

food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food in Schools
Survey 2007



▶▶ **Coventry**

Obesity and Children ▶▶

Obesity among children is spiralling and tackling obesity is a national priority. In July 2004 a Public Service Agreement (PSA) target was set to 'halt the year on year rise in obesity among children under 11 by 2010 in the context of a broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole'. This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.

The Foresight report (2007) – 'Tackling Obesities: future choices' has taken a strategic overview of the issue of obesity. By 2050 the Foresight modelling indicates about 25% of children under 16 could be obese (www.foresight.gov.uk)

As part of a multi-faceted approach to tackling obesity school food has undergone huge change in the last three years:

Transforming School Food

New standards for school food have been introduced covering food not only served at lunch times but across the whole school day. This work is being led by the School Food Trust www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk

Healthy Schools

The Healthy Schools Programme has been transformed with a target for all schools to be on the programme by December 2009 and 75% of schools to have achieved new healthy school status. The new status involves schools having completed the Healthy Eating Theme which covers a whole range of issues including having a whole school food policy, and pupil and parent involvement in all aspects of the development and implementation of healthy food throughout the school day. www.healthyschools.org.uk

Food in Schools Programme

In 2005 the Department of Health introduced the Food in Schools Programme which looks at food across the school day. A toolkit for schools is available online to support developing food in schools activities in line with healthy eating criteria for national healthy schools status. www.foodinschools.org

Food in Schools Audit ▶▶

In order to assess how effectively national priorities on obesity and school food are influencing practice in schools the Department of Health West Midlands undertook a baseline survey of Food in Schools Activity in 2005. This survey focussed particularly on food school activity in primary schools across the West Midlands. This audit was repeated during the spring term 2007 to measure changes over the past 2 years. Additional questions were added to the 2007 survey to look at changes as a result of introduction of new standards for school food, and the new Healthy Schools Programme criteria. The 2007 survey also included secondary, middle, and special schools and PRUs.

The survey provides a snapshot in time of food in schools activity. The response rate varied between stages of education with a much higher response rate from primary schools than from secondary and special schools. We have therefore reported on these sectors separately. There has also been a reduction in the response rate for primary since 2005 although still relatively high. The results say nothing about the representativeness of the sample and this needs to be taken into consideration when looking at the data. However, the results suggest a very positive change in schools and an increase in good practice across the West Midlands. The category other covers middle schools, PRUs and those schools which did not specify which group they fell into.

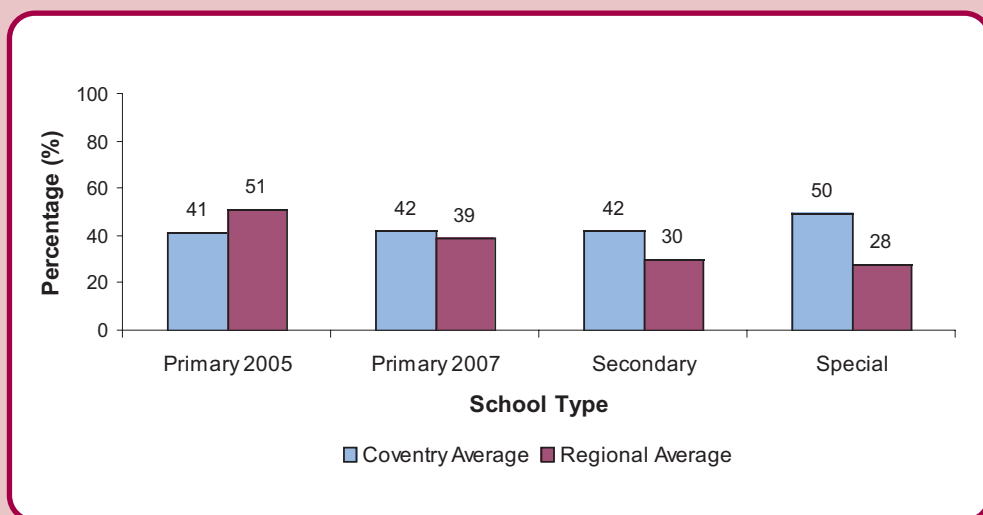
Headlines ▶▶

- Only 36% of responding primary schools report having a whole school food policy compared to 62% regionally
- 83% of responding primary schools in Coventry promote healthier lunchboxes to pupils and parents
- 97.5% of Coventry schools are participating in the Healthy Schools Programme
- 20.4% of Year 6 pupils within Coventry are obese which is above the national average of 17.3%. (NCMP, 2006/07)
- Free school meal uptake in Coventry is above average – primary schools 86% (average 82.5%); secondary schools 78.6% (average 73.5%) (School Food Trust, 2007)

Coventry Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Range across LEA's (%)
Primary 2005	97	40	41%	38-77%
Primary 2007	86	36	42%	20-58%
Secondary	19	8	42%	11-50%
Special	10	5	50%	0-75%
Other		1		
2007 Total	115	49	43%	21-56%

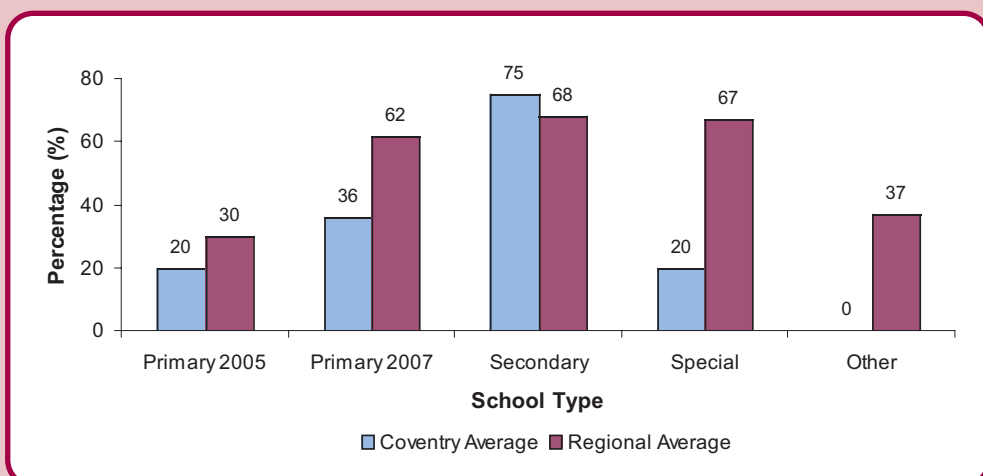
1: Response Rate

The regional response rate for primary schools was higher than that for special and secondary schools so we are reporting on the findings for each of these areas separately. The 'other' section includes schools which either did not specify which category they fell into, PRU's and through schools. Within Coventry this section is made up entirely of schools who did not specify which category they fell into.



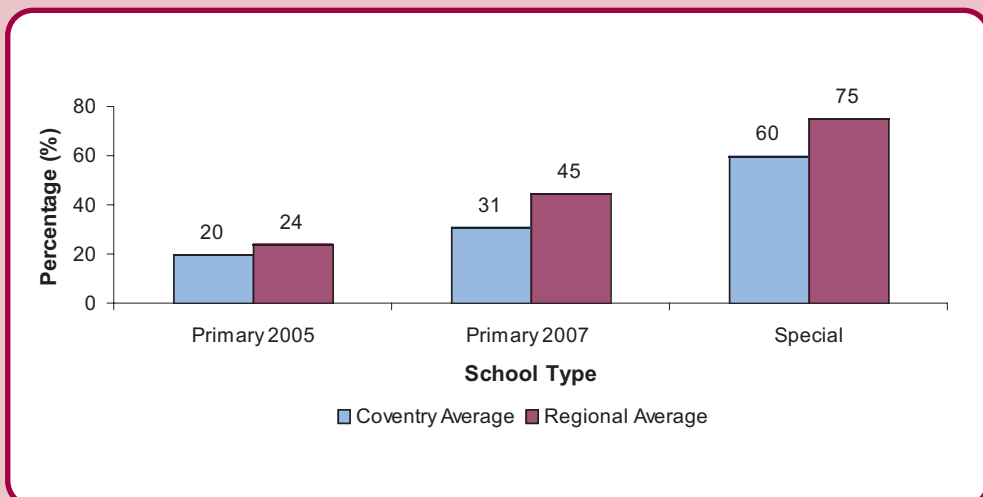
2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

The number of responding primary schools reporting having a whole school food policy has increased by 16% since 2005 however this is still considerably lower than the regional average.



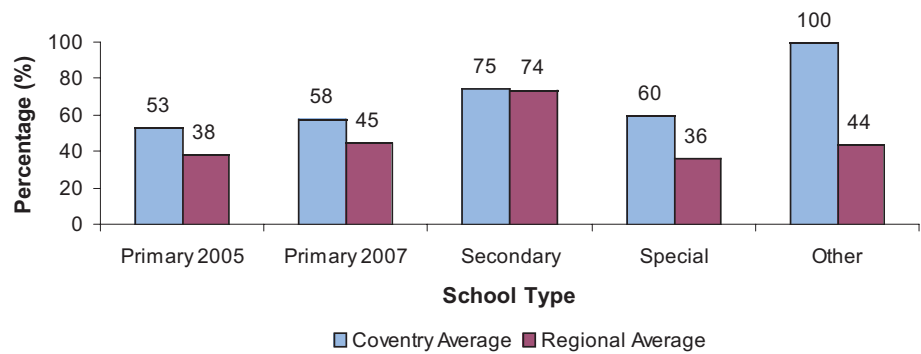
3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Since 2005 there has been an 11% increase in the number of primary schools providing fruit at KS2, however both primary and special schools were below the regional average.



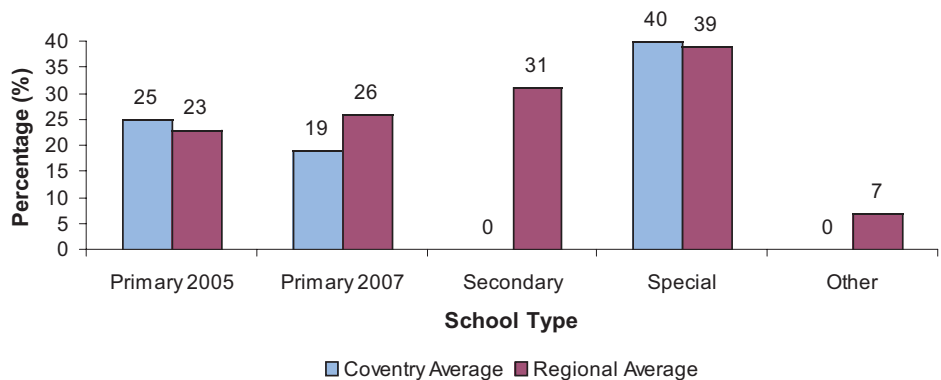
4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

Coventry has a higher than average number of schools reporting that they provide a breakfast club for pupils.



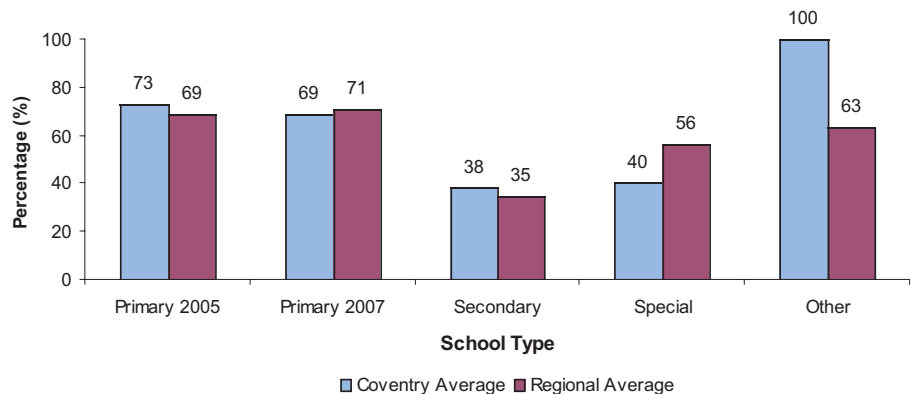
5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

A low proportion of responding schools reported having a tuckshop in their schools.



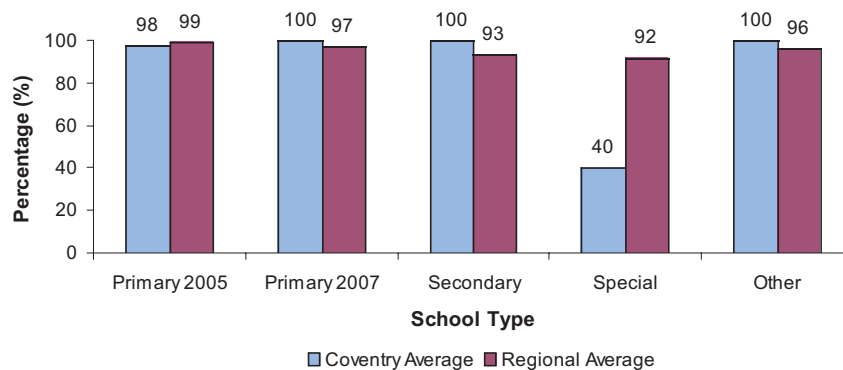
6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

Secondary and other schools scored above the regional average for implementing a healthy snacking policy. Whereas, primary and special schools were below the regional average. When considering the data it needs be noted that these may not be mutually exclusive, in many cases healthy snacking policies are part of the whole school food policy or a school may have a healthy snacking policy but not a policy covering the wider aspects of school food.



7: Does your school provide access to free drinking water?

A high proportion of schools are providing access to free drinking water with a regional average of 96%, Coventry scored just below this with 94%. Only 2 of the responding special schools reported providing access to free drinking water.



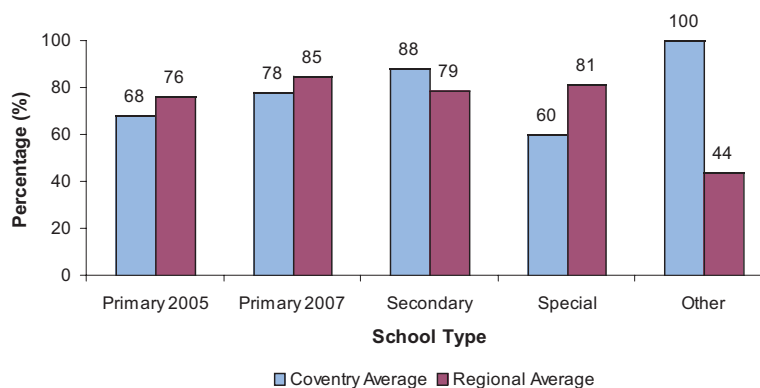
8: Does your school have a dining room that is an attractive and sociable place to eat?

Since 2005 Coventry has seen a 12% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a dining room that was an attractive and sociable place to eat.

Some of the key themes related to the dining environment include:

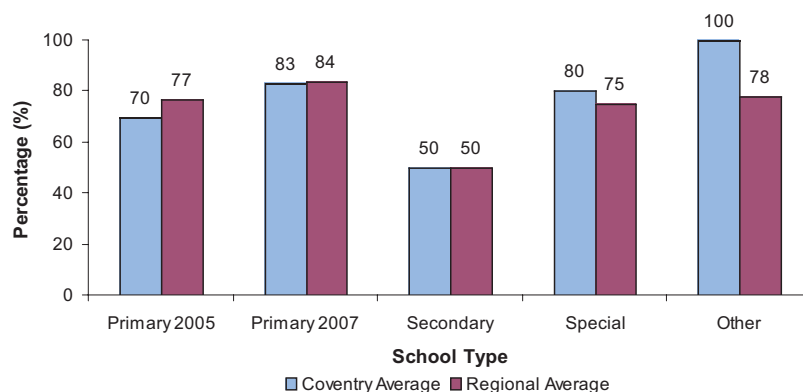
- 1. Improvements** - A number of primary schools said they were in the process of developing their dining environment.
- 2. Lack of facilities** - Many primary schools only have the option to eat in their classrooms
- 3. School Hall** - Multipurpose halls are often the only available place for children to eat.
- 4. Difficulties** - The school hall can be difficult to make attractive due to its multipurpose use.

Although no schools within Coventry reported any specific examples of good practice regarding dining room environments, some areas within the region reported examples such as the introduction of fun tablecloths, display of artwork and playing music in the dining room.



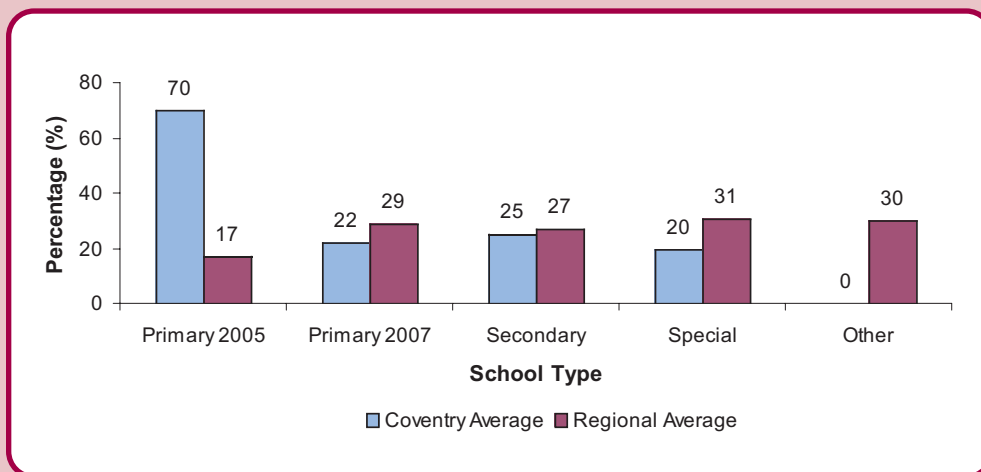
9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

Since 2005 Coventry has seen a 13% increase in the number of primary schools reporting that they promote healthier lunchboxes to pupils and parents. Furthermore, secondary, special and other schools all scored in line with or above the regional average.



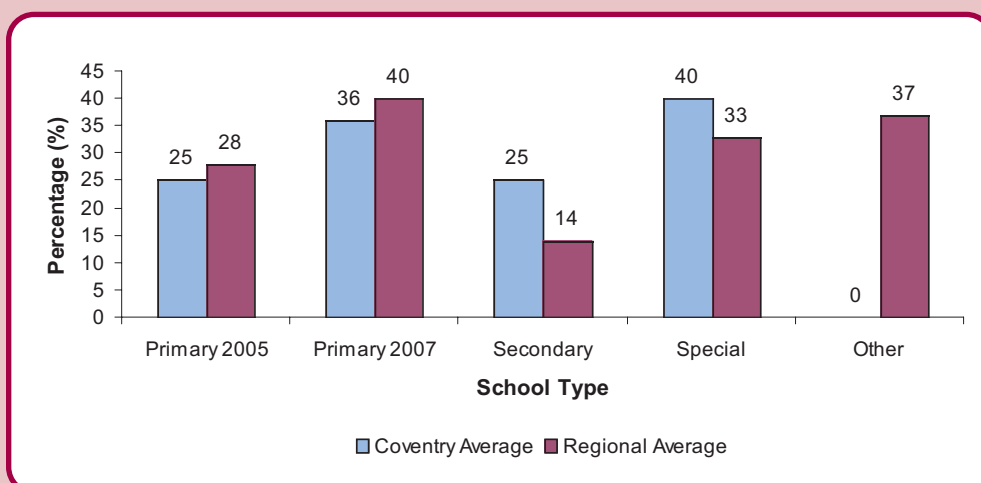
10: Does your school have a cooking club?

There has been a large decrease in the number of primary schools reporting having a cooking club between 2005 and 2007. Furthermore, all schools in Coventry were below the regional average.



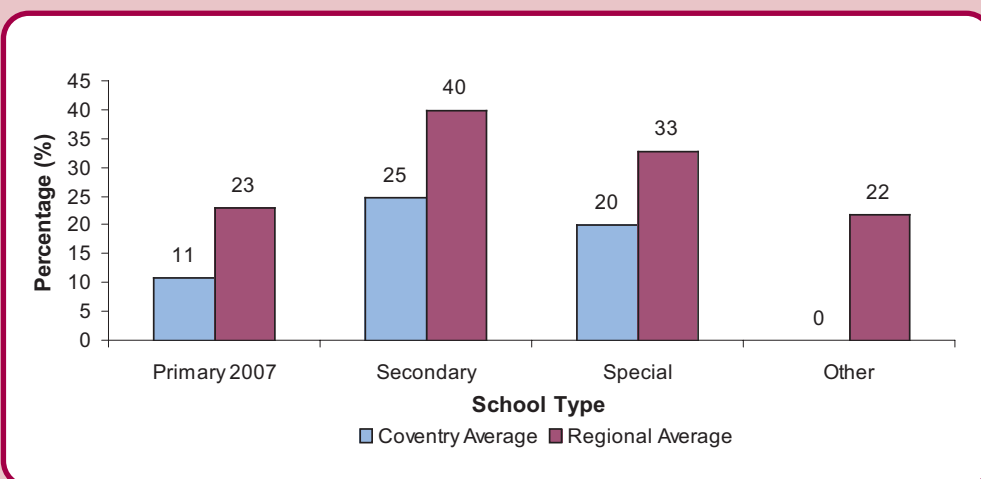
11: Does your school have a growing club?

Since 2005 there has been a 11% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a growing club. Compared to the region, primary and other school were below the average, whereas secondary and special schools were above the regional average.



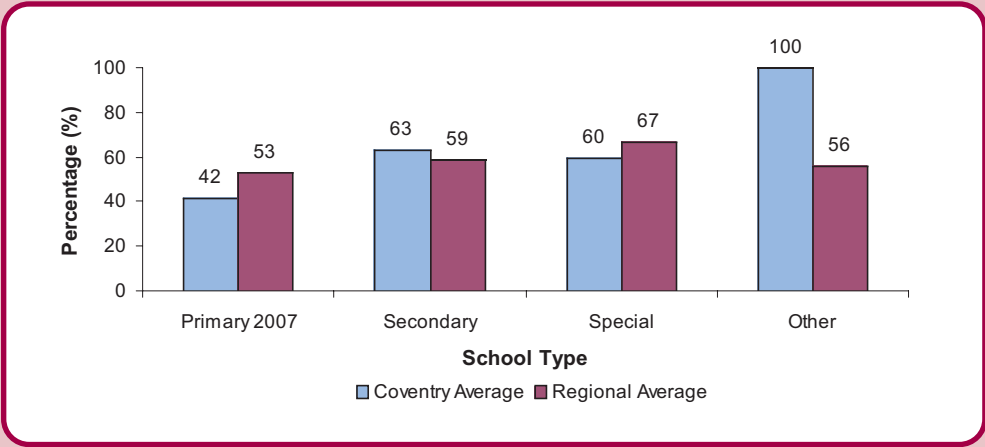
12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

All schools within Coventry were below the regional average for providing extended school activities.



13: Does your school provide opportunities within the school CPD plan for staff training on food related areas in school?

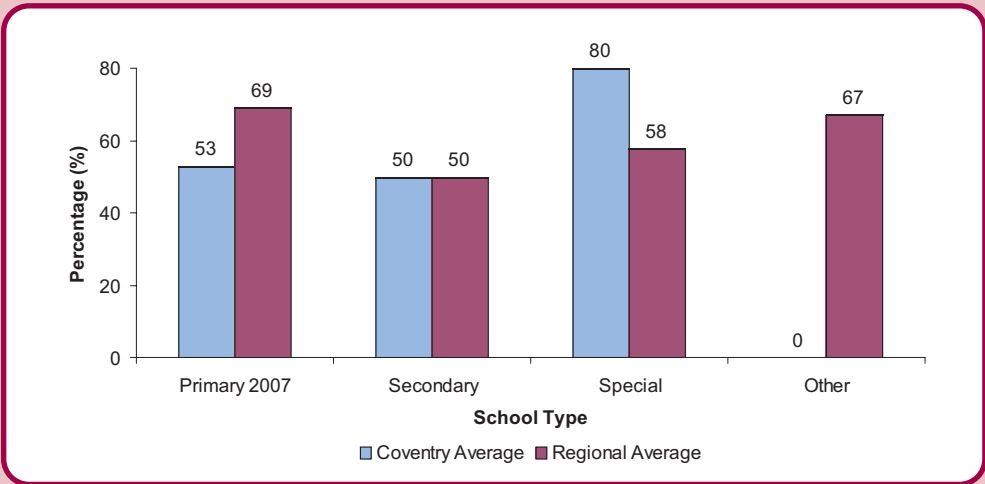
Primary and special schools scored below the regional average for providing opportunities within the school CPD plan for training on food related areas. Secondary and other schools on the other hand, were above the regional average. The majority of personal development noted was in basic food hygiene.



14: Does your school involve parents in school food activities?

Secondary and special school were in line with or above the regional average for involving parents in schools food activities. However, primary and 'other' school were below the regional average. The data suggests two main themes in the way parents are involved in school food activities:

1. **Participation in activities** - Green days, parent workshops and healthy share projects.
2. **Information** - Newsletters.



Changes ▶▶

Can you identify any changes children and young people are making to food choices across the school day as a result of new school food guidelines? If yes, what are the changes?



A high proportion of schools identified changes that children were making to food choices as a result of the new school food guidelines. Within Coventry 21 primary schools, 7 secondary schools, 3 special schools and 1 'other' school had noted changes. On further analysis three broad themes emerged including:

Making healthier choices ▶

These included, eating more fruit and vegetables, healthier lunchboxes, increased school meal uptake and increased water consumption.

"After a successful healthy eating meeting for parents - Packed lunches are healthier and the sales on the salad bar have increased"

Attitudes ▶

Many schools noted general changes in children's attitude to healthy food stating they were more health conscious and willing to try new foods.

"Children have a raised awareness and accept increasing responsibility for the choices they are making – they want to be healthy"

Knowledge/Awareness and Eating Behaviour ▶

Schools noted a greater awareness of 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' foods as well as changes in eating behaviour as a result of changes to school food.

"There is now a great awareness surrounding healthy choices. As a result there is a greater uptake of healthy food in schools"

Although not specifically reported on within Coventry, some schools within the region noted changes in children's behaviour such as being more attentive.

General Comments: ▶▶

Some schools added additional comments to the questionnaire. Two key themes emerged from these around examples of good practice and the difficulties encountered.

Examples of Good Practice – Healthy lunchbox competitions.

Difficulties - Lack of funding, practical help and guidelines.

“Whole school card system if children have 5 healthy things in lunch box/hot dinner then get a stamp on card. Full card = free ticket to school disco”

Recommendations ▶▶

In some areas Coventry was below the regional average. Some areas of note include:

Key Stage 2 Fruit is an area for additional work. We would like to see all school providing fruit for pupils at KS2 either through healthy snacking policies, through fruit tuckshops or by purchasing additional fruit from the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme distributor.

Water in Schools - Water should be made readily available to all pupils, only 2 - 40% of the responding special schools reported that they provided access to free water facilities which is well below the regional average of 96%.

Cooking Clubs - The number of schools with cooking clubs within Coventry was also below the regional average and is something that all schools should be looking at developing. This year the School Food Trust has been awarded funding to develop 'Lets Get Cooking' programmes in primary schools. For more information visit www.letsgetcooking.org.uk

Useful websites

www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk

www.foodinschools.org.uk

www.healthyschools.org.uk

www.5aday.nhs.uk

www.letsgetcooking.org.uk

www.foodafactoflife.org.uk



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