

The Importance of a Good School Food Culture

Case Study: Holy Trinity Primary

Our School

Holy Trinity Primary School in Bury Town Centre has a broad pupil demographic, with 91% of children speaking English as an additional language and 17 languages spoken in total. The school is one of the most deprived in the area, with very low levels of attainment on entry.

School meals are provided by the Local Authority, with 150 pupils being served each day. Although the food is of good quality, budget restrictions have traditionally limited choice and variety. Outside of the dining room, all pupils have a snack during the morning. Like many schools, we have some issues with mixed messaging, with children often bringing cakes or sweets in to share with classmates on their birthday. We also hold 'Easter egg' raffles and regular cake sales to raise funds.

However, we know that a good school food culture is important for our pupils and have developed a number of our own schemes, including a Friday 'party table' to reward good behavior for one child in each class. But we wanted to learn more about the ways in which we can improve our food culture and so jumped at the chance to take part in the pilot for this new training resource.

The First Steps on Our Food Journey

The training session led to some extremely lively and positive staff discussions about school food culture and its relationship to pupil health and wellbeing. The video case studies were especially useful, providing all of our staff with some concrete ideas to deliver improvements. Some practical suggestions that particularly resonated were:

1. Staff eating with the children and the introduction of table cloths, water and cutlery - to create a more sociable and enjoyable dining environment
2. Establishing a 'Bistro Buddy' system, in which year 6 help to serve the younger pupils. This provides useful experience for older children and some welcome support for catering staff!
3. The introduction of salad bars and vegetable gardens, to improve pupil choice and get them actively involved in growing their own food

The session has galvanized us into action. We've already introduced a number of 'quick wins' including changes to our breakfast snacks, to eliminate unhealthy options, and many members of staff have begun to eat with the children.

In the longer-term, we plan to:

1. Meet with our caterers to ensure food is suitably varied and healthy.
2. Install a self-service salad bar
3. Set-up our own 'Bistro Buddies' scheme
4. Eliminate unhealthy paid-for snacks and expand our provision of free or subsidised fruit to all pupils
5. Get pupils involved in growing their own vegetables

"We're only at the start of our journey to improve our school food culture, but, after undertaking the training, we're confident that we can deliver improvements through small manageable steps and that our efforts will provide enormous benefits to the health, wellbeing and attainment of all our pupils".

Marcus Elder, Headteacher

