

# food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food In Schools  
Survey 2007



**Solihull**

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 This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.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

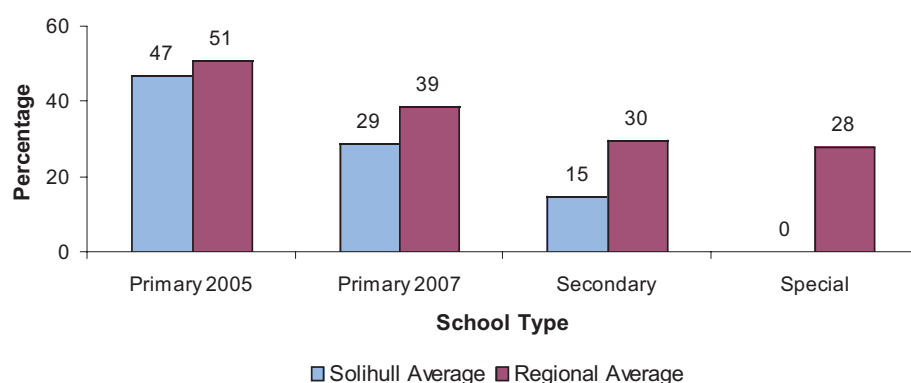
## Headlines ▶▶

- There has been a 31% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a whole school food policy since 2005, however this is still below the regional average.
- 35% of responding Solihull primary schools report having a cooking club,
- 30% of responding primary schools have a growing club in place
- Free school meal uptake within Solihull was below the regional average– primary schools 74% (average 82.5%): secondary schools 70% (average 73.5%) (School Food Trust 2007).
- 96.6% of schools are participating in the Healthy Schools Programme

| Solihull Schools | Number of Schools | Number of Responses | Percentage (%) | Range across LEA's (%) |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Primary 2005     | 60                | 28                  | 47%            | 38-77%                 |
| Primary 2007     | 68                | 20                  | 29%            | 20-58%                 |
| Secondary        | 13                | 2                   | 15%            | 11-50%                 |
| Special          | 5                 | 0                   | 0%             | 0-75%                  |
| Other            | 0                 | 1                   |                |                        |
| 2007 Total       | 86                | 22                  | 26%            | 21-56%                 |

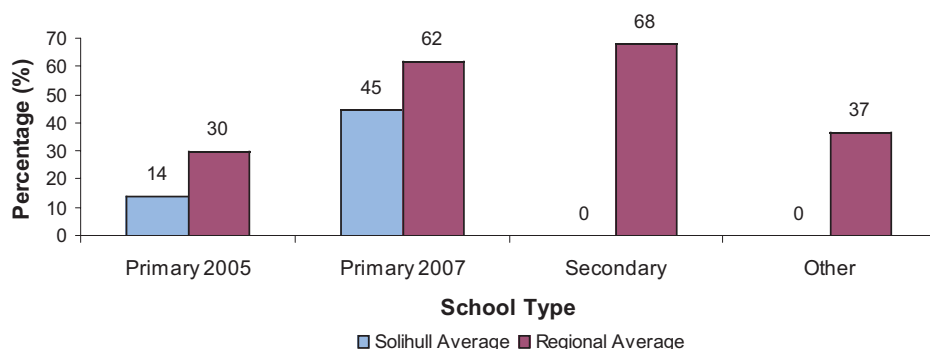
## 1: Response Rate

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. In Solihull this section is made up entirely of schools who did not specify which category they fell into. It is important to note that only 2 secondary schools responded to the survey.



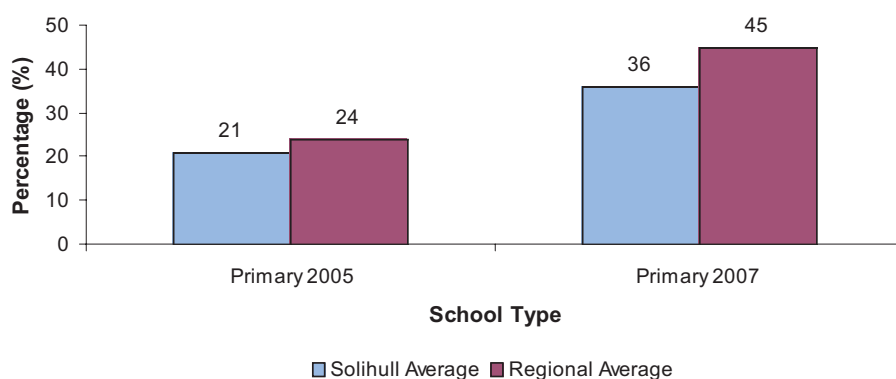
## 2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

Although Solihull has seen a 31% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a whole school food policy, they still are below the regional average. Neither of the two secondary schools had a whole school food policy.



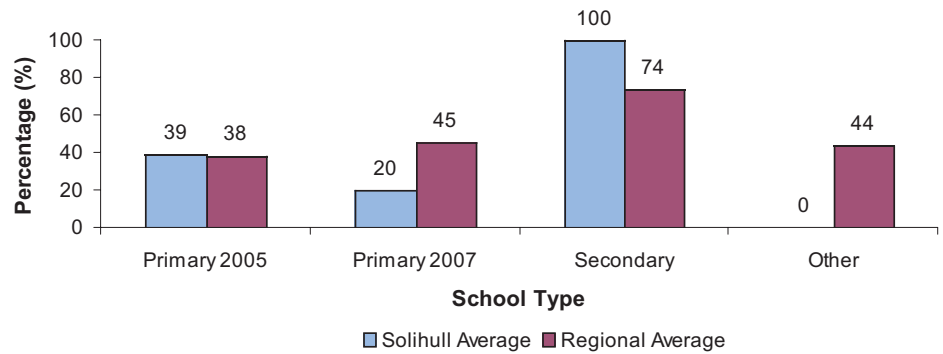
## 3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Since 2005 Solihull primary schools have seen a 15% increase in the number of schools reporting that they provide fruit at key stage 2, however this is still below the regional average.



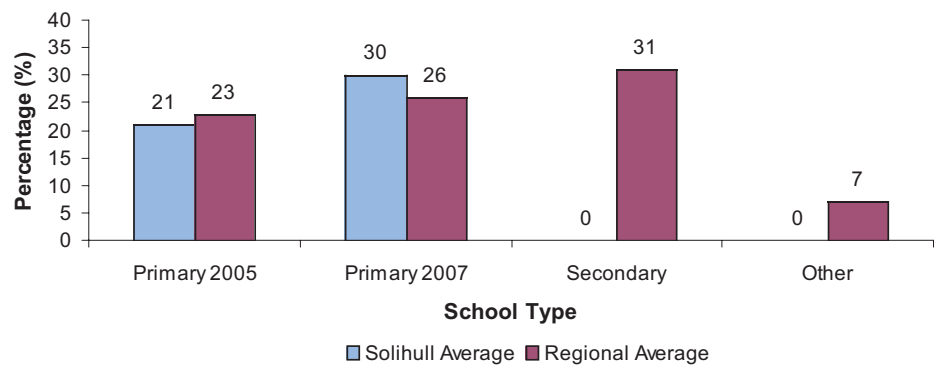
## 4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

Since 2005 the number of primary schools reporting having a breakfast club in primary schools has decreased by 19%. Both primary and other schools were below the regional average. On the other hand, both secondary schools have breakfast clubs. However, it is important to interpret this data with caution as only 2 secondary schools responded to the survey.



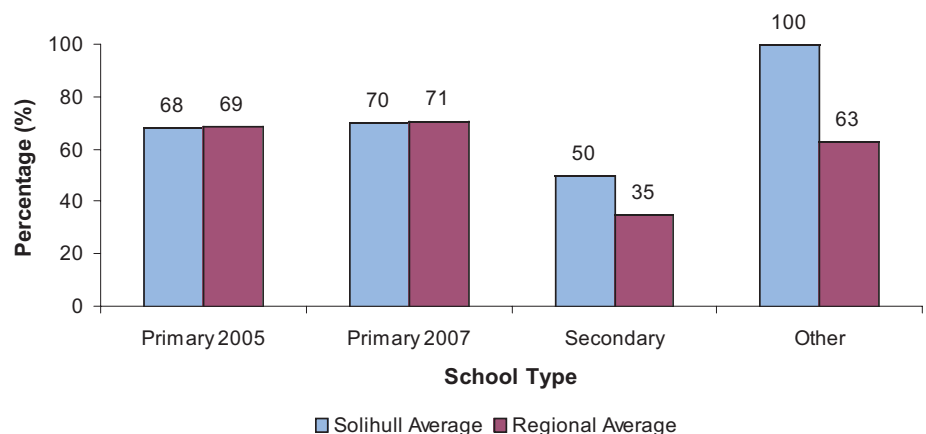
## 5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

Solihull has seen a 9% increase in the number of primary schools providing a tuckshop, which in 2007 was above the regional average. However, none of the secondary or other schools that responded had a tuckshop.



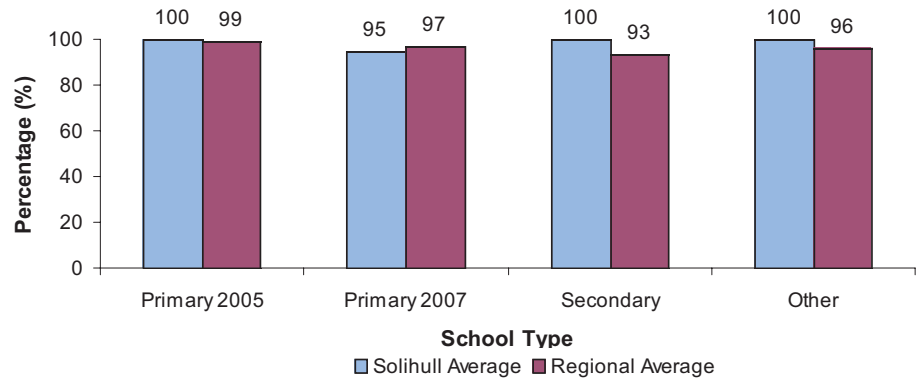
## 6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

The proportion of responding primary schools with a healthy snacking policy was in line with the regional average. Both of the responding secondary schools had a healthy snacking policy.



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

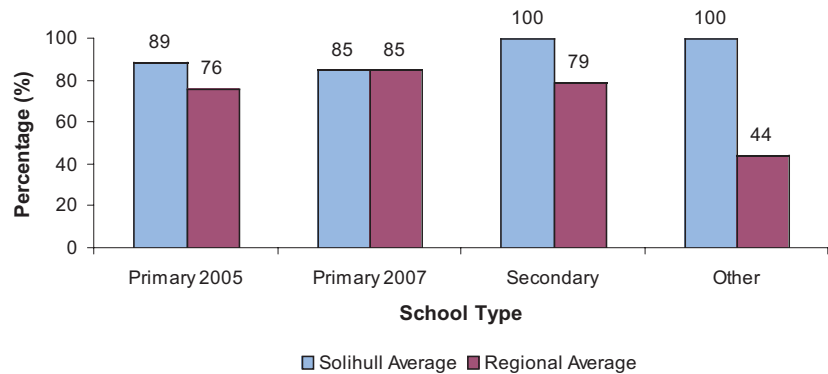
A high proportion of schools are providing access to free drinking facilities with a regional average of 96%, Solihull was just below this with 95%.



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

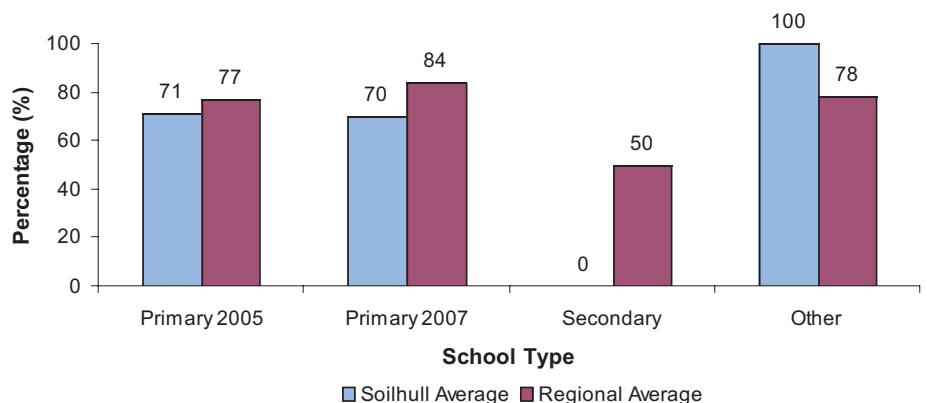
All schools were in line with or above the regional average for providing pupils with an attractive and sociable dining environment. Some of the key themes related to the dining environment include:

- 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** - Tableclothes introduced, music, food wheel, and fun place mats.



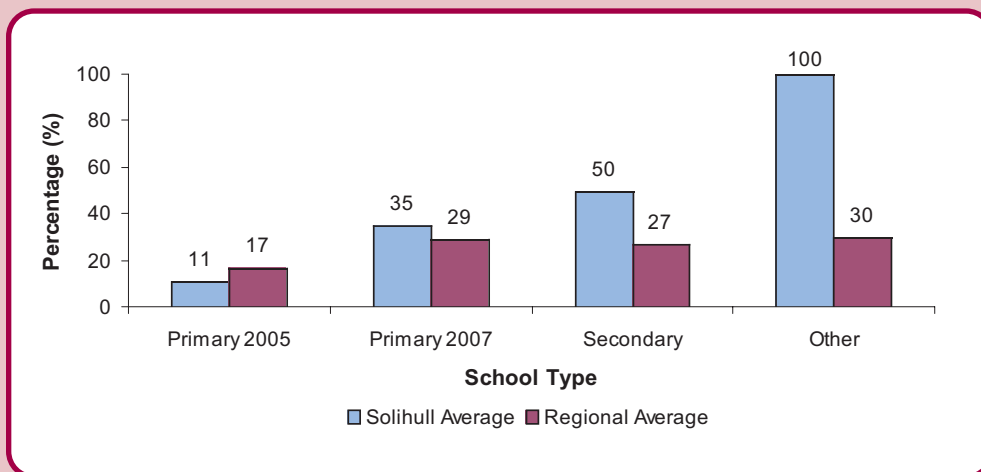
## 9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

Primary and secondary schools were below the regional average for promoting healthier lunchboxes.



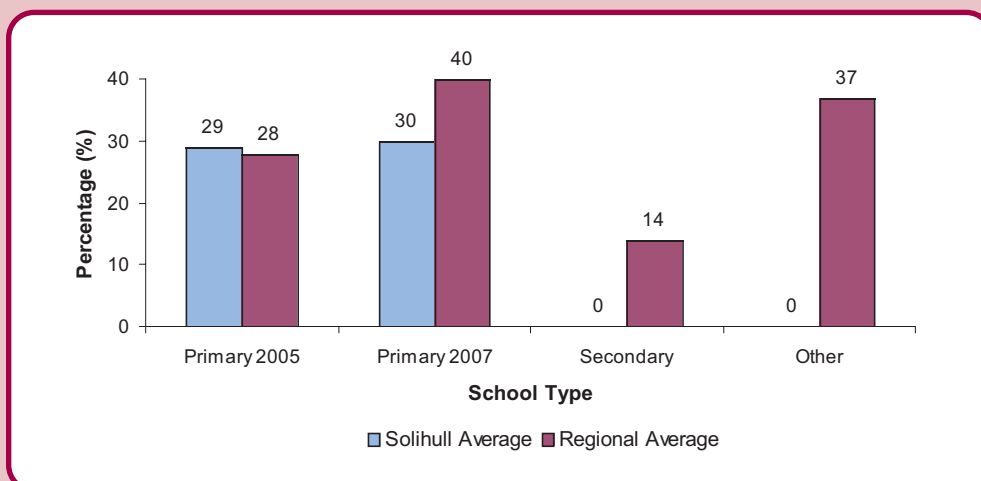
## 10: Does your school have a cooking club?

Since 2005 Solihull has seen a 24% increase in the number primary school with cooking clubs. Primary, secondary and other schools were all above the regional average.



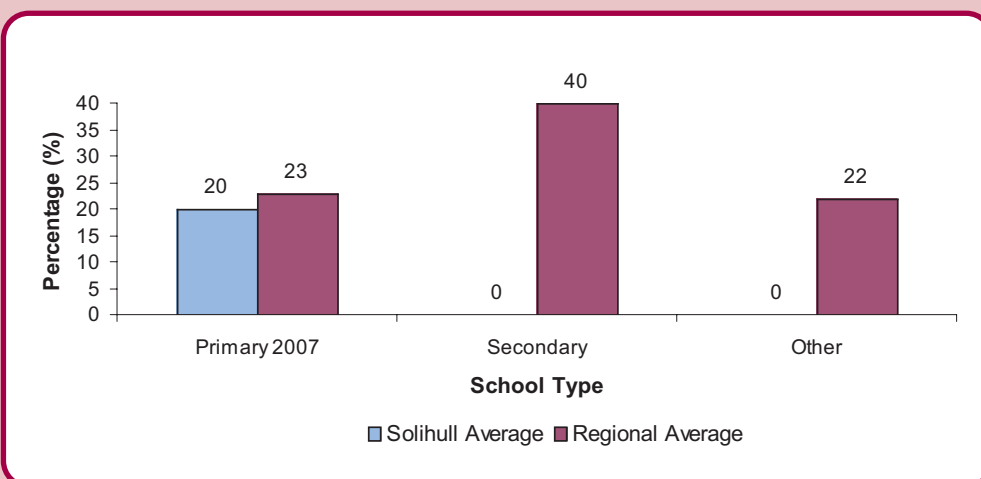
## 11: Does your school have a growing club?

Solihull has a lower than average number of schools reporting having a growing club.



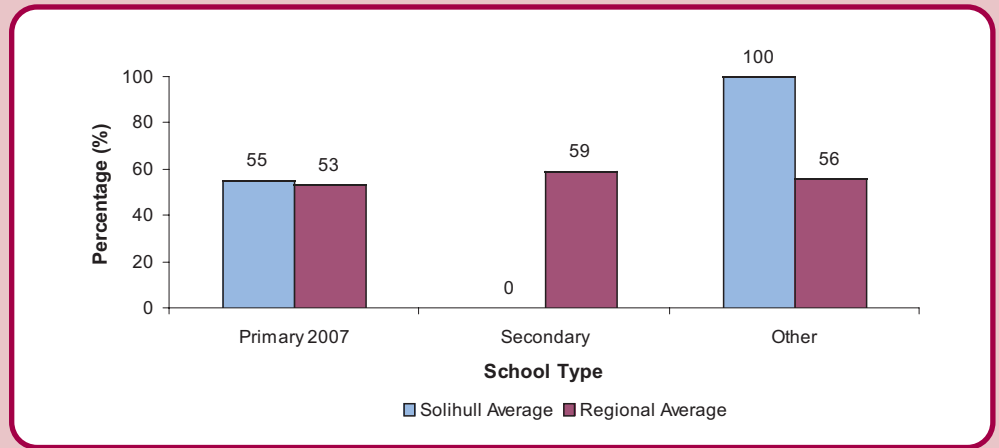
## 12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

Solihull has a lower than average number of schools responding that they provide extended school activities.



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

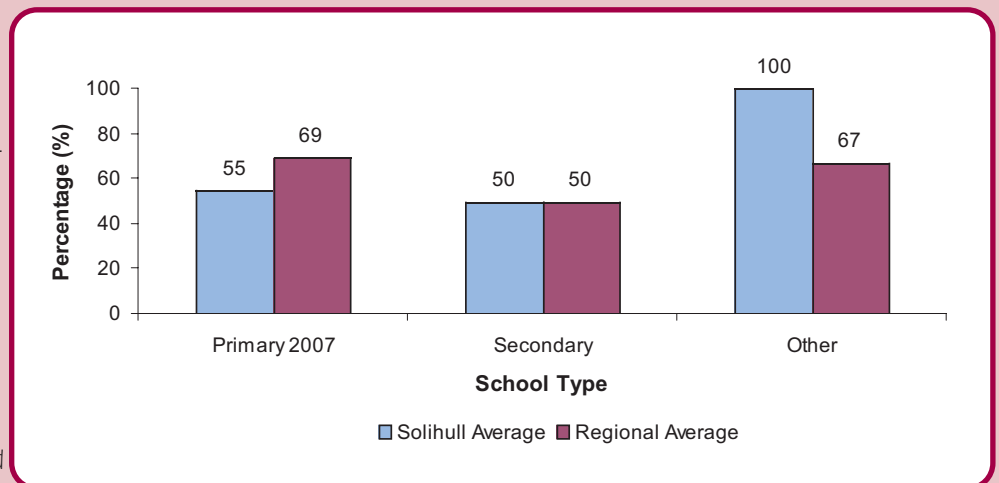
Primary and other schools were above the regional average for providing opportunities within the school CPD plan for training on food related areas. In contrast none of the secondary schools that responded provided CPD opportunities. The majority of personal development provided was in basic food hygiene.



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

Secondary and other schools were in line with or above the regional average for involving parents in food in school activities. However, primary schools 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, cooking clubs and healthy share projects.
2. Information - Newsletters, questionnaires and parents write food diaries.



# 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 Solihull, 9 primary and 2 secondary schools 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.

“Lots of progress has been made in hot school meals, they are less processed. Lunchboxes also have less chocolate. Children enjoy fruit at break time”

## 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.

“The cook offers ‘fruit’ only day for puddings. At first the children were reluctant but now they all enjoy 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.

“Children are much more aware of a balanced diet and the importance of low fat, sugar and salt. Parents tell us that children talk about this at home”.

Although not specifically reported on within Solihull 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** – Parent workshops to consult on food policy.

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

“Schools cannot change attitudes on their own, home remains a greater influence we do our bit enthusiastically”.

## Recommendations ▶▶

In many areas Solihull was below the regional average, in particular it is important that schools without a whole school food policy aim to develop one. Some other areas of note include:

**Growing Clubs** - Solihull has a lower than average number of schools with growing clubs for children. 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](http://www.yearoffarmingandfood.org.uk) for more information.

**Breakfast Clubs** - Solihull has a lower than average number of schools providing children with a breakfast club. The Food in Schools toolkit provides information on establishing a school breakfast club.

**Healthy Lunchboxes** - Both primary and secondary schools were below the regional average for promoting healthier lunchboxes to pupils and parents. More information on healthy packed lunches is available on the school food trust website.

### Key Stage 2 Fruit and Vegetables

The number of responding primary schools reporting that they provide fruit and vegetables at Key Stage 2 is lower than the regional average. We would like to see all primary schools providing fruit and vegetables through healthy snacking policies, tuckshops, fruit and vegetables brought from home or bought from the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme distributors at just 10p per day.

### Useful websites

[www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk)

[www.foodinschools.org.uk](http://www.foodinschools.org.uk)

[www.healthyschools.org.uk](http://www.healthyschools.org.uk)

[www.5aday.nhs.uk](http://www.5aday.nhs.uk)

[www.letsgetcooking.org.uk](http://www.letsgetcooking.org.uk)

[www.foodafactoflife.org.uk](http://www.foodafactoflife.org.uk)



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