

# food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food in Schools  
Survey 2007



▶▶ **Staffordshire**

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 This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.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

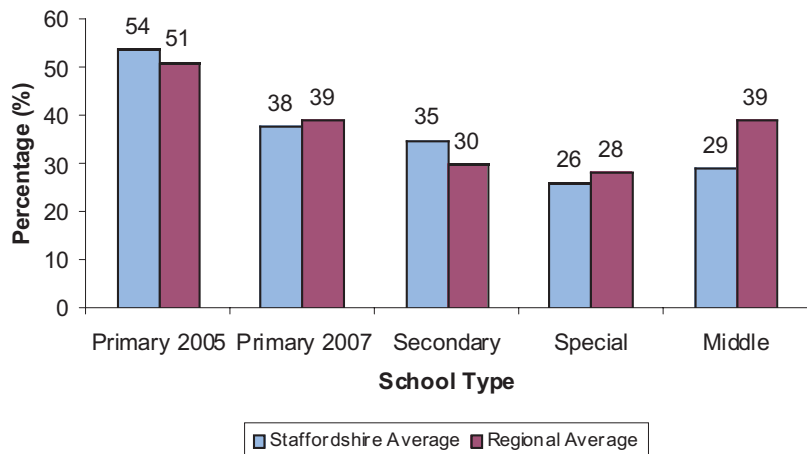
## Headlines ▶▶

- Since 2005 Staffordshire has seen a 27% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a whole school food policy.
- 58% of responding primary schools provide fruit and vegetables at key stage 2 which is well above the regional average of 45%.
- 95% of responding secondary schools have a breakfast club.
- Over three quarters of primary schools promote healthier lunchboxes to pupils and parents.
- 95% of schools are participating in the Healthy Schools Programme.
- Free school meal uptake in Staffordshire was below average - primary schools 82.2% (average 82.5%): secondary schools 69.5% (average 73.5%) (School Food Trust, 2007).

Staffordshire Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Range across LEA's (%)
Primary 2005	315	170	54%	38-77%
Primary 2007 including 3 early years and 3 nurseries	307	118	38%	20-58%
Secondary	54	19	35%	11-50%
Special	23	6	26%	0-75%
Middle	14	4	29%	0-44%
2007 Total	404	147	36%	21-56%

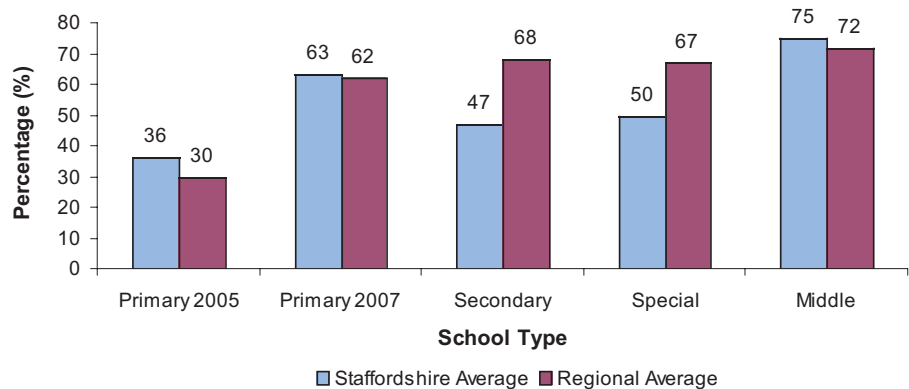
## 1: Response Rate

The regional response rate for primary schools was significantly higher than that for special, middle and secondary schools so we are reporting on the findings for each of these areas separately.



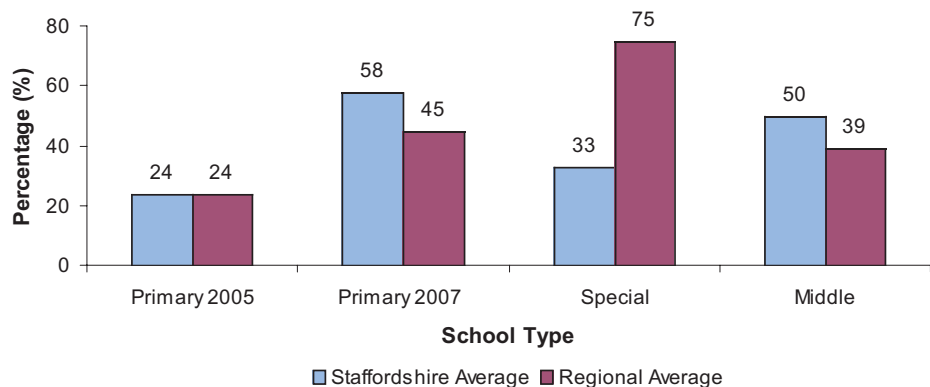
## 2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

The number of responding primary schools in Staffordshire with a whole school food policy has increased from 36% - 63% since 2005. However, secondary and special schools are below the regional average for holding a whole school food policy.



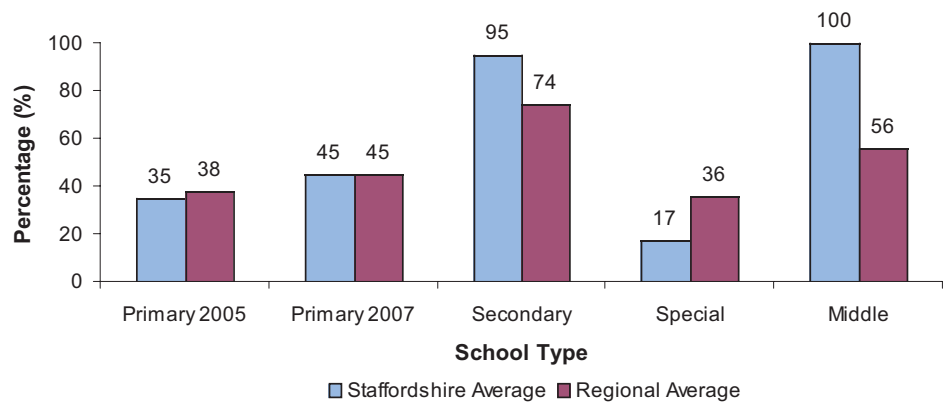
## 3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Staffordshire primary schools have seen a 34% increase in the number of schools providing fruit and vegetables at key stage 2, and is well above the regional average of 45%.



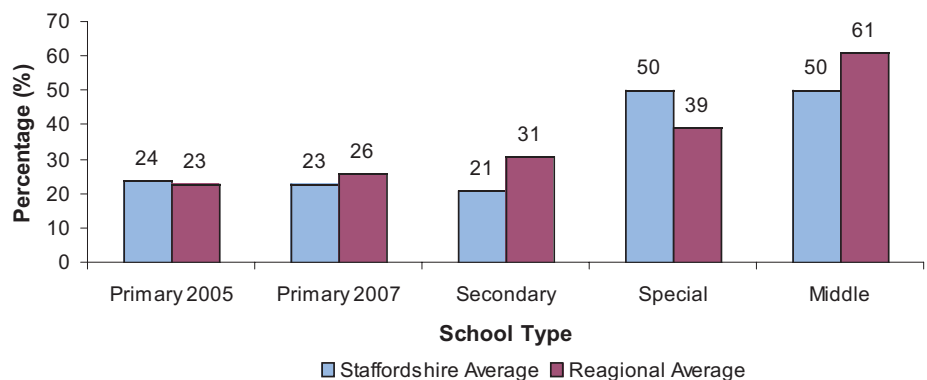
## 4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

Responding primary schools were in line with the regional average for the number of schools with a breakfast club. Secondary and middle school were both well above the regional average, whereas special schools were below average.



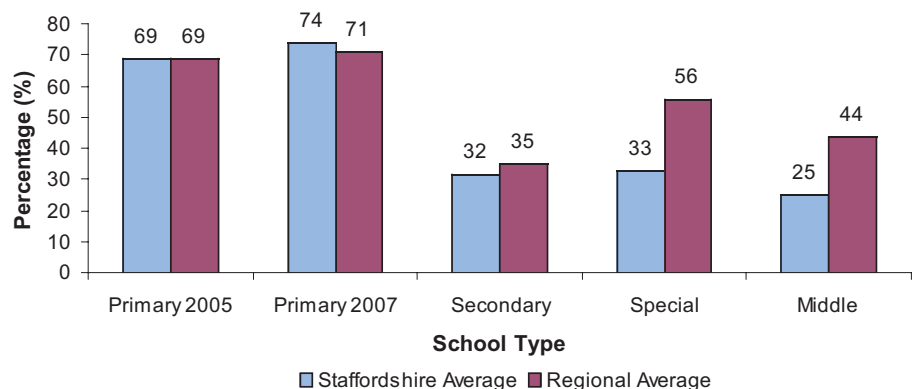
## 5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

Within Staffordshire responding primary, secondary and middle schools were all below the regional average for providing pupils with a tuckshop. Special schools on the other hand were above the regional average.



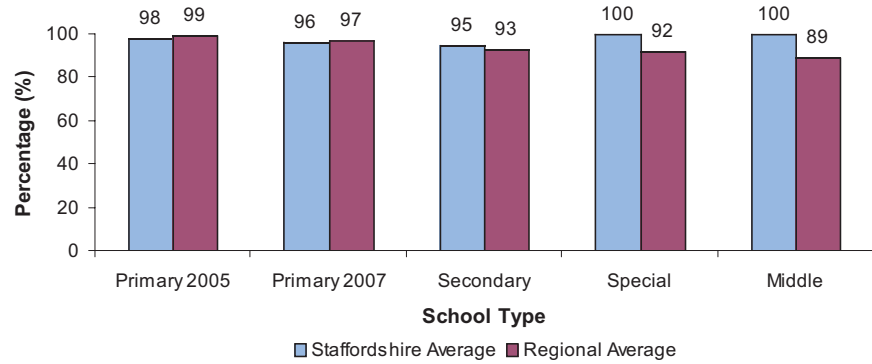
## 6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

There has been little change in the number of schools reporting having a healthy snacking policy since 2005. Secondary, special and middle schools were all 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 facilities. As an area Staffordshire were in line with or just above the regional average.

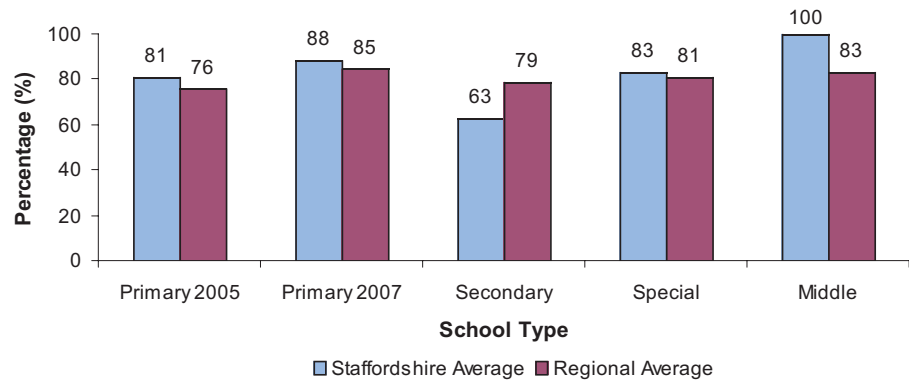


## 8: Does your school have a dining room that is an attractive and sociable place to eat?

Apart from secondary schools all schools were above the regional average for reporting that there schools provide pupils with an attractive and sociable dining environment.

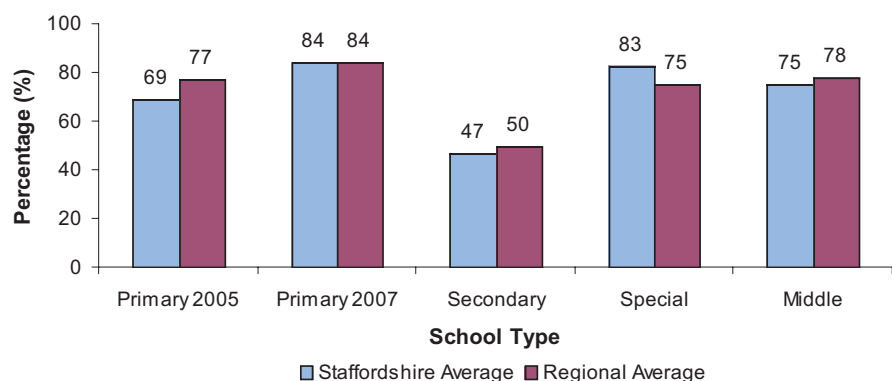
Some of the key themes related to the dining environment include:

- 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** - Multipurpose halls are often the only available place for children to eat.
- 4. 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.
- 5. Examples of good practice** - Weekly golden table, posters outside sandwich eating area and one school reporting having a wall painted by an artist with the children.



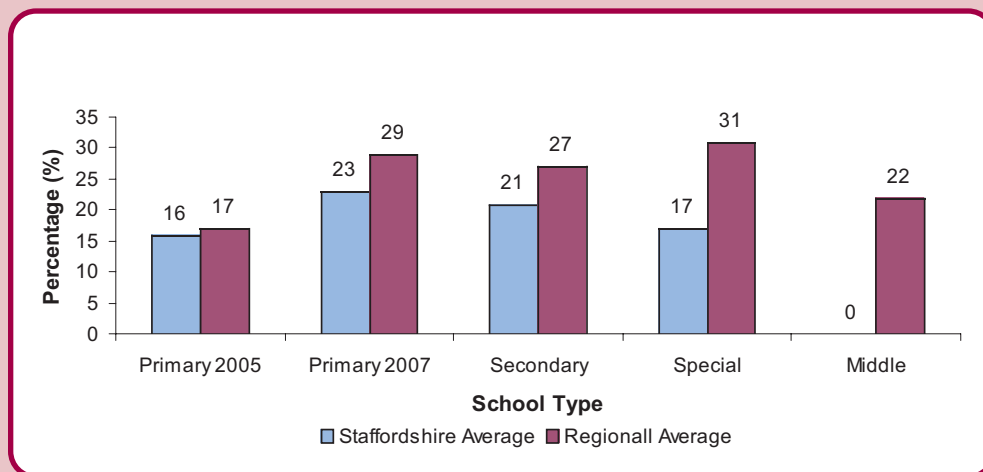
## 9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

Since 2005 Staffordshire has seen a 15% increase in the number of primary schools that promote healthier lunchboxes to pupils and parents. Secondary and middle schools were just below the regional average.



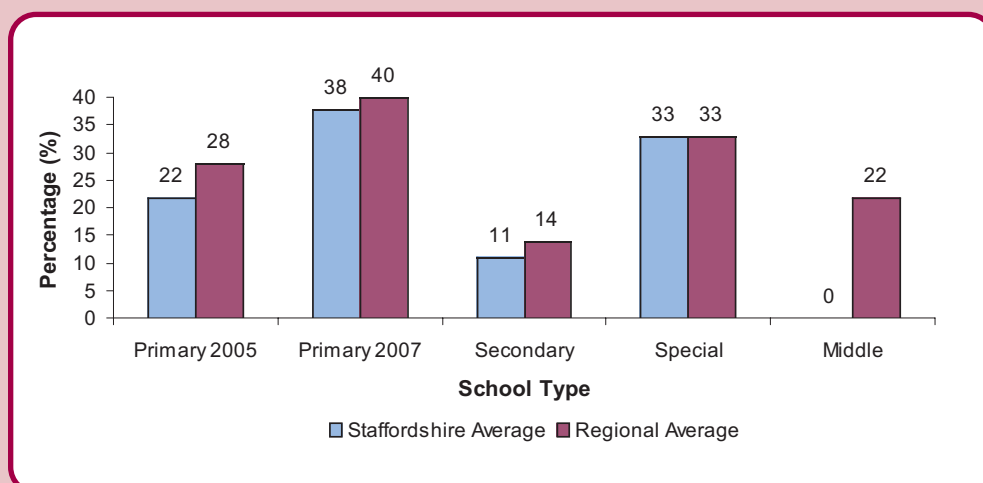
## 10: Does your school have a cooking club?

Staffordshire primary schools have seen a 7% increase in the number of primary schools with cooking clubs since 2005. However, all schools were below the regional average.



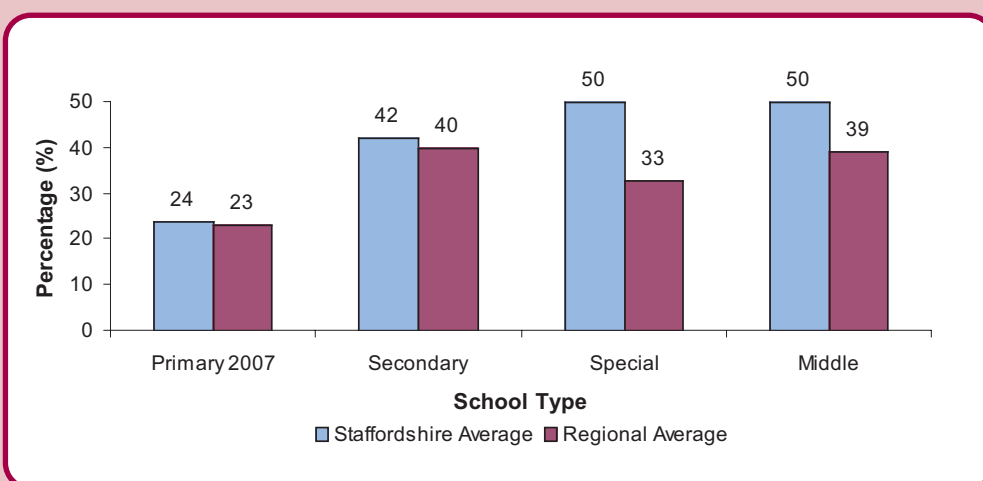
## 11: Does your school have a growing club?

Since 2005 the number of primary schools with growing clubs has risen by 16%. However, apart from specials schools that were in line with the regional average, all schools were below the regional average.



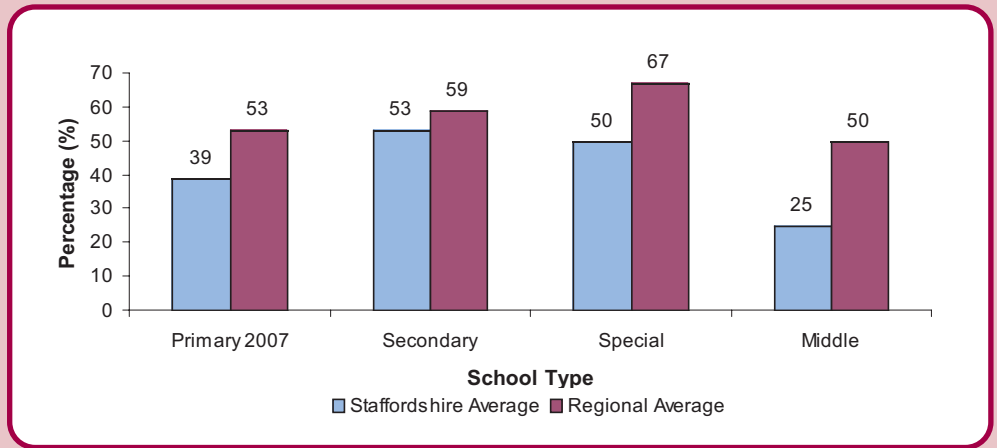
## 12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

All schools within Staffordshire were above the regional average.



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

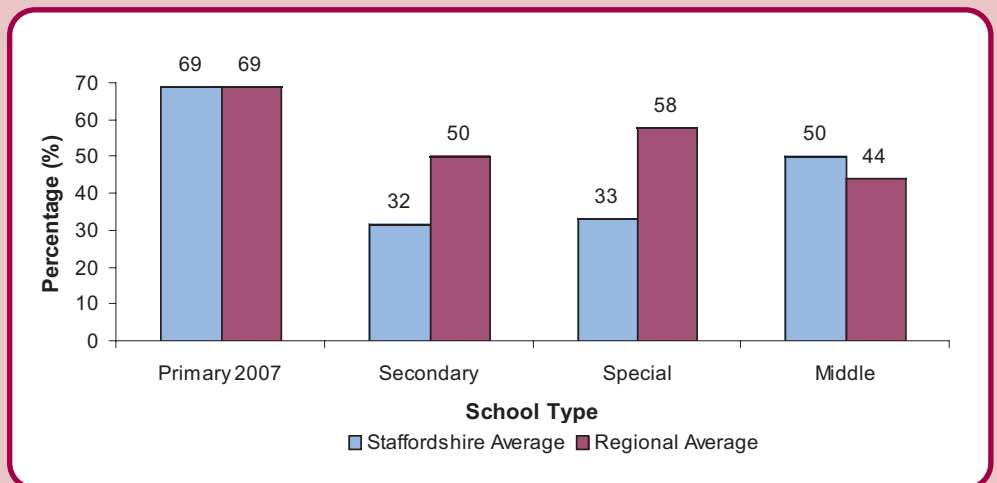
All schools within Staffordshire were below the regional average for providing opportunities within the school CPD plan for training on food related areas. The majority of personal development noted was in basic food hygiene.



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

Within Staffordshire primary and middle schools were above the regional average for involving parents in school food activities. However, secondary and special 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** - Parent workshops, tasting sessions, cooking club, family learning and cooking clubs.
- 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 Staffordshire 86 primary schools, 19 secondary schools, 2 special schools and 3 middle 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.

"100% of children have a portion of fruit at break time. Children drink water regularly and lunchboxes include at least 4 healthy items"

## 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.

"All children are encouraged to choose healthy lunches and are proud when they are given healthy lunchboxes by their parents"

## 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 more aware now about healthy eating eg 5 a day and understand the need to change eating habits. They realise the need to bring about change through school meals and are willing to try new foods"

Although not specifically reported on within Staffordshire 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 food week, organic garden, publicity campaigns on healthy eating and stickers for choosing healthy options.

“Children know what are healthy choices but parents push barriers by providing coco pops cereal bars, flavoured water etc”

“Now the children go to snack and chip shops offsite to have lunch”

**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. Some schools in Staffordshire particularly within secondary schools reported that children go offsite to eat unhealthy foods.

## Recommendations ▶▶

In many cases Staffordshire were above the regional average, however, there are some areas that need to be developed.

**Whole School Food Policy** - Secondary and special schools were below the regional average for reporting having a whole school food policy. As part of National Healthy Schools status, all schools are required to have a 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 and audit tool to support the development of a whole school food policy. Visit [www.foodinschools.org](http://www.foodinschools.org) for more information.

**Cooking and growing clubs** - Staffordshire 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](http://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](http://www.yearoffarmingandfood.org.uk) for more information.

**Dining Room Environment** - This was 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](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk)

### 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)



Catherine Goodridge  
Regional School Food and Health Co-ordinator (West Midlands)

3rd Floor, Kingston House  
438 High Street  
West Bromwich  
B70 9LD

Tel: 0121 612 1460  
Fax: 0121 500 1501  
E-mail: [catherine.goodridge@sandwell-pct.nhs.uk](mailto:catherine.goodridge@sandwell-pct.nhs.uk)

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