

food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food in Schools
Survey 2007



▶▶ **Shropshire**

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 This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.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

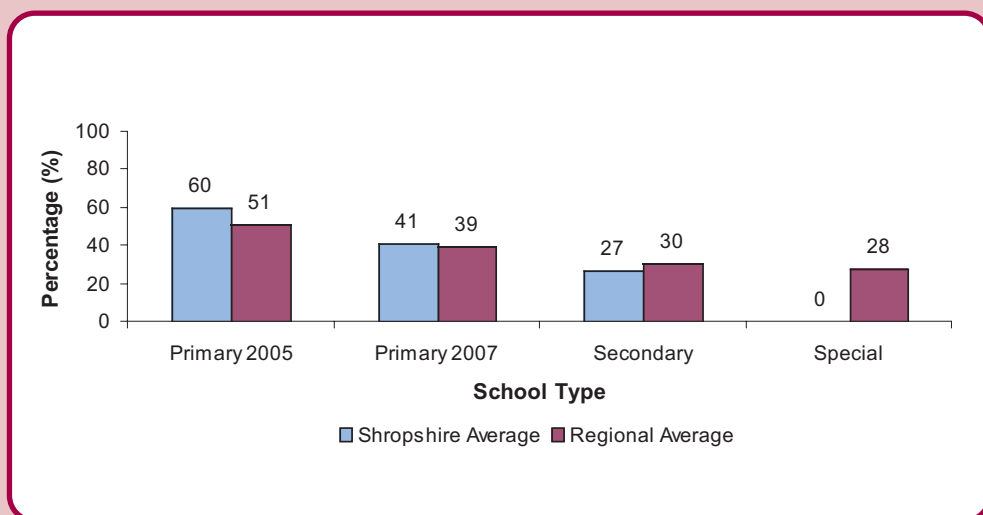
- 71% of primary schools in Shropshire report providing fruit at KS2, which is a 50% increase since 2005.
- 50% of Shropshire primary schools report have a cooking club.
- 100% of schools in Shropshire are participating in the Healthy Schools Programme.
- Free School Meal uptake in Shropshire was above average for primary schools 84.5% (average 82.5%) but below average for secondary schools 70.9% (average 73.5%) (School Food Trust, 2007).
- 15.9% of year 6 pupils are obese which is below the national average of 17.3% (NCMP, 2006/7)

Table 1: Response Rate

Shropshire Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Range across LEA's (%)
Primary 2005	130	78	60%	38-77%
Primary 2007	143	58	41%	20-58%
Secondary	22	6	27%	11-50%
Special	2	0	0%	0-75%
Other		2		
2007 Total	167	64	38%	21-56%

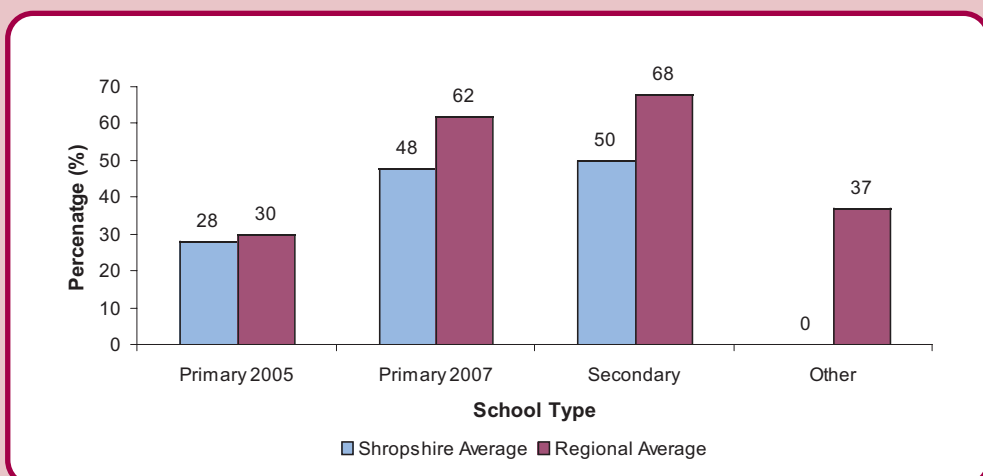
1: Response Rate

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. In Shropshire this section is made up entirely of schools who did not specify which category they fell into.



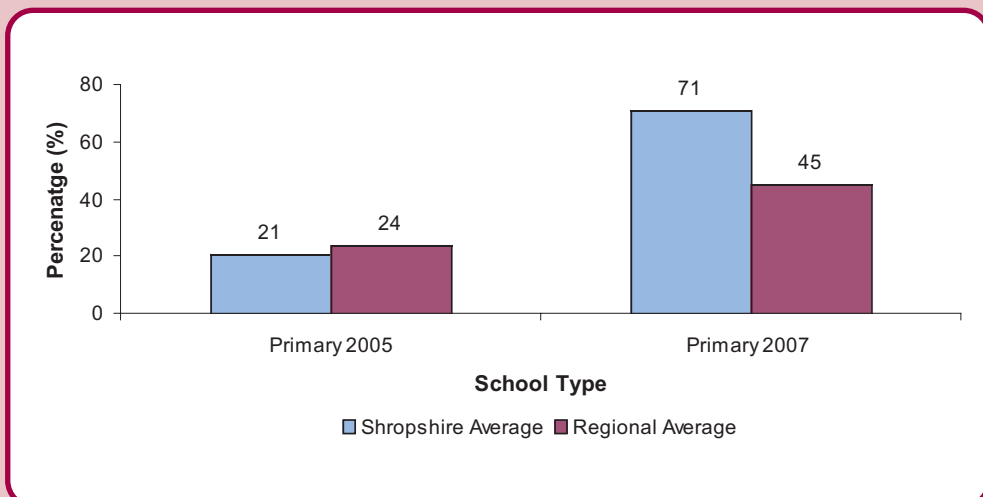
2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

Although Shropshire has seen a 20% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a whole school food policy, all schools were below the regional average.



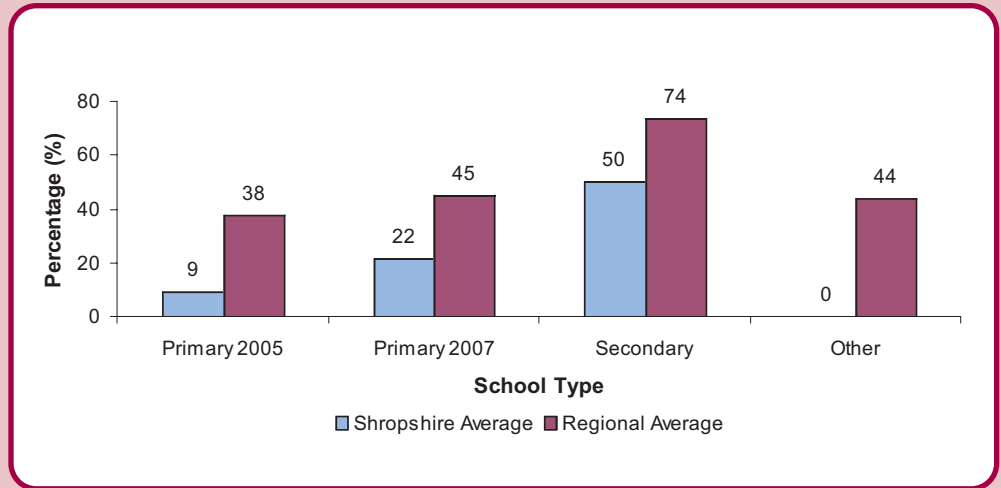
3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Since 2005 Shropshire has seen a 50% increase in the number of primary schools providing fruit at KS2 which is well above the regional average.



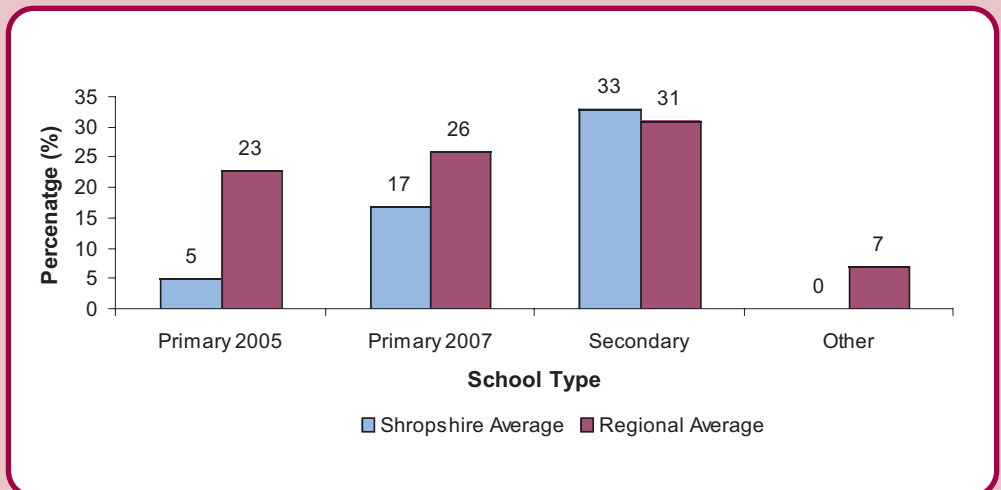
4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

There has been a 13% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a breakfast club since 2005. However, all schools scored below the regional average.



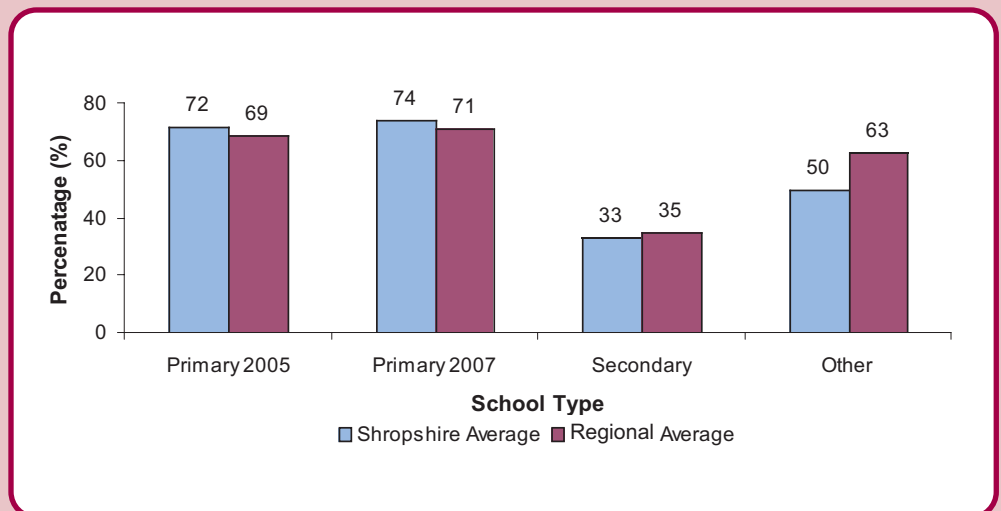
5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

Between 2005 and 2007 Shropshire has seen a 12% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a tuckshop. However, primary and other schools were still below the regional average.



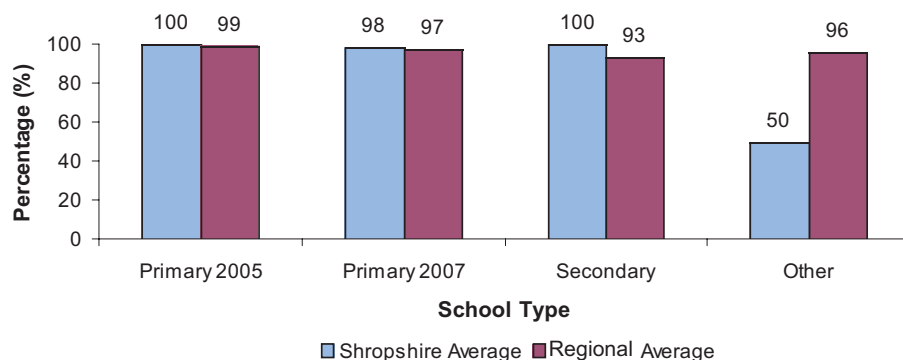
6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

Within Shropshire 74% of primary schools responding to the survey report having a healthy snacking policy. 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 facilities with a regional average of 96%, Shropshire was just above this with 97%.

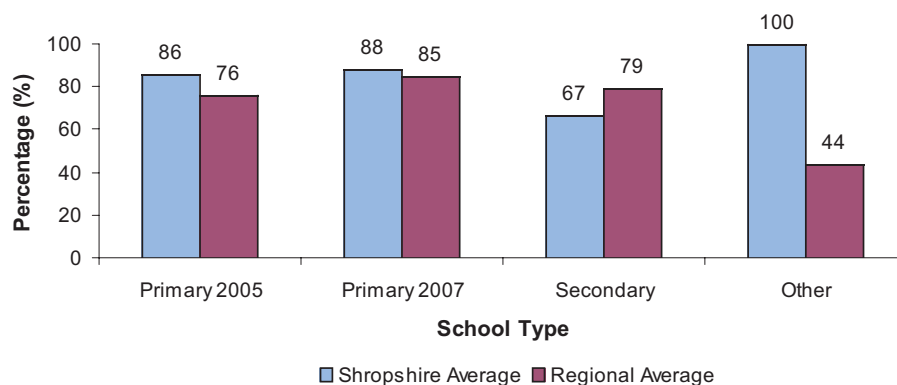


8: Does your school have a dining room that is an attractive and sociable place to eat?

Both primary and other schools within Shropshire were above the regional average for providing an attractive and sociable dining environment for pupils. However, secondary schools were below the regional average.

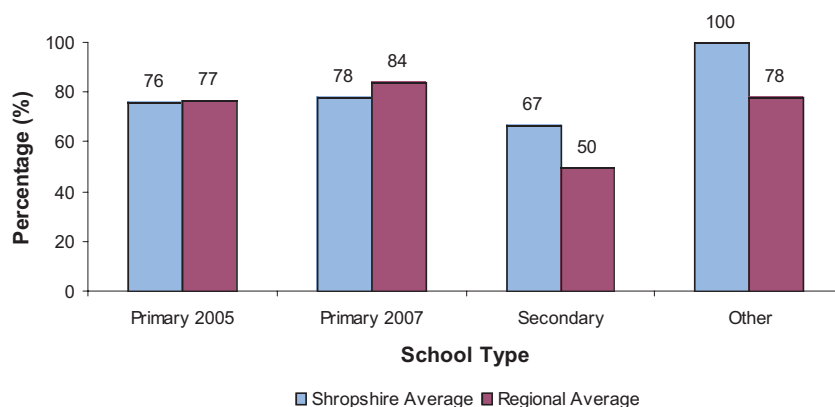
Some of the key themes related to the dining environment include:

- Improvements** - A number of primary schools said they were in the process of developing their dining environments.
- Lack of facilities** - Many primary schools only have the option to eat in their classrooms
- School Hall** - Multipurpose halls are often the only available place for children to eat.
- Difficulties** - The main complaints regarding dining environment was the area in which the children eat in is too small, and the school hall can be difficult to make attractive due to its multipurpose use.
- Examples of good practice** - New curtains and displaying children's artwork.



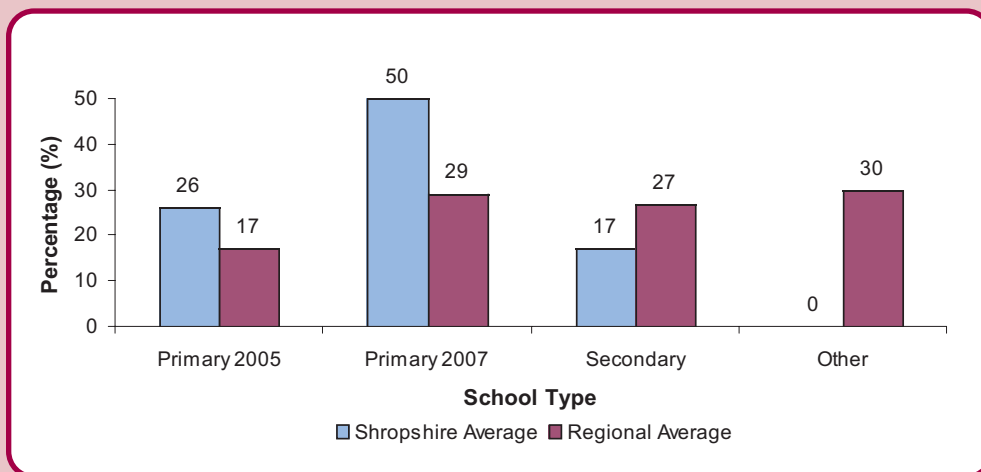
9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

There has only been a slight increase (2%) in the number of primary schools reporting that they promote healthier lunchboxes to pupils and parents. Primary schools were below the regional average, whereas, both secondary and other schools were above the regional average.



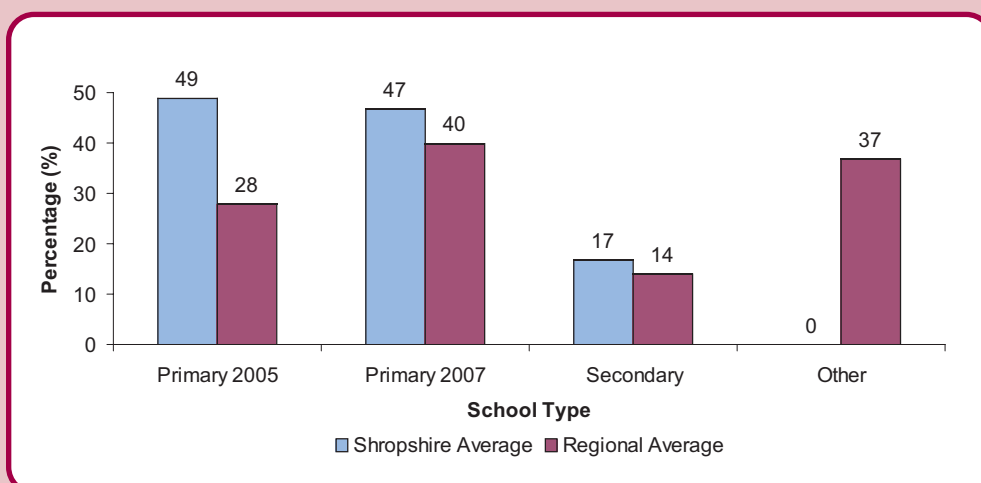
10: Does your school have a cooking club?

Since 2005 Shropshire has seen a 24% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a cooking club which in both cases was above the regional average. Secondary and other schools on the other hand were both below the regional average.



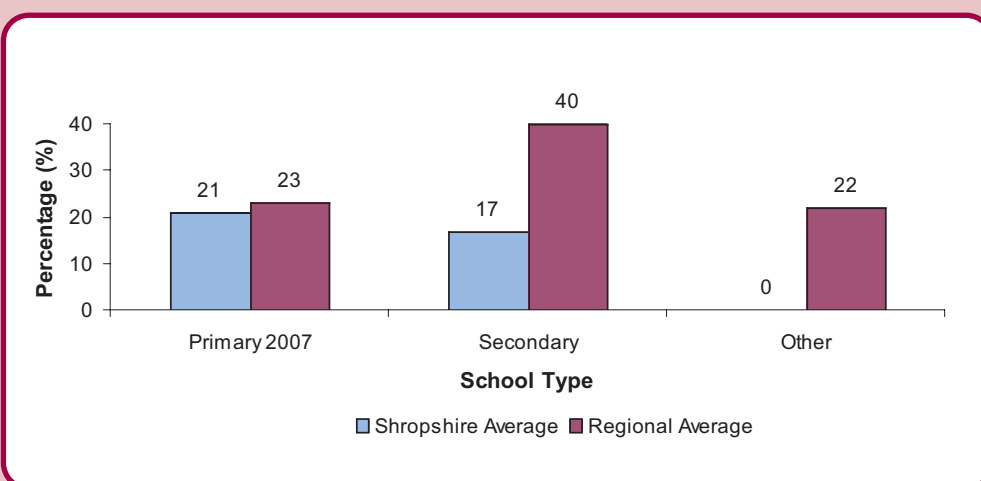
11: Does your school have a growing club?

Shropshire has a higher than average number of primary and secondary schools with growing clubs.



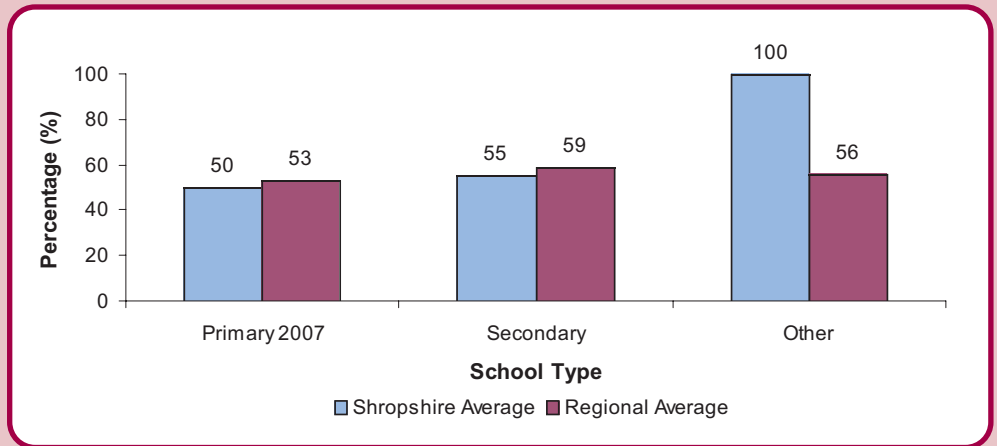
12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

All schools within Shropshire were below the regional average for noting that they provided extended schools activities. However a high proportion of schools provided cooking and growing clubs which are considered to be extended schools activities in Shropshire.



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

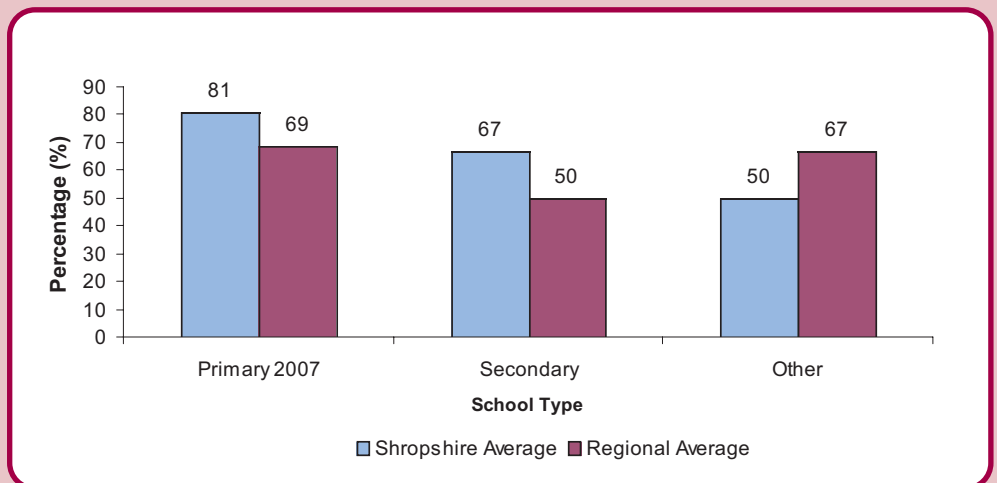
Both primary and secondary schools were just below the regional average for providing opportunities within the school CPD plan for training on food related areas. The majority of personal development noted was in basic food hygiene.



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

Shropshire has a higher than average number of schools reporting that they involved parents in school food activities. The data suggests two main themes in the way parents are involved in school food activities:

1. **Participation in activities** - Parent workshops, tasting sessions, cooking club, monthly family lunch.
2. **Information** - 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 Shropshire 36 primary schools, 4 secondary schools and 1 'other' school had noted changes. On further analysis three broad themes emerged, including:

Making healthier choices ▶

Such as eating more fruit and vegetables, healthier lunchboxes, increased school meal uptake and increased water consumption.

"We have noticed far more fruit and salad in lunchboxes over the past two years. Also when free fruit was first introduced many children would not eat it. We insist that they at least try it and now the majority eat the whole piece of fruit"

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 are very keen to eat fruit during break times even those who said they didn't like it"

Knowledge/Awareness and Eating Behaviour ▶

Schools noted children's raised awareness of 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' foods as well as a change in eating behaviour as a result of this.

"Pupils now eat healthy snacks at break and are more aware of what they eat at lunchtime. This has had a positive impact on their ability to select the healthy option"

Although not specifically reported on within Shropshire 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 difficulties encountered.

Examples of Good Practice – Food in schools training session, stickers promoting choice of fruit and vegetables at lunchtime and healthy meal deals.

Difficulties – Many schools reported that although consistent messages around food were being given at school these were often undermined in the home environment. Additionally some schools had actually noticed a decrease in the number of children having school dinners since the new guidelines.

Recommendations ▶▶

Overall Shropshire has mixed results with some above and some below the regional average. Areas of note include:

Whole school food policy – Shropshire has a lower than average number of schools reporting having a whole school food policy in place. As part of National Healthy status, all schools are required to have a written whole school food policy. A number of documents are available to support schools in developing a whole school food policy for example the Food in Schools website has a sample document audit tool. Visit www.foodinschools.org.uk

Breakfast Clubs – Shropshire has a lower than average number of schools providing children with a breakfast club. Breakfast clubs should be provided through extended schools on the basis of identified need planning for sustainability.

Dining room environments was a particular issue for secondary 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

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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