

School Meals Scrutiny Review – Feedback from School Visits

School Visit 1

- Does the school monitor the take up of school meals?
Yes
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. (meal is subsidised from money made by break time trolley which sells cheesy bread, cookies, hot chocolate)
- 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.

- Is the school meal achieving value for money in terms of cost and quality?
Yes
- 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.
- 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.
- What is the payment frequency for dinners? Option to pay daily, weekly in advance, half termly in advance, etc?
Daily or weekly – mostly daily. Credit note issued if no money paid or pack up sent.
- Does the school run Clubs over lunchtime? Is there time to eat hot dinner and attend club?
All clubs are after school.
- Do pack ups and dinners eat together in the dining room?
Yes
- 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.
- 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.
- Can parents opt into dinners at any time or do they have to commit to a term etc?
Do it on a daily basis.
- 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)..

- 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.
- 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 head teacher 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. Responses to the survey questions are shown below:

- Does the school monitor the take up of school meals
Yes
- Does the school monitor the take up of school meals of those pupils entitled to free school meals?
- Does the school wish to see an increase in the number of pupils taking a daily school meal? If not why?
Yes
- 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.*

- 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.
- How involved are the school in the promotion of school meals?
At parents and open evenings there is food to sample.
- Does the school gather feedback from either parents/carers and/or pupils on the school meals provided in the school?
Yes
- 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.
- 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
- How would you rate the quality of the dining facilities currently available in the school?
Good, pleasant places to eat.
- 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.*
- What is the payment frequency for dinners? Option to pay daily, weekly in advance, half termly in advance, etc?
- Does the school run Clubs over lunchtime? Is there time to eat hot dinner and attend club?
- Do pack ups and dinners eat together in the dining room?
Yes, pack ups can usually eat wherever they like.
- 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.

- 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?).
- Can parents opt into dinners at any time or do they have to commit to a term etc?
- How are those entitled to free meals identified in the classroom/ dining room?
Cashless system ensures FSM children are not identified.
- 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.
- Equalities
TA sat with child with Downs Syndrome. Staff keep an eye on vulnerable pupils.

School Visit 3

The Headteacher outlined the catering arrangements at the school. The school was tied into a contract with a private provider (Chartwells) which had been part of the facilities management arrangements made with the building of the new school. All catering equipment was provided and funded by the school and the contract provides for a 50:50 split of the profits between school and contractor. Food is provided on a self-service basis offering a range of snacks, hot and cold meals etc. from a number of locations in the 'main street' of the school building. Food is provided before school starts (breakfast), break times and at lunch.

The contractor provides a range of healthy menus but other food is available too so healthy eating is determined by student choice.

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.

The school operates a cashless payment system which parents and students can top on line or in school. There is therefore no means of identifying students in receipt of free school meals at the service points.

The Head went on to outline a number of concerns about the current contract and catering arrangements more generally:

- Despite its much-praised design, the new school building did not have a dedicated dining/eating facility and this caused a number of practical problems and was felt to militate against healthy eating. The school is functionally difficult to manage at lunchtime with 1,300 children and staff.
- The contract was not considered to be good value for money, particularly with regard to the pricing of food and excessive packaging.
- 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 the contract lacked transparency about costs and calculation of profit. The school felt strongly that there were not getting a fair share of the returns made by the contractor but had no way of verifying this.
- The school would not wish to renew the contract when it expired and would look re-contract with a different provider and better, more transparent terms.
- Potential for school to join CYC contract post 2015.
- Chartwells staff in school are good
- 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
- Overall take up of school meals was not known but the daily turnover of some £1600 suggested that it was high.
- The head teacher is a new appointment and is seeking to re-focus the school ethos to emphasis a strong achievement culture. Any changes to catering arrangements would need to support this change.

Parental and student views - There had been no specific survey on school catering but no issues had been raised through the student council other than the cost of meals etc.

Re Free school meals:

- FSM cost £2.40 which included a main meal and a drink or a main meal and a pudding.
- FSM pre-loaded card prior to lunch. 200 FSMs.
- The school is working with CYC to increase FSM take up and sends a termly letter to parents with information about FSM, entitlement and how to claim.

School Visit 4

- Does the school monitor the take up of school meals?
Yes
- Does the school monitor the take up of school meals of those pupils entitled to free school meals?

Yes a regular updated letter is sent to parents. A pastoral worker has responsibility for this. The Headteacher feels there is an element of pride involved in not applying.

- Does the school wish to see an increase in the number of pupils taking a daily school meal? If not why?
Yes to ensure every child is eating a healthy meal.
- Does the school know or have any evidence to support the reasons for low take-up?
Expense mainly .many pupils eat only once or twice per week
- Could the school accommodate an increase in the number of pupils taking a school meal? What would be the barriers?
Yes. There are no barriers but there will be implications in the long term when infants receive free school meals. Maybe it will encourage for juniors or maybe it will be divisive within families if cost is an issue.
- How involved are the school in the promotion of school meals?
Very involved. Menus are on the website. Taster meals are provided on open nights. Grandparents are invited into school for meals. Carr has a curry club. Friday top table where certain where certain pupils are rewarded by sitting on a top table to eat with the H/T
- Does the school gather feedback from either parents/carers and/or pupils on the school meals provided in the school?
Yes, via school book mainly.
- How satisfied is the school with its current school meals provider? What are they good at? What could be improved?
The quality of food is fine. The issues are around delivery days for fresh food, the cost to the school and the effectiveness of communication with the contractor on a day to day basis (kitchen phone)
- Is the school meal achieving value for money in terms of cost and quality?
Yes in quality. Cost is an issue for some.
- How would you rate the quality of the dining facilities currently available in the school?
Very good. A warm, friendly atmosphere in the dining room.
- Do you, or have you considered offering a cashless payment system for parents?

This exists already. Nobody handles cash in the dining room. FSM are not obvious to other pupils.

- What is the payment frequency for dinners? Option to pay daily, weekly in advance, half termly in advance, etc?
Weekly in advance.
- Does the school run Clubs over lunchtime? Is there time to eat hot dinner and attend club?
Yes there are lunch clubs. First lunch passes are provided for club goers.
- Do pack ups and dinners eat together in the dining room?
Yes.
- Is the dining room a pleasant place to eat in? Are queues tolerable? Is there pressure to eat quickly and go?
The dining room is pleasant and queues are managed well.
- 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?).
There is a 3 week cycle. Menus can be redesigned.
- Can parents opt into dinners at any time or do they have to commit to a term etc?
Weekly commitment
- How are those entitled to free meals identified in the classroom/ dining room?
The adults know who they are without making it obvious to pupils.
- Does the food look appealing? Is there much waste going in the bin?
The food looks appealing. Waste is kept to a minimum.

School Visit 5

- Does the school monitor the take up of school meals?
Yes but it doesn't particularly act upon it.
- Does the school monitor the take up of school meals of those pupils entitled to free school meals?
To some extent. The H/T is not responsible for the organisation or monitoring of school meals.

- Does the school wish to see an increase in the number of pupils taking a daily school meal? If not why?
The school sees it as parental choice
- Does the school know or have any evidence to support the reasons for low take-up?
Expense mainly - some faddy eaters
- Could the school accommodate an increase in the number of pupils taking a school meal? What would be the barriers?
Yes. It would depend on the contract with the cook.
- How involved are the school in the promotion of school meals?
Emails are sent home to advertise school meals. Only to those who communicate with the school by email.
- Does the school gather feedback from either parents/carers and/or pupils on the school meals provided in the school?
Not to any real extent.
- How satisfied is the school with its current school meals provider? What are they good at? What could be improved?
Generally happy but would like the meals to be cheaper.
- Is the school meal achieving value for money in terms of cost and quality?
Yes in quality. Cost is an issue.
- How would you rate the quality of the dining facilities currently available in the school?
Good
- PDo you, or have you considered offering a cashless payment system for parents?
This exists already. Nobody handles cash in the dining room.
- What is the payment frequency for dinners? Option to pay daily, weekly in advance, half termly in advance, etc?
Weekly in advance.
- Does the school run Clubs over lunchtime? Is there time to eat hot dinner and attend club?
Yes there are lunch clubs and pupils have time to eat.
- Do pack ups and dinners eat together in the dining room?

No

- Is the dining room a pleasant place to eat in? Are queues tolerable? Is there pressure to eat quickly and go?
The dining room is pleasant and any queues are managed well.
- 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?).
Not really
- Can parents opt into dinners at any time or do they have to commit to a term etc?
Weekly commitment usually.
- How are those entitled to free meals identified in the classroom/ dining room?
Staff don't always know who is FSM
- Does the food look appealing? Is there much waste going in the bin?
The food looks appealing. Waste is kept to a minimum.