

# Sharing school food success

The positive impact school food can have on children's health, well-being and academic achievement is recognised now more than ever amongst parents, by local authorities and by Ofsted.

Getting school food right has never been more important for schools. It takes a huge amount of time and effort to plan and deliver tasty, nutritious and appealing school food. So when you are getting things right, why not tell people about it?

For many schools introducing free school meals for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils was a big challenge. Demonstrating the steps you have taken to successfully implement Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) – whether through updating your kitchen and dining area, changing your menus or improving your communications to change attitudes to school food – can show how responsive, creative and effective your school can be.

Sharing your successes may fall pretty low on a busy priority list, but investing a little time and effort to develop a case study about your school food success will give you a positive story you can use to promote your school now and in the future.

By showcasing what you've achieved with your school food you'll be able to:

- Reassure parents their children are being given every opportunity to eat well and do well at your school
- Demonstrate to prospective parents school food is one of many reasons to choose your school
- Give evidence of good practice, innovation and success to Ofsted inspectors
- Build your reputation with your local authority and other schools in your local area.

If you're not sure where to start, our top tips will help you put together a case study which will shine a spotlight on your successes and help to promote your school.

## *Top Tips for creating your case study*

Talk to the key people involved in your school's approach to food and to delivering free school meals for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils - it may be the head teacher or your school business manager or cook.

Prepare your questions in advance. Here are some ideas of topics you might want to cover:

- What do you think are your biggest school food achievements?
- What challenges have you faced as a result of introducing UIFSM?
- What changes have you made to overcome these challenges, for example have you upgraded your kitchens or dining space, revamped your menus or improved your school food marketing?
- Who did you work with to make these changes? Did you get any external support? Did you involve the whole school community?
- What do your pupils and their parents think of these changes?

Don't forget to talk to the most important people - your customers! Quotes from children are usually honest, jargon-free and get straight to the point.

Ask your pupils what they think and let their comments sell your school food. Finding out what parents think is also a good idea.

Use facts and figures. No one wants to be blinded with statistics, but a couple of well chosen facts and figures can get your message across quickly and simply. For example “85% of children choose school meals over packed lunches since we changed our menus and updated our dining space.” Illustrate your case studies with photographs. Pictures of your pupils enjoying healthy school food with their friends can be more effective in telling your story than pages of words.

Keep it short and to the point. There’s no hard and fast rule about how long a case study can be, but think about how to keep your audience interested, breaking up detail with powerful quotes and statistics and concentrating on what you’ve achieved.

Keep the language you use clear and simple and you’ll be able to use the content for all audiences. Ask permission. Make sure any quotes you include have been approved by the person quoted or, in the case of a child, their parent. Statistics should be accurate and easy to reference if needed.

## *Top Tips for creating your case study*

Once your case study is written and approved it can be used in a variety of ways to sell your school, as well as your schools meals service, to your key audiences.

For example, you could try:

- publishing the story on your school website or in an e-newsletter
- using featured quotes and facts and figures as content for social media channels, like Twitter or Facebook, or for posters and flyers
- using content as evidence to support bids for further funding and support.

Read examples of other schools’ case studies on both the LACA and Children’s Food Trust sites.