

School Meals Scrutiny Review – Feedback from School Visits

School Visit 1

- A. Does the school monitor the take up of school meals?
Yes
- B. Does the school monitor the take up of school meals of those pupils entitled to free school meals?
Definitely. Very detailed figures kept. People premium made them try to increase numbers.
- C. Does the school wish to see an increase in the number of pupils taking a daily school meal? If not why?
Yes, very much so, but wants the funding to go with it.
- D. Does the school know or have any evidence to support the reasons for low take-up?
*Parental choice and/or pupil choice.
Too expensive, especially for more than one child.*
- E. Could the school accommodate an increase in the number of pupils taking a school meal? What would be the barriers?
Yes but couldn't say about kitchen equipment.
- F. How involved are the school in the promotion of school meals?
*Very.
Push it at parents evenings
Menu is on the school website and sent home with children
Have special Mothers Day, Fathers Day and other special meals that parents/cares can attend. Good uptake and feedback.
There is a garden and the cook uses the food grown.
Governors asked parents eligible for FSM to apply even if child would not eat meal.*
- G. Does the school gather feedback from either parents/carers and/or pupils on the school meals provided in the school?
Yes- very positive.

When 'Sunday roast' is on the menu it is very popular and numbers increase. (this meal is subsidised from money made by break time trolley which sells cheesy bread, cookies, hot chocolate)

- H. How satisfied is the school with its current school meals provider? What are they good at? What could be improved?
Very but this is because of the individual cook rather than the provider.
- I. Is the school meal achieving value for money in terms of cost and quality?
Yes
- J. How would you rate the quality of the dining facilities currently available in the school?
*Absolutely freezing - Children wear coats.
School has freshened up the decor.*
- K. Do you, or have you considered offering a cashless payment system for parents?
Has considered it and had lots of presentations but did not think it would be financially viable. School would be charged about 20p every time a payment is made and most parents would only be able to do it daily.
- L. What is the payment frequency for dinners? Option to pay daily, weekly in advance, half termly in advance, etc?
*Daily or weekly – most daily.
Credit note issued if no money paid or pack up sent.*
- M. Does the school run Clubs over lunchtime? Is there time to eat hot dinner and attend club?
All clubs after school.
- N. Do pack ups and dinners eat together in the dining room?
Yes
- O. Is the dining room a pleasant place to eat in? Are queues tolerable? Is there pressure to eat quickly and go?
Too cold. Queues OK. No pressure to eat up quickly, in fact KS1 not allowed to turn trays round to eat pudding without permission.

- P. Does the school management have any input into the menu options? Do pupils have any input into menu options? Do the pupils get the meal they wanted (in choice schools?).
No input into menus.
- Q. Can parents opt into dinners at any time or do they have to commit to a term etc?
Do it on a daily basis.
- R. How are those entitled to free meals identified in the classroom/ dining room?
They are identifiable in the cafeteria (pasta, baked potato etc) but not the canteen (2 course meal no choice)..
- S. Does the food look appealing? Is there much waste going in the bin?
Looks appealing. Did not know about waste. Children mainly ate everything and all those questioned liked school meals. Many only seemed to have a meal once a week even though child preferred it so probably down to cost.
- T. Equalities.
*Separate(warm) room for vulnerable children.
Food cut up by server for child with CP
TA in hall for autistic child but did not sit next to him to keep him as independent as possible.*

School Visit 2

Met with the headteacher who gave a general over view of school meals at the school. The lunch break is short, only 35 minutes. There is a canteen for two course dinner and a cafe for snacks, pizzas etc. The cafe is open at break time and students can, and some do, spend their dinner money there.

We then met a group of students from different year groups who make up a committee to look at school meals. The catering manager is part of this group.

We then had lunch in the canteen with the head and member of staff responsible for overseeing the catering.

There are no vending machines in the school and students are not allowed out.

A. Does the school monitor the take up of school meals

Yes

B. Does the school monitor the take up of school meals of those pupils entitled to free school meals?

C. Does the school wish to see an increase in the number of pupils taking a daily school meal? If not why?

Yes

D. Does the school know or have any evidence to support the reasons for low take-up?

Feed back from pupils we spoke to:

Long queues, sometimes the 'thumb' system doesn't always work. (We were told this is usually because the thumb is not put on properly)

Cheaper to bring a pack up.

£1.30 for a bacon sandwich with one tiny bit of bacon is not good value and sometimes not good quality.

E. Could the school accommodate an increase in the number of pupils taking a school meal? What would be the barriers?

Yes, it would make sure it could.

F. How involved are the school in the promotion of school meals?

At parents and open evenings there is food to sample.

G. Does the school gather feedback from either parents/carers and/or pupils on the school meals provided in the school?

Yes

H. How satisfied is the school with its current school meals provider? What are they good at? What could be improved?

Very content. The meals have improved and are liked.

- I. Is the school meal achieving value for money in terms of cost and quality?
Yes. The two course meal is subsidised by the profit from items such as bakes and soft drinks sold in the cafe
- J. How would you rate the quality of the dining facilities currently available in the school?
Good, pleasant places to eat.
- K. Do you, or have you considered offering a cashless payment system for parents?
Yes, have the thumb scan. Parents can put in money online and see what the child has bought.
- L. What is the payment frequency for dinners? Option to pay daily, weekly in advance, half termly in advance, etc?
- M. Does the school run Clubs over lunchtime? Is there time to eat hot dinner and attend club?
- N. Do pack ups and dinners eat together in the dining room?
Yes, pack ups can usually eat wherever they like.
- O. Is the dining room a pleasant place to eat in? Are queues tolerable? Is there pressure to eat quickly and go?
Yes it is. The students perceived the queues as long but they weren't too bad. There was no pressure to eat and go apart from the short lunch break – 35 minutes.
- P. Does the school management have any input into the menu options? Do pupils have any input into menu options? Do the pupils get the meal they wanted (in choice schools?).
- Q. Can parents opt into dinners at any time or do they have to commit to a term etc?
- R. How are those entitled to free meals identified in the classroom/ dining room?
Cashless system ensures FSM children are not identified.

S. Does the food look appealing? Is there much waste going in the bin?
Yes, don't know but very little left in cafe at end of lunch.

T. Equalities

TA sat with child with Downs Syndrome. Staff keep an eye on vulnerable pupils.

School Visit 3

Under contract with Chartwells - 5 year contract to March 2015. After rebuild in 2010 Chartwells won the contract.

Head and Finance staff thought that they gave poor value for money. School maintain and repair equipment and are responsible for capital costs. The profit is split and the school receive on average £4,000 per annum. However, there is no open book system and the actual profit is unknown to the school. The school feels that the profits must be higher than they appear.

Meeting soon to renegotiate but Chartwells not willing to share information on profits. The staff working in school are good. Potential for school to join CYC contract post 2015. Turnover £1,600 per day.

FSM cost £2.40 which included a main meal and a drink or a main meal and a pudding.

Food is expensive e.g. panini cost £1.80. Lots of packaging. The average spend per pupil is £4. Cashless system where cards can be pre-loaded via the internet or at the machine in school. FSM pre-loaded card prior to lunch. 200 FSMs Termly letters to parents regarding signing up for FSM. Slip to provide information to parents to see if there is an entitlement.

The school is functionally difficult to manage at lunchtime. No social eating area. 1,300 children and staff.

Tick box healthy menu. Lots of cookies and pizza. Staff do not monitor what children buy.

Parent survey and school council raise no big issues apart from cost.

Breakfast - toast, crumpets and bagels available.

Break 11 to 11.15am - bacon sandwiches. Lunch 1.15pm to 2pm

Chartwells also manage a Costa Coffee franchise in school.