

School Food: Guidance for Governors

Why this matters

The governing board are responsible for the provision of school food. As a governor you play a crucial role in creating and embedding a great school food culture. It is the statutory responsibility of the governing body / trustees to ensure the School Food Standards¹ are being met and Ofsted are putting a much greater focus on how schools are creating a culture and ethos of healthy eating². A great school food culture improves children's health and academic performance³. Increasing the take-up of school meals is also better for your school's finances. A half-empty dining hall – like a half-empty restaurant – is certain to lose money⁴.

Getting more families to choose school meals requires a cultural change within your school. It means providing tasty food that both looks good and is nutritious; creating a positive dining experience; getting the price right; allowing children to eat with their friends and instilling a love of cooking and growing. The headteacher can lead this transformation but they also need support from their governors and leadership team.

The Department for Education recommends that all governors “work with the senior leadership team to develop a whole school food policy that sets out the school's approach to its provision of food, food education (including practical cooking), the role of the catering team as part of the wider school team and the school's strategy to increase the take-up of school lunches.”⁵

Food is a great way for your school to engage with and support your local community. You might reach out to community members to help your school set up cooking and gardening clubs, or share an allotment with local families. Many schools love to invite community members in for lunch or to sell produce at school events. There are also many national and local authority initiatives which schools can access, including [Change4Life](#) campaigns, [National School Meals Week](#) and [British Nutrition Foundation Healthy Eating Week](#). Other initiatives and programmes, to help schools transform food culture and promote healthy lifestyles, are showcased on the ‘What Works Well’ website.

Your school has a unique role to help children learn and develop good healthy eating habits for life, creating happier, healthier adults of the future.

Links to other useful resources

The School Food Plan “What Works Well” website

at www.schoolfoodplan.com/www

DfE's Guidance on School Food for Governors

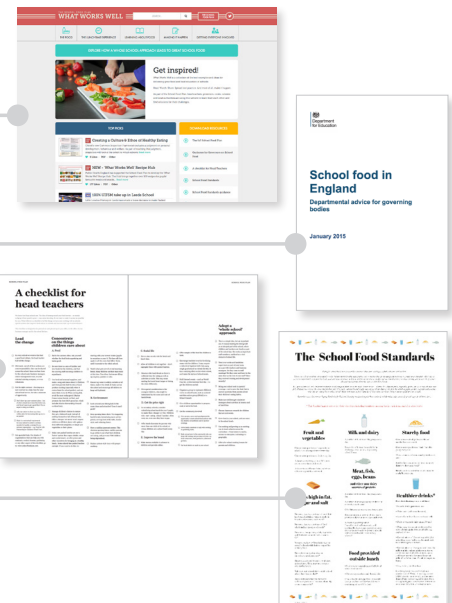
at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england>

The School Food Plan's Headteacher checklist

at www.schoolfoodplan.com/checklist/

School Food Standards Guidance document

at www.schoolfoodplan.com/standards



¹ www.schoolfoodplan.com/standards

² www.schoolfoodplan.com/ofsted

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/370686/HT_briefing_layoutvFINALvii.pdf

⁴ http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/School_Food_Plan_2013.pdf - Page 49

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/393122/School_food_in_England_2015.pdf

SCHOOL FOOD PLAN

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Ofsted expect children to make informed choices about healthy eating. The School Food Plan, in collaboration with the National Governors' Association, has produced this checklist to support governors in championing a whole school approach to food and help create a culture and ethos of healthy eating. It is designed to be used alongside other School Food Plan resources including the [Headteacher Checklist](#) and What Works Well website www.schoolfoodplan.com/www

ENSURING CLARITY OF VISION, ETHOS AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Key questions

What can the governing body do?

- Does your school take a whole school approach to food?
- Who on the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for healthy food provision and food education?
- Are all staff aware of and implementing a whole school food policy?

- Ensure that school food is included within the remit of one of the governing body's committee as part of the school's wider health and wellbeing strategy.
- Ask the SLT to develop / review a whole school food policy which includes a healthy packed lunch, vending and drinks policy.
- Check what CPD training is in place for all teachers and support staff to support their knowledge of health and wellbeing?

- What do school meals look and taste like?
- Is drinking water freely and easily available?
- What do children and parents think about the food and drink on offer, and is there a positive lunchtime environment?
- Are children given regular access to the practical experience of food growing and cooking?

- When making a school visit, see how the lunchtime experience contributes to the culture and ethos of the school.
- Have a member of the governing body attend school council / School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) meetings.
- Ask the SNAG / school council to provide feedback on the quality and enjoyment of school food and overall lunchtime experience.

- Are all children able to access a school meal: including children who qualify for free school meals and children with allergies?
- Does your school have a breakfast club / after school club which is accessible and affordable for all pupils?

- Ensure all school meal take up data is reported.
- Ask the SLT to investigate why children might not be opting for a school meal and look at ways to reach families who aren't taking up their free school meal entitlement.
- Use a cashless system to reduce stigmatisation and shorten queue times.
- Consider using pupil premium funding to support a breakfast club.

HOLDING THE HEADTEACHER TO ACCOUNT / SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP

- How will your school demonstrate a culture and ethos of healthy eating to Ofsted?

- With your school leaders, work through the questions in the School Food Plan's Practical Guidance Creating a Culture and Ethos of Healthy Eating. www.schoolfoodplan.com/ofsted

- Is your school complying with the statutory School Food Standards ?
- Does your catering team regularly meet with the SLT?
- Is your school's kitchen team getting the support they need to develop and learn?
- Are the catering team, including mid-day supervisors, using the [Professional Standards](#)?

- Check with the Headteacher / Catering Manager that standards are being met across the whole school day.
- If an exempt Academy, sign up to the [School Food Standards](#).
- Ask how your Catering staff are supported and integrated into school life.

- What provision is there for every pupil to experience a practical and curriculum based food education?
- Is "a love of cooking" and a knowledge of healthy eating being instilled as part of mandatory teaching of Food Education?

- Ensure there is enough timetabling, space and practical resources (equipment, ingredients) .
- Find out how the school budget/charging policy makes provision so all pupils can access ingredients and resources for cooking.

OVERSEEING THE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE SCHOOL AND MAKING SURE ITS MONEY IS WELL SPENT

- What are your take up figures of school meals including universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) and free school meals (FSM)?

- Obtain and review take up data each term.
- Work with SLT to identify trends, flag issues and create a plan for increasing take up.
- See how expert support could improve the quality and take up of meals.

- Are all children entitled to Pupil Premium funding registered for a Free School Meal?

- Ask the SLT/Business Manager to review the current Pupil Premium sign up system and look at [good practice](#) to help maximise registrations.

- Is your school getting the most out of its Catering contract?
- Consider how you could you do better?

- Ask the SLT/Business Manager to conduct a review of the current catering contract and ensure the spec is appropriate.
- The contract spec should include the [School Food Standards](#), [Professional Standards](#), food quality and lunchtime experience.