

16th March 2014

Letter to the Sunday Times

Pilot projects in schools across Newham and Durham have shown that universal free school meals lead to a rapid and marked improvement in academic performance, particularly among the poorest children. This is partly because well-nourished children concentrate better (only 1% of packed lunches meet the current nutritional standards for school food); and partly because of the wider cultural benefits. Bringing everyone – children and teachers – together once a day to talk and break bread makes a dramatic difference to the culture and atmosphere of a school.

This is why – whatever political gossip you might read – this policy has such broad cross-party support. Originally a Labour idea, it was brought back into play by Michael Gove, and has been carried over the finishing line by the Lib Dems. From September all infants will eat well for free.

As Head Teachers, and as professionals working in the sectors most closely involved, we have seen for ourselves what a huge difference this policy will make. We also understand the logistical challenges involved. But help is available (details at www.schoolfoodplan.com). We would urge head teachers to take advantage of the government-funded support, and seize this golden opportunity.

Headteachers

Richard Dunne	Ashley CE Primary School, Walton
Louise Nichols	Kingsmead and Gayhurst Schools
Sarah Rutty	Bankside Primary School, Leeds
Gill Harrison	St Oswald's CE VA Infant & Nursery School
Lindsay Vollans	St Michaels Primary School, Bishop Middleham
Carmen Palmer	St Richard's CE Primary School, Ham
Ed Vainker	Reach Academy, Feltham
Caroline Owen	St Laurence CE Primary School, Derbyshire
Kim Dorian-Kemp	High View Primary, Plymouth
Helen Colbert	East Sheen Primary School
Rachel Chahal	The Oval, Birmingham
Jared Brading	Sacred Heart Primary School, Battersea
Tim Baker	Charlton Manor Primary School
Calvin Henry	St Marks Primary School, Islington
Simon Mower	Chaddlewood Primary School, Plymouth
Catherine Lester	Cheam Fields Primary School
Catherine Langham	Abbotsmeade Primary School, Peterborough



SCHOOL FOOD PLAN

Mrs Hilton
Claire Platt
Travis Latham

Little Gonerby CE Infant School, Grantham
Collaton St Mary Primary School
The Federation of George Betts and Shireland Hall Primary Academies

Paula Cummings
John Lynch
Karen Holmes
Adam Breakwell
Jim Wallace
Steven Badcott

Cambo First School, Morpeth
High Street Primary School, Plymouth
St Tudy's CE Primary School, Bodmin
Orleton CE Primary, Shropshire
College Road Primary, Plymouth
Uplowman Primary, Exeter

School Food Plan Expert Panel and others

Professor Ashley
Adamson

Public Health Nutrition (Newcastle University)

Myles Bremner
Rosie Boycott
Anne Bull

Director, School Food Plan
Chair of London Food Board
National Chair, Lead Association for Catering in Education
Chief Executive, Children's Food Trust
Co-author, School Food Plan

Linda Cregan
Henry Dibleby
Alison Garnham

Chief Executive, Child Poverty Action Group
Director, Food for Life Partnership

Libby Grundy
Judy Hargadon

Former Chief Executive, Children's Food Trust

Christine Lewis
Neil Lovell

National Officer for Education, Unison

Carmel McConell,
Professor Theresa
Marteau

Director, Jamie Oliver Foundation

Dr Michael Nelson
Jeanette Orrey
Sarah Owen
Sarah Ray

Chief Executive, Magic Breakfast
Director, Behaviour and Health Unit, Cambridge University

Sara Jayne Stanes
John Vincent
Stephanie Wood

Public Health Nutrition Research
Ex-school Cook and co-founder, Food for Life
School Cook, Stoke Newington School
Senior Manager, National College for Teaching and Leadership
Chief Executive, Royal Academy of Culinary Arts
Co-Author, School Food Plan
Founder, School Food Matters



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