suppliers used. Each week, the cook should strive to keep the number of orders she places to a minimum. Although this approach may generate a need for more storage space, it will reduce the amount of time that staff spend receiving and putting away deliveries. Obviously this needs to be balanced with the need to serve fruit, salads and vegetables which are as fresh as possible. • Put arrangements in place to ensure that suppliers can access the appropriate part of the premises quickly and easily. • See Children’s Food Trust/Learning Network – ‘Reducing kitchen and dining waste’ and ‘School food procurement’ • Support and advice on nutrition available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FAQs www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/newstandards/faqs - Email info@childrensfoodtrust.org.uk - Telephone 0800 089 5001 or 0114 299 6901 - Website www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/schools/the-standards/revised-standards - Online training – suitable for school staff and caterers http://learningnetwork.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of both the food and the service counter needs to take account of the fact that many children are now ‘informed purchasers’ and regularly frequent high street chains. As such, they are in a position to directly compare your service offer with the wider market. • The service counter should provide children with an enjoyable experience. It should look tidy, clean, attractive and plentiful right to the end of service. Even if it is not the case, small quantities of food in large containers will look like left-overs. Wherever possible as supplies diminish, transfer food into smaller, clean dishes. The meal experience for the last child should be as good as that offered to the first. • Whenever possible, avoid plating up meals in advance. As well as making the servery look cluttered, they will quickly go cold. Any food remaining on the servery between sittings should be covered/ returned to hot storage. • While always being mindful of any hygiene concerns, increasing the amount of pupil self-service can be very beneficial. In addition to speeding up the service, it provides a better quality experience and makes pupils feel that they are being treated more like adults. They will adapt quickly without too much disruption. They will also self-regulate, meaning that you should not see any significant increase in the price of ingredients. Provide tongs to allow pupils to take their own bread from attractive baskets. Consider offering individual tubs or pots of salad to which pupils can help themselves. • Where possible, pile up cold puddings on platters dressed with doyleys etc. – biscuits and bakes could be displayed in large glass jars/cloches with tongs – again for pupils to serve themselves. If hot puddings are served at ambient temperature, some of these could be presented in a similar way. Hot custard can then be served from vacuum-type flasks. • Table-top or free-standing chilled presentation units can be used to present cold puddings,

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	<p>yoghurts, fruit juice and milk. Again, pupils could help themselves to these items.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that fruit bowls and salad trolleys look full, fresh and appetising throughout service. Encourage pupils to return to the salad trolley as many times as they wish. The cost of waste will be marginal and fruit and salad items can often be incorporated within other dishes. To encourage increased take up of fresh fruit, pupils should be frequently reminded that it can be cut up for them. Often, the onus is on them to remember/ find this out for themselves. • Where take up of salad is low, consider asking the lunchtime supervisors to take it to the tables and serve directly on to pupil plates. • Where possible, replace flight trays with crockery • Regularly review the appearance of the servery from the customer perspective – make sure that children can actually see all the food being offered – they take longer to decide when they can't. However well-presented the servery, it will never tempt those children bringing packed lunches if they never actually get to see it. • Catering staff should be knowledgeable about the food they are serving. As time permits they should talk about what is on offer and make recommendations. • See Children's Food Trust/Learning Network – Customer Service for School Caterers • Long queues are off-putting and encourage poor behaviour within the dining room. Look at ways to reduce the amount of time spent queuing and address any 'bottle-necks': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple menus equate to shorter queues. - Display the menu at the beginning of the queue so that pupils can begin making their choices. Use picture versions for younger children and place the same pictures alongside the corresponding dishes on the servery. - Always place cutlery at the start of the queue. - If possible, introduce a 'fixed' meal system. Often, much time at the servery is wasted by catering staff having to ask each pupil whether he or she wants each element of the meal. Under a fixed meal system, once the main course is chosen, the appropriate vegetables and/or accompaniments are automatically put on the plate. Providing quality issues are addressed, once on the plate, there is a greater likelihood that the pupils will actually try them. The school policy and communications plan should be used to manage stakeholder expectations about this strategy. - Service staff should use the correct utensils for the job e.g. they shouldn't be fiddling with spoons when tongs, pea ladles etc. would be more effective - Be flexible. Where staggered or separate sittings operate, rather than wait for a specific time before allowing pupils to access the dining room, introduce further classes as queues diminish. - Where there are large numbers of pupils, and queues are slow, consider the potential for reducing the time spent in line by splitting the queue at an earlier stage. To achieve this, either provide separate service areas or divide a single servery into distinct areas. This can mean that one area is devoted to the traditional item, one to the vegetarian, one to the cold etc. Where one item is known to be more popular than the others, the less popular items can be combined within a single service point. Dining room staff can be used to direct pupils to the appropriate area. In those schools with a nil choice menu, the servery can be divided into sections with the full menu replicated and offered from both points. - Further efficiencies can be achieved by shifting the selection process to an earlier part of the day – pre-ordering. Making choice available only to those pupils attending registration can also help to reduce late attendance. Where this system is adopted, to guarantee meal suitability, it is advisable to restrict late attenders to the vegetarian option.

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Production Kitchens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In addition to further reducing queuing times, cashless systems have an advantage in that parents can go on line to see what their children are eating and prevent FSM children from being stigmatised. - Where queues are long, but turnover is quick, remember to promote the average time that each pupil actually spends queuing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All rooms in which food is prepared stored or cooked have to be kept clean and in good condition. Rubbish and food waste must not be allowed to build up. Written cleaning schedules should be in place. • Food production spaces have to be capable of being well-lit and ventilated and steps must be taken to prevent infestation. • Similarly, all equipment has to be kept clean, hygienic and in good condition - either the catering contractor or the school should have an appropriate equipment maintenance and replacement plan and budget in place. • Sinks and separate wash basins must be available and accessible. They must be supplied with hot and cold water. Any water used in the production of food must be of drinking quality. • Extraction systems must comply with current legislation. Either the contractor or the school should be given the responsibility of keeping up with legislation. • Food must not be put at risk of being contaminated or anything else which could be harmful to consumers. • When planning the purchase of new equipment, or revising the kitchen lay-out, heavily involve the cook in the process. Understanding the detailed requirements from the perspective of all users will avoid costly changes later - she will have first-hand knowledge of any problems that need to be overcome. Where possible, try to 'future-proof' the kitchen against further increases in meals. Choosing the most efficient layout and paying attention to flow issues will make the kitchen work more effectively and may reduce your area requirements • Think carefully about how kitchen equipment is actually used. Do not hang on to unnecessary equipment. If not used frequently, consider removing or replacing with a more flexible alternative. For example a single combination oven has the potential to produce a no-choice menu for up to 100 pupils. It can also help to reduce energy and ingredient costs, increase productivity and, providing staff are trained correctly, improve food quality. • Where possible, stay in regular contact with and obtain the support of the council's Asset Management Team. Avoid making ad-hoc requests for funding. Provide them with a clear long-term replacement/development plan and the consequences – both financial and operational – of not investing. • Alternatively schools can rent or lease heavy equipment • As a general rule, reduced facilities require disproportionate staffing levels and greater organisation eg. it may require two people to hand wash up, a dishwasher might allow the same task to be carried out by one person.
Receiving Kitchens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hygiene requirements are as for production kitchens. • In order to meet the specific needs of the receiving school, clarify the actual level of flexibility within the production kitchen. Request from them, the operational and financial

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Other School Catering	<p>implications of any desired improvements/amendments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, consider how the quality of the service offer could be improved by converting from a 'receiving' to a 'finishing' kitchen. The core hot elements of the meal could be delivered from the production unit but many cold sweets, drinks, fruit and salads could be produced directly on site. The addition of a small oven and fridge for example, could make it possible for many small receiving schools to add a filled baked potato option to their menu. • Make sure that the equipment used and/or time scale of delivery allows the food to be received and served at temperatures that both meet legal requirements and provide the required quality for your pupils. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other catering provided over the course of the day (fruit scheme, cool milk, tuck shops etc.) should be managed and timed in such a way that it does not suppress pupil appetites at lunch time. • It must comply with the Standards for School Food. • See Children's Food Trust/Learning Network – 'Planning cooking activities for different audiences' and 'How to run practical cooking clubs'. • See www.magicbreakfast.com
Marketing and Promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage stakeholders and create increasing support for the service by developing an annual communications, promotions and marketing plan. This should assist in managing stakeholder expectations about the aims and objectives of school meals and about what can be achieved. Where necessary, the plan should also be used as a means to educate. For example, UIFSM advisers have found that many parents consider their children's refusal to eat any fruit or vegetables 'fussy eating', and a normal part of childhood which they will grow out of. The reality is that, in order to develop and learn effectively, children need to achieve a balanced diet at this stage in their life. The plan should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow for regular customer consultation. - Create, for each stakeholder group, a steady stream of regular short, consistent messages, across a range of suitable media. Demonstrate to parents and pupils that activities are being focussed on the things that are important to them. - Clarify the roles of each stakeholder group (senior management, teachers, DRAs, catering staff, pupils and parents) in terms of meeting the objectives for the service. - Convince parents to value the service and appreciate the benefits it provides to them with the result that they support the school in encouraging their children to take, and eat school meals. It should assist in breaking down resistance to future price increases and help them to understand the importance of continuing to register for free school meals. - Create a demand for, and maintain interest in, school meals among pupils. Encourage them to broaden their diet by eating all the component parts of the meal - Ensure that all school staff consistently communicate the correct (and agreed) messages about the school meals service. • Given that communications generally need repeated 'hits' before they are actually absorbed, the mechanism for devising the plan could be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to identify all the messages, events and promotions that need to be disseminated over the course of the year - to identify any appropriate deadlines

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to identify the appropriate stakeholders - to identify the number of 'hits' required and the optimum times for these to be received. - to identify the range of communication channels most likely to generate the required number of hits - to ensure that each hit is concise and clearly describes the benefits to the targeted stakeholder - Consideration should also be given to the potential for issuing messages in a manner that is convenient and easy for parents to 'receive' rather than for the school to 'send'. Consider increased use of Facebook, Twitter, texting etc. Ensure that all parents are consistently aware of the service offer. - Promote the dining facility in newsletters, on the website and in the prospectus - Give school meals high profile at assemblies, parent evenings and other events. Give parents the opportunity to sample a cross section of the meals offered (rather than just cakes and biscuits) and to discuss their child's eating habits with a senior member of the catering team. - Each communication should be used as an opportunity to 'sell' rather than just 'inform'. For example, menus should work both as a source of information and as a sales tool. In order to stimulate interest, the language used to describe each of the dishes should be considered. It is important to remember that the presentation and physical quality of the promotional materials used gives a direct impression of the quality of the actual service provided. - Greater ownership, by pupils, of the dining area, could be achieved via the school council. The dining room could become a standing agenda item and meetings could be attended by catering staff (who may need initial support from catering management?) The student council could be used to survey the wider student body about the service. Care would need to be taken to manage pupil expectations, to always take action where possible and to feedback the reasons for any instances where the requested action couldn't be taken - Given that it takes between 8 – 10 attempts before a child learns to enjoy a new 'taste', aim to carry out food 'tastings' on a smaller scale, but more frequent basis. Lunchtime supervisors could repeatedly take small bowls of the day's less popular dishes and vegetables to individual tables and ask for feedback: 'Try this. Is it not as nice as you thought, as nice as you thought or nicer than you thought?' or 'You tried this a while ago, let me know what you think now' etc. The financial implications of such an approach would need to be negotiated with the contractor. - Within each new menu cycle, the less popular days will soon be established. Optimise resources available by providing more school support on these days e.g. teachers and other influential staff encouraging pupils to try the foods on offer and less when more popular menus are offered. - Create a schedule of events for the year. Ensure that the success of each event is reported back to parents. - Reward high performers by raising the profile and status of the 'Golden Table' with say, table cloths, better crockery and cutlery, food brought to the table etc. - Create lunch time awards schemes by recognising strong performance during meal times. A trophy shelf/ wall certificates which allowed the names of individual children to be entered could be introduced. Create a league table for those children taking the most school meals with perhaps a champion for the school or each class. Clear plates and good eating habits can be rewarded by the issue of stickers. Stickers proclaiming 'I ate all my vegetables' or 'I made up my own salad' have an advantage

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	<p>in that, as well as providing encouragement to pupils, they also promote your success directly to parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be mindful that the school and its teaching staff will always have much greater influence over pupil eating habits than catering and dining room staff or written promotional materials. - The promotions and service development plans should aim to address the most common reasons given for not taking a school meal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There aren't enough meals available that my child likes to eat - We cannot afford to take school meals - The choice of meals is too limited. - It takes too long to get served at lunch time - The food is poor quality - My child comes home at lunch time - The portion sizes are too small - My child prefers to be able to do other things at lunch time - My child's friends don't take school meals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Log on to http://www.thegreatschoolslunch.co.uk/uifsm-free-resources-for-you/ Many of the messages included within the resources provided are suitable for inclusion within a communications strategy.. • See – Children's Food Trust/Learning Network – Primary/Secondary School Food: 'Involving parents carers and children' • See Children's Food Trust/Learning Network – 'Increasing registration and take up' and www.educateringtoolkit.co.uk • Further resources for Lead Association for Catering in Education (L.A.C.A.) members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - www.laca.co.uk - www.thegreatschoolslunch.co.uk - www.educateringtoolkit.co.uk
Involve the Community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build links with the community by considering the introduction of a luncheon club on certain days of the week or month. • Invite parents and other family members to take a school lunch. As well as generating additional income for the school, these actions will help create advocates for the service and begin to change outmoded perceptions of school meals. • Maximise business levels by inviting the community into school when classes are out on trips etc. • Give careful consideration to safeguarding issues.
Pricing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School governors have direct responsibility for setting prices. The school needs to bear in mind that not increasing prices may be creating a negative impression of the service among some stakeholders. They know that food and labour prices have increased over the years so how has the school managed to maintain quality without increasing its rates? Any strategy needs to recognise that prices must increase at some stage and that small, regular increases achieve far less customer resistance than large, ad hoc price hikes. It also needs to take account of the fact that some parents may already consider the price of a meal to be expensive. • Where a school serves large families, consider introducing discounts for multiple

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Packed lunches	<p>purchases. It may be that such families cannot afford to pay the standard price of school meals for their older children. In which case it would be difficult to convince any younger children entitled to a UIFSM to take a school meal while their siblings all take (preferred?) packed lunches. Further discounts could be offered to those pupils who take a lunch every day. As the contractor is likely to benefit financially from increased take up, there may be some potential to negotiate, from them, a reduced rate for such meals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a packed lunch policy. The absence of a policy allows parents to fill lunch boxes with foods of low nutritional value but high popularity among children. In a situation where children are the key influencers and such freedom over packed lunch content is permitted, school meals will always struggle to be successful. • Where a robust packed lunch policy is in place, permit pupils taking school meals sit together with those bringing packed lunches • As part of your parent communications, provide frequent reminders that the focus of your dining room staff and is to assist and encourage pupils to enjoy the benefits of a nutritional school lunch. Therefore they may not necessarily have time to open the packets, tetra boxes etc. of those pupils that cannot manage for themselves. • Remove any 'hidden' incentives for pupils to bring a packed lunch e.g. they are seated first, they get out to play sooner, they are allowed fruit juice while school meals are limited to water. • The Head teacher now also has the freedom to ban packed lunches completely. Rather than introduce a blanket ban however, it might be more acceptable to apply it to all new intakes to the school • Always use the caterer to provide packed lunches for all children on school trips, days out etc. • See Children's Food Trust/Learning Network – 'Introducing a healthy packed lunch policy'.
Misc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the academic year 2015 to 2016, a provisional allocation of UIFSM grant to schools will be based on the final allocation for academic year 2014 to 2015. A final allocation for academic year 2015 to 2016 will be calculated in June 2016 based on take-up recorded in the October 2015 and January 2016 School Censuses. The conditions of grant also confirms that the rate per meal will remain £2.30 for the 2015-16 academic year. • In addition to the main allocations above, schools with 150 or fewer pupils on roll (including nursery classes), as recorded on the January 2015 School Census will receive an extra flat payment of £2,300 in recognition of the additional costs that small schools incur. The conditions of grant and calculator can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals-uifsm-funding-allocations-2015-to-2016