

food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food In Schools
Survey 2007



▶▶ **Sandwell**

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 This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.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 ▶▶

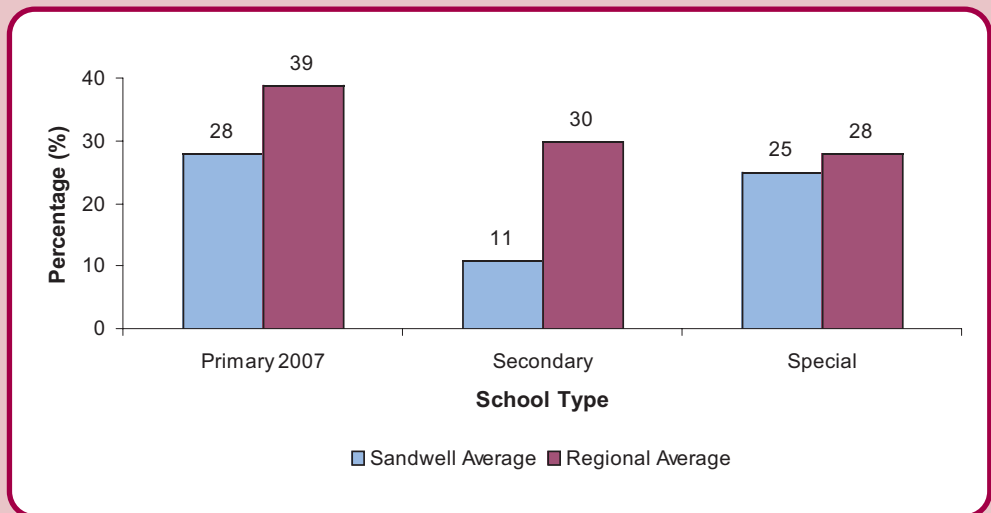
- 75% of responding primary schools in Sandwell report having a whole school food policy
- 50% of primary and secondary schools report providing pupils with a tuckshop
- Over three quarters of responding primary schools report that they promote healthy lunchboxes to pupils and parents
- Only 11% (2) secondary schools and 28% (28) of primary schools responded to the survey
- 94.2% of schools in Sandwell are participating in the healthy schools programme
- Free school meal uptake in Sandwell is below average – primary schools 77.9% (average 82.5%); secondary schools 78.6% (average 73.5%) (School Food Trust 2007).

Table 1: Response Rate

Sandwell Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Range across LEA's (%)
Primary 2007	100	28	28%	38-77%
Secondary	18	2	11%	20-58%
Special	4	1	25%	11-50%
Other		1		0-75%
2007 Total	122	31	25%	21-56%

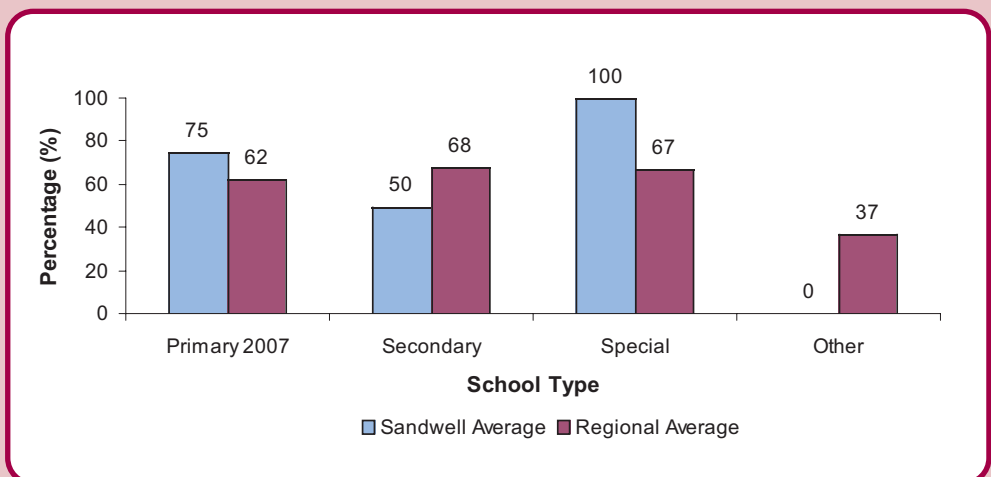
1: Response Rate

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 fall into, PRU's and through schools. Within Sandwell this section is made up of just one Pupil Referral Unit. It is important to note only 2 secondary schools and 1 special school responded to the survey.



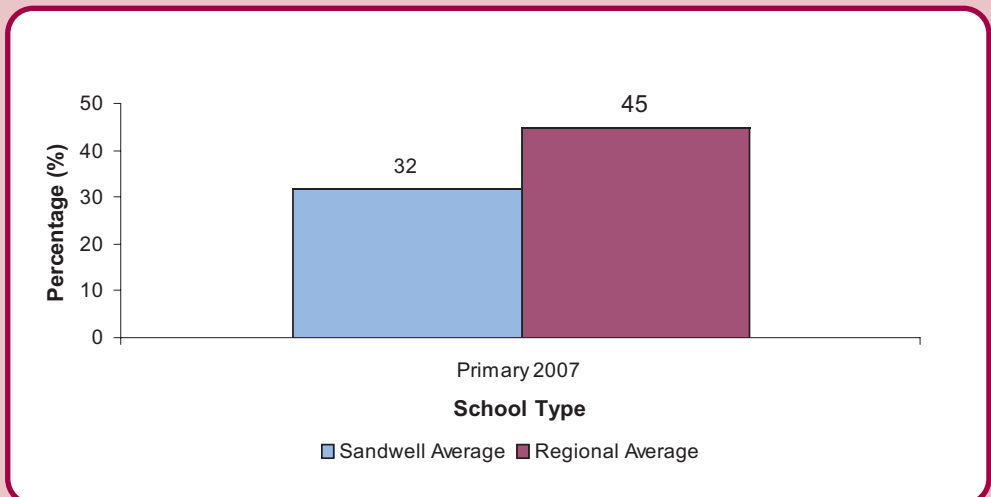
2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

The number of primary and special schools reporting having a whole school food policy was above the regional average, whereas for secondary and other schools this was below the regional average.



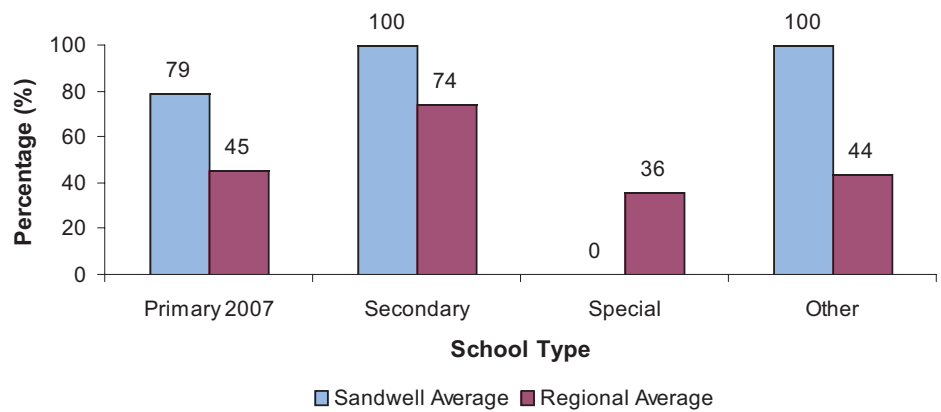
3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Figure 3 illustrates the percentage of primary schools providing fruit at KS2 which is below the regional average.



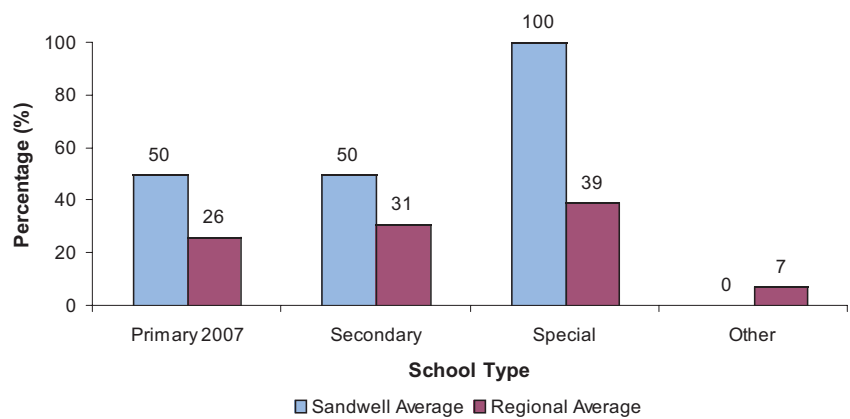
4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

Sandwell has a higher than average number of primary, secondary and other schools reporting that they provide a breakfast club.



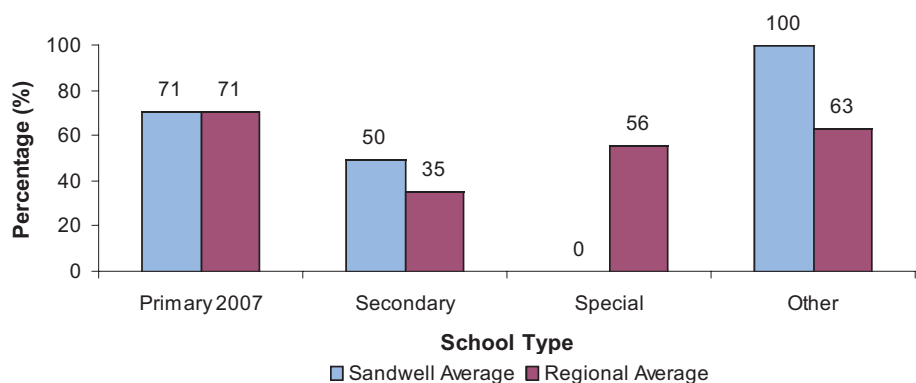
5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

Sandwell schools were above the regional average for providing pupils with a tuckshop.



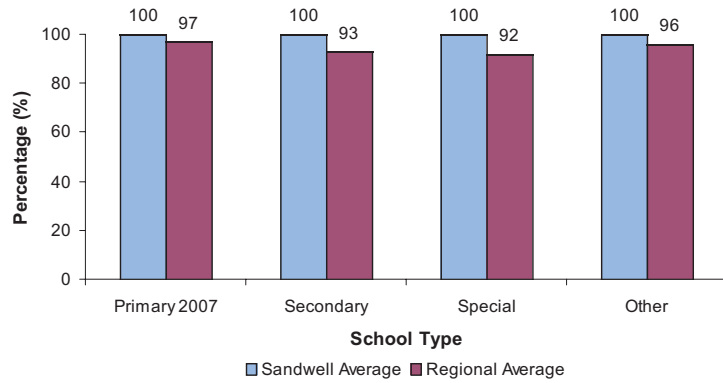
6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

Primary schools in Sandwell were in line with the regional average for reporting they have a healthy snacking policy. Furthermore secondary and other schools in Sandwell scored above 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%, Sandwell scored above this with 100%.



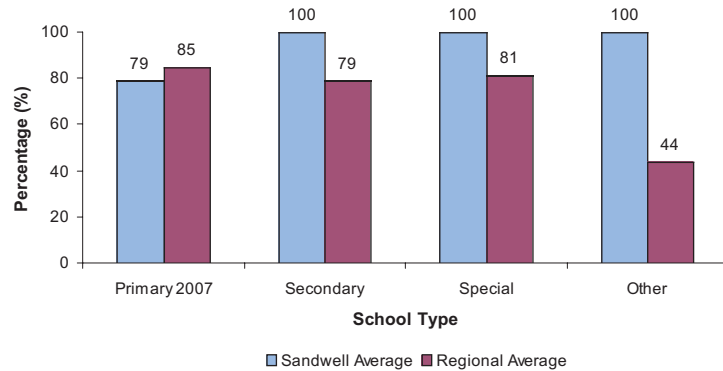
8: Does your school have a dining room that is an attractive and sociable place to eat?

Within Sandwell 100% of secondary, special and other schools that responded reported having an attractive and sociable dining environment.

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

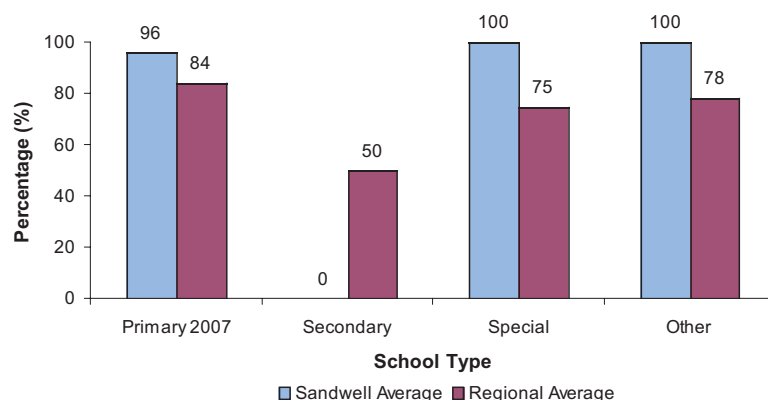
- 1. Improvements** – A number of primary schools said they were in the process of developing their dining environments.
- 2. Lack of facilities** - Many primary schools only have the option to eat in their classrooms
- 3. School Hall** - Multi-purpose halls are often the only available place for children to eat.
- 4. Difficulties** - The main complaints regarding dining environments were that dining areas were too small, and the school hall can be difficult to make attractive due to its multi-purpose use.

Although no schools within Sandwell reported any specific examples of good practice some areas within the region reported examples such as providing fun tablecloths, and displaying artwork and playing music.



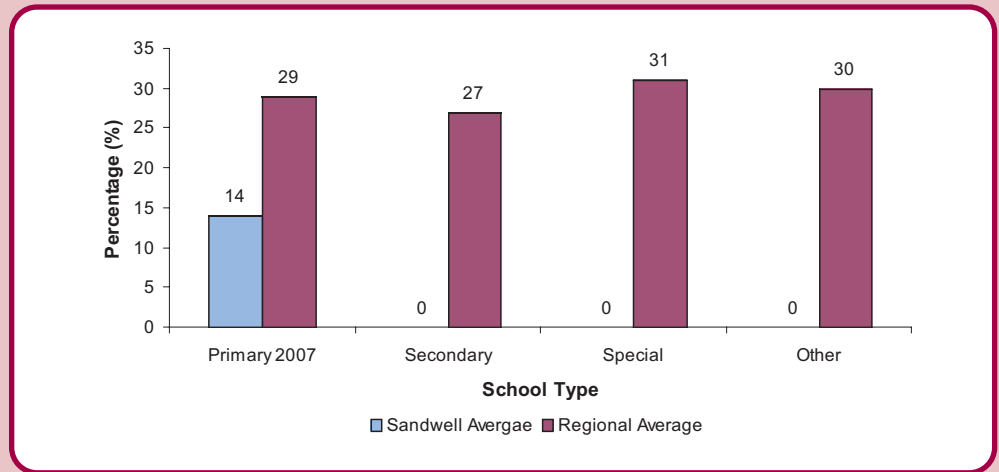
9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

A high proportion of primary schools are promoting healthier lunchboxes in school – nearly 96%. Neither of the responding secondary schools promoted healthy lunchboxes.



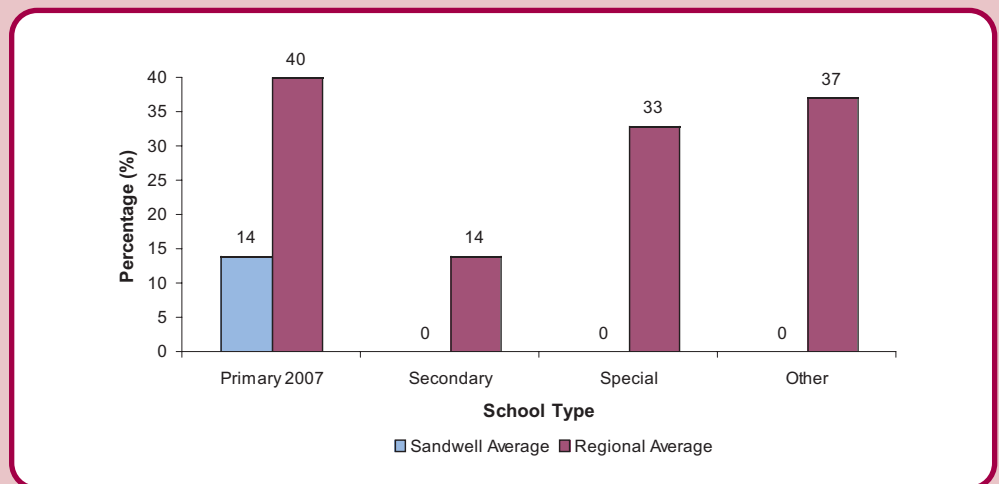
10: Does your school have a cooking club?

Figure 10 clearly illustrates that Sandwell has a lower than the average number of schools with cooking clubs.



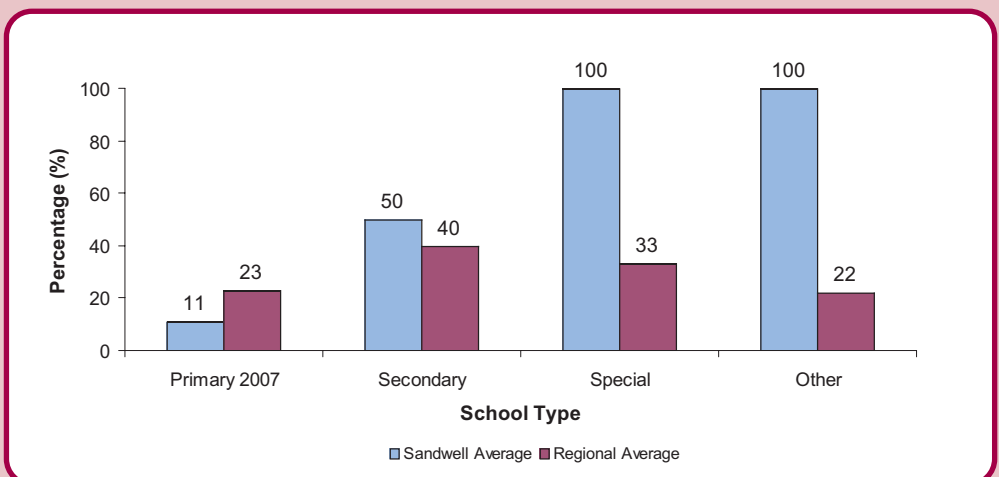
11: Does your school have a growing club?

Sandwell has lower than average number of schools with growing clubs.



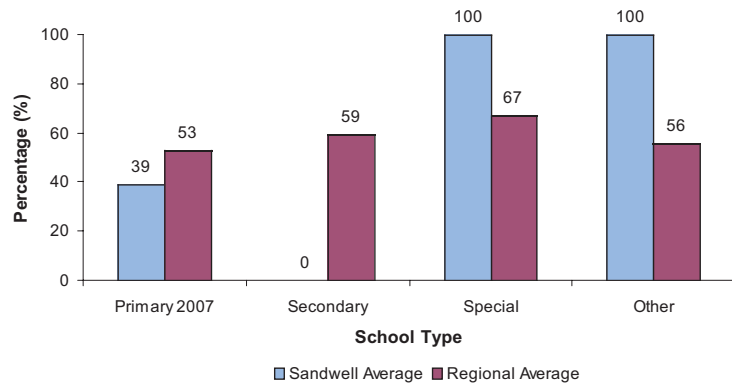
12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

Based on the schools that responded, secondary, special and other schools were above the regional average at providing extended school activities. However, primary schools were below the regional average.



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

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

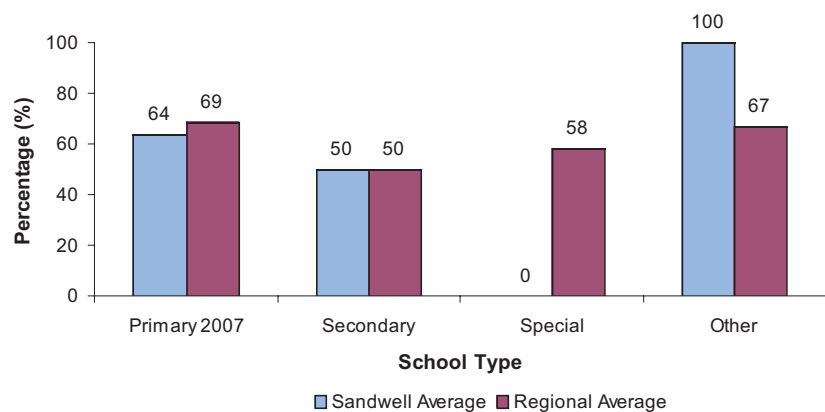


14: Does your school involve parents in school food activities?

Primary and special schools however, were below the regional average for involving parents. Secondary schools were in line with the average and other schools were above the average. The data suggests two main themes in which parents are involved in school food activities

1. Participation in activities -

Parent workshops, cookery clubs and healthy living weeks.



2. **Information** - Providing information to parents through newsletters and questionnaires.

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 Sandwell 19 primary schools, 2 secondary Schools, 1 special school and 1 'other' school had noted changes. On further analysis four broad themes emerged including:

Making healthier choices ▶

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

Many of the secondary schools in Sandwell noted that unhealthy snacks had been removed and more healthy sandwiches and drinks were being consumed.

"Children no longer have unhealthy playtime snacks since our new policy banned this. More water is consumed since this was encouraged throughout the day"

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 healthier attitude to food, they eat a wider selection of healthy food at lunchtime"

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.

"Children are more aware of what a balanced healthy diet is and the need to maintain one"

Behaviour ▶

One secondary school in Sandwell also commented on the change in the children's behaviour.

"Children have a calmer approach, especially on visits away from school where we take our own tuckshop, Disco food is also healthier- the children are less hyperactive"

General Comments: ▶▶

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

Examples of Good Practice – Many schools reported on their involvement with the national healthy schools programme as well as the development of parent workshops, healthy lunchbox sessions, growing their own food and school meal menu development.

Difficulties – Many schools reported that although consistent messages around food were being given at school these were often undermined in the home environment.

Recommendations ▶▶

Sandwell had a mix of results some were above the regional average and some were below. 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.

Dining room environments was a particular issue for primary schools. We would recommend looking at the school food trust resource – ‘A fresh look at the school meal experience’ for advice on support in this area. The report looks at how schools can make improvements to the look and feel of their dining hall, manage lunch times effectively, reduce queuing and to improve behaviour. The report is available at www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk

Healthy Lunchboxes- A very high proportion of primary schools report promoting healthier lunchboxes, however this work need to be extended to secondary schools as none of the responding secondary schools promoted healthier lunchboxes to parents and pupils.

Cooking and Growing Clubs – Sandwell has a lower than average number of schools providing cooking and growing clubs for children. 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

2007 is the Year of Farming and Food. The aim of the year is to engage pupils in an understanding of where food comes from – field to fork and a key objective is to ensure that all children participate in a growing activity. Many programmes are in place to support this. Visit www.yearoffarmingandfood.org.uk for more information.

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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