

Ofsted - Inspecting a Culture and Ethos of Healthy Eating

The School Food Plan (www.schoolfoodplan.com) highlights the importance of taking a whole school approach to healthy eating, the head teacher leading the change, and active pupil engagement. A good food culture has been shown to raise attainment, improve behaviour and support pupil wellbeing.

To achieve the benefits to pupils outlined above, it is important that food becomes an integral part of the school day and that school meals, along with any other catering provision does not operate in isolation - separate from the wider school function.

For this reason, whether the school operates its own in-house catering service or purchases catering from the local authority or other supplier, during an Ofsted inspection, it must be able to demonstrate the steps it has taken to ensure a whole school approach.

To achieve this, it is essential that a member of the senior management team or governing body has direct responsibility for healthy food provision and education. As part of their role, this individual should produce a written 'Whole School Food Policy' which should be signed off by the head teacher and governors. The policy could include:

- ✓ A summary of how the school has addressed The School Food Plan/ responded to The Headteacher Checklist <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/checklist/>.
- ✓ Details of how food and diet will be used to support the delivery of the curriculum.
- ✓ The key objectives/award criteria for any catering provision/potential catering supplier
- ✓ The basis for auditing the quality of the catering service provided, the delivery of food education and general performance against the Food Policy.
- ✓ Details of any nationally accredited schemes or other initiatives to which the school is striving for/taking part in – Change4Life, Soil Association's Food for Life Catering Mark, Children's Food Trust Award
- ✓ The extent of compliance with Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services Nutrition Criteria (GBSF) <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-food>
- ✓ Clear definitions of the roles of all stakeholders and descriptions of how they are expected to engage with and support the process – senior leadership, governors, school staff – teaching and non-teaching, midday supervisors, kitchen staff, catering management, parents and pupils.
- ✓ Details of the records maintained relating to school meals take up.

The policy must be widely shared with all stakeholders – newsletters, websites, prospectus etc.

When completing Self Evaluation Forms and preparing development plans, details of the strategies for delivering the Whole School Food Policy should be included.

Collate and record any evidence of pupil premium spending used to promote healthy eating and learning. This may include the provision of breakfast and after school clubs and the purchase of specific ingredients for those pupils unable to bring from home.

It is now generally accepted that the quality of the food served is only a small part of providing a positive dining experience for customers. When considering whether to make a purchase (whether free or not), they are also likely to be influenced by the environment in which they are required to eat, the staff with whom they will come into contact and the operating systems to which they will be exposed.

It is essential therefore, that you can demonstrate that you have addressed the issues that are actually important to your customers – pupils and parents. To achieve this, consultation is essential. To be effective the consultation should be in a form that is convenient for your target market to use for example, student councils, snag groups, parent voice, hard copy questionnaires or web site submissions.

Phrase questions in a way that will help manage expectations about what your service can deliver. To ensure that your target audience continues to supply you with the feedback you require, summarise and share the outcomes of each consultation in a timely manner. Demonstrate that you have actively considered the suggestions made by outlining any actions you plan to take as a result of the feedback. Where actions aren't possible, give the reasons why.

Use your research to confirm that your customers continue to find the food you serve appealing and delicious. Reinforce the views expressed by regularly carrying out your own checks. Personally undertake the customer journey from start to finish.

Use the outcomes of your research to create menus, service-styles and dining rooms that appeal to your customers. Pay particular attention to:

- ✓ The length of time pupils are required to queue – consider pre-ordering systems, biometric payment, provision of multiple service points, staggered access or separate sittings.
- ✓ Guaranteeing pupils their first choice of meal – again, consider pre-ordering.
- ✓ Making sure that those pupils entitled to a free school meal cannot be easily identified or stigmatised.
- ✓ Making special provision available to those younger pupils who may find lunch times intimidating.
- ✓ Giving pupils sufficient time to enjoy their meal without feeling rushed.
- ✓ Ensuring dining room staff are friendly, accessible and in sufficient numbers for the tasks they are required to perform. Generate a clear understanding of the role they are expected to play in engaging children. Provide sufficient training and direction to allow them to perform their duties well. When selecting the pupil management systems to be employed, make sure that improving the dining experience for children takes priority over convenience and ease for dining room and school staff.
- ✓ Providing an environment with an attractive, welcoming dining space that pupils would naturally want to use. It should be well decorated, clean and uncluttered, well lit and not too hot or cold. Throughout the lunch period, furniture and equipment used by pupils should be spotlessly clean and well maintained.
- ✓ Without overly compromising the social experience for pupils, take action to create a calm atmosphere. At no point should the dining room be allowed to become over-crowded or too noisy.
- ✓ Ensure that the service counter is presented attractively throughout the entire service period. Presentation should be such that it will maintain the interest of existing customers while at the same time attracting new ones.

Provide incentives for school staff to eat with pupils. It may be that some pupils will benefit from the continuity and assurance that this would provide. Furthermore, some pupils may have very limited exposure to adults enjoying eating freshly prepared salads and freshly-cooked vegetables or joining them at the table. If so, this action will have a direct impact on their eating habits.

In addition to making the service appealing to customers, you must be able to demonstrate that the meals and other foods you serve within school consistently comply with The School Food Standards. Each time the menus are amended or a new dish is introduced, satisfy yourself that you still achieve compliance. Where the

school employs the services of a catering contractor, the onus can be placed upon them to prove this to you.

For those pupils and parents that wish to continue bringing a lunch from home, make sure that a robust packed lunch policy is in place. See www.nhs.uk - lighter lunch boxes. Ensure that the requirement for healthy packed lunches, and the mechanisms you will use for dealing with any that fail to meet your required standard, are outlined within your School Food Policy.

Children and their parents are constantly bombarded with a range of mixed messages about food and diet. A core element of the School Food Policy should be around how your school will help children obtain a better knowledge of these issues and how it makes learning about healthy eating, nutrition and practical cooking possible for all pupils. To achieve this, you must work to deliver consistent messages both across the curriculum and in pastoral care. Core competences reflecting the key areas of priority for children and young people – which include physical activity and consumer awareness - can be found at www.nutrition.org.uk/foodinschools/competences/competences.html

The school must be in a position to evidence that it has provided sufficient time-tabling and practical resources to ensure that the above can happen:

- ✓ Is there a qualified subject specialist for food education?
- ✓ During cookery sessions, is there sufficient emphasis on the production of savoury items?
<http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/cooking-in-the-curriculum/>
- ✓ Do any food growing or gardening activities take place?
- ✓ Do the continual professional development plans for teachers and support staff include the training required to support their knowledge of health and well-being?
- ✓ Can the school demonstrate links between healthy eating and the wider personal development, behaviour and welfare framework? (E.g. through the adoption of the eight principles of health and wellbeing, the achievement of health and well-being awards, working with appropriate outside agencies, holding special assemblies and regularly conveying messages themed around these issues).
www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-children-and-young-peoples-emotional-health-and-wellbeing

Finally, the school must be in a position to demonstrate that it has put systems in place to measure children's increased understanding of healthy eating. Within the dining room, this might mean monitoring any increased uptake at the salad trolley or fruit station. Providing the quality of the food is good, the amount of plate waste generated might also provide a strong indicator.