

food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food in Schools
Survey 2007



▶▶ **Stoke**

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 This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.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

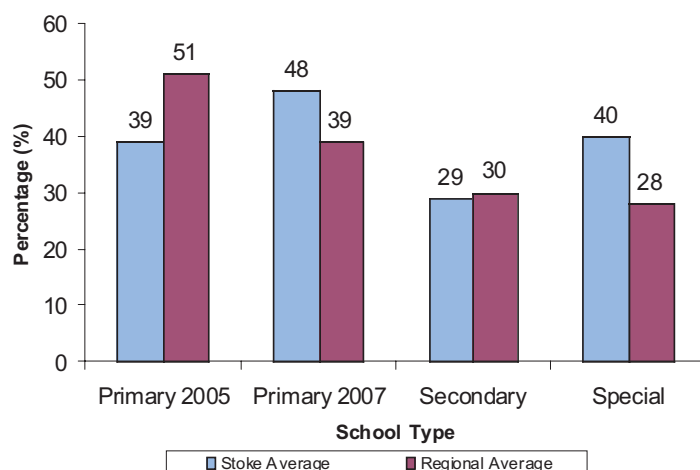
Headlines ▶▶

- 61% of responding primary schools provide fruit and vegetables at key stage 2 which is well above the regional average of 45%.
- 80% of responding secondary schools have a whole school food policy (WSFP).
- 98% of responding schools within Stoke-on-Trent report having an attractive and sociable dining environment.
- 64% of responding primary schools have a breakfast club which is well above the regional average of 45%.
- 82.2% of schools in Stoke-on-Trent are participating in the national healthy schools programme.
- Free School Meal uptake in Stoke-on-Trent was above average for primary schools 85.5% (average 82.5%) but below average for secondary schools 69.1% (average 73.5%) (School Food Trust, 2007).

Stoke on Trent Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Range across LEA's (%)
Primary 2005	79	31	39%	38-77%
Primary 2007 including 3 PRUs & 7 nurseries	81	39	48%	20-58%
Secondary	17	5	29%	11-50%
Special	5	2	40%	0-75%
2007 Total	103	46	45%	21-56%

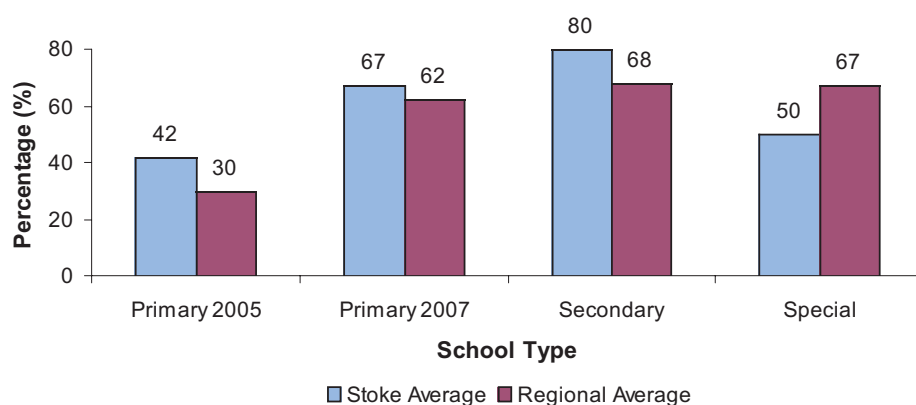
1: Response Rate

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



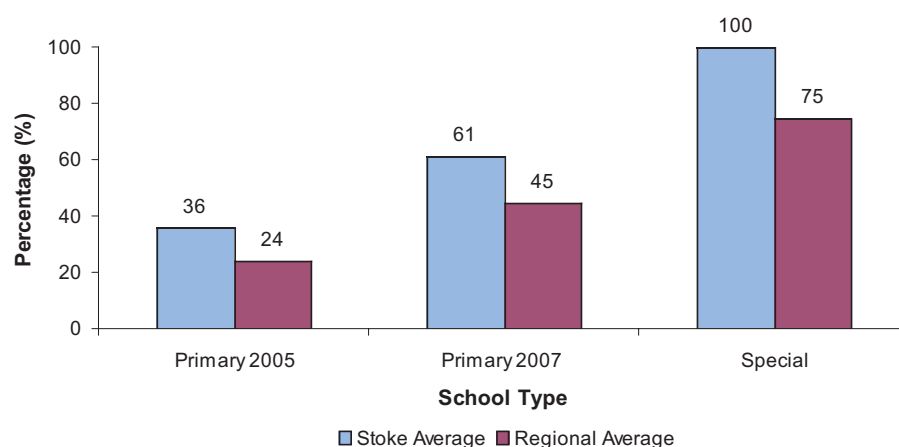
2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

Since 2005 Stoke-on-Trent has seen a 25% increase in the number of responding primary schools reporting having a whole school food policy. Both primary and secondary schools were above the regional average, whereas special schools were below the average.



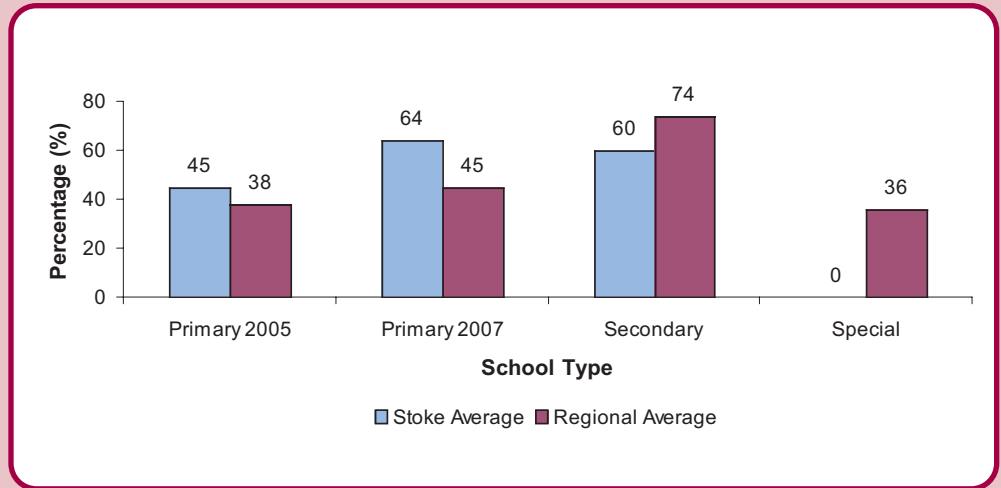
3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Stoke-on-Trent has seen a 29% increase in the number of primary school providing fruit and vegetables at key stage 2. Furthermore, both primary and special schools were above the regional average.



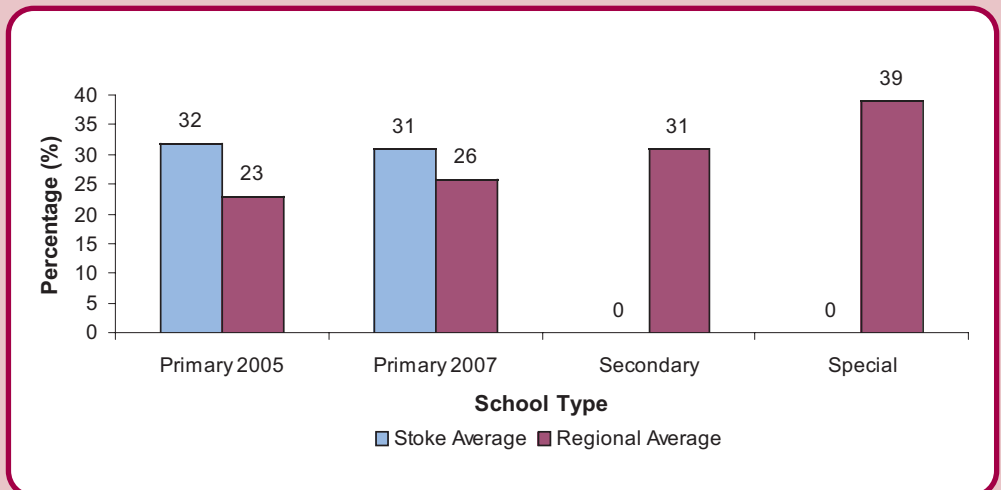
4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

Between 2005 and 2007 the number of breakfast clubs within Stoke-on-Trent primary schools increased by 19%, which in both cases was above the regional average. However, secondary and special schools were below the regional average.



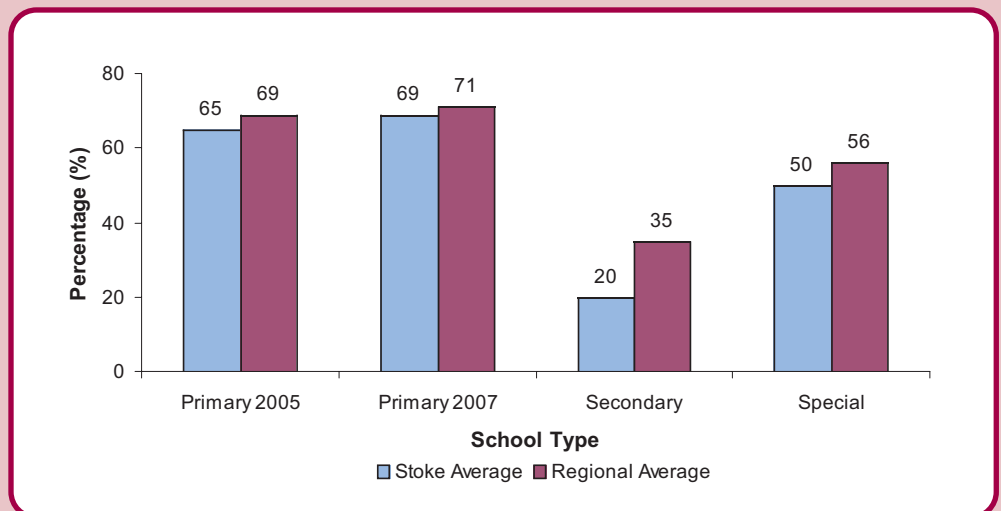
5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

Stoke-on-Trent has a lower than average number of secondary and special schools reporting having a tuckshop. In contrast primary schools were above the regional average.



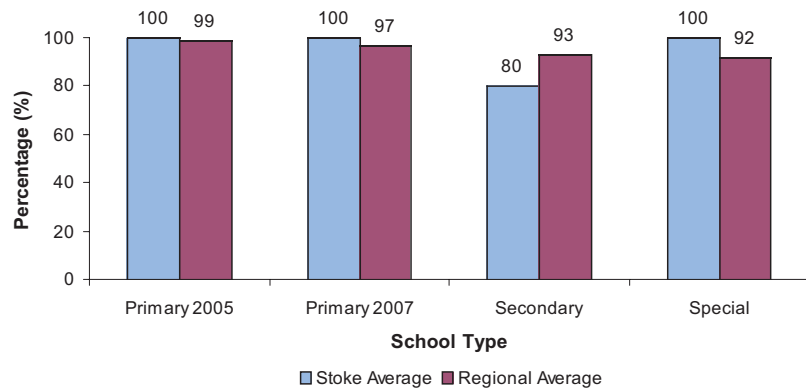
6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

All schools within Stoke-on-Trent 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%. Apart from 1 secondary school all respondents provided access to free drinking water.

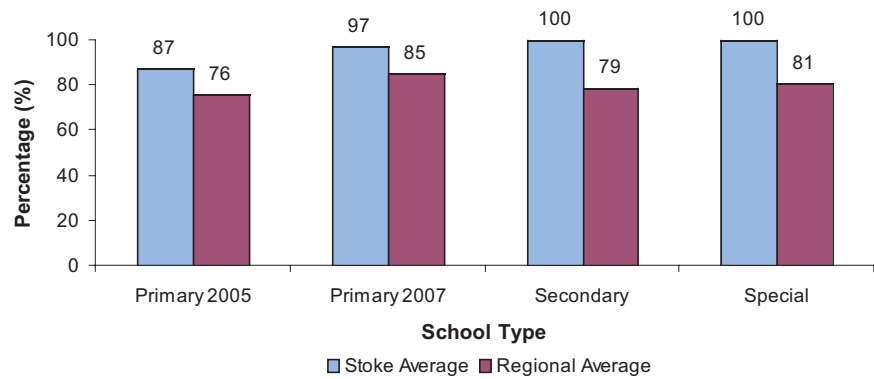


8: Does your school have a dining room that is an attractive and sociable place to eat?

Between 2005 and 2007 there was a 10% increase in the number of primary schools reporting that they have an attractive and sociable dining environment. All schools were above the regional average.

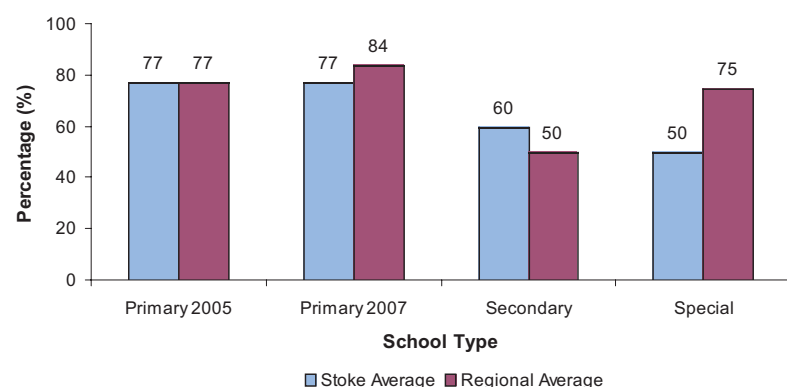
Some of the key themes related to the dining environment include:

- 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** - Multi-purpose halls are often the only available place for children to eat.
- 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.
- Examples of good practice** - Dining area decorated by pupils and an eco café.



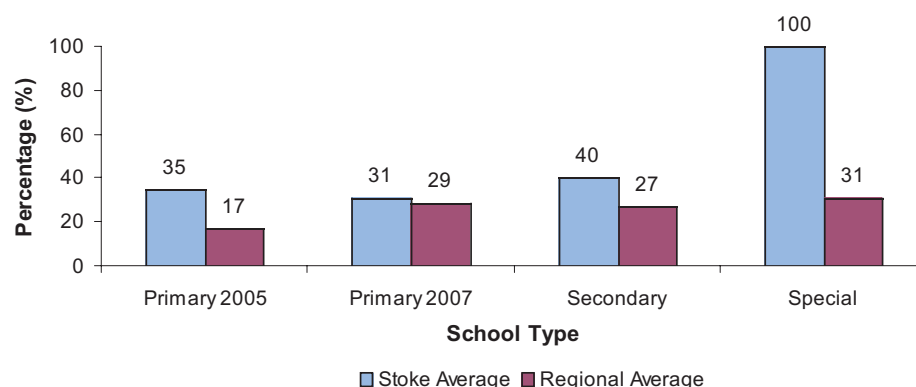
9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

A high proportion of primary schools are promoting healthier lunchboxes in school, although this is still slightly below the regional average.



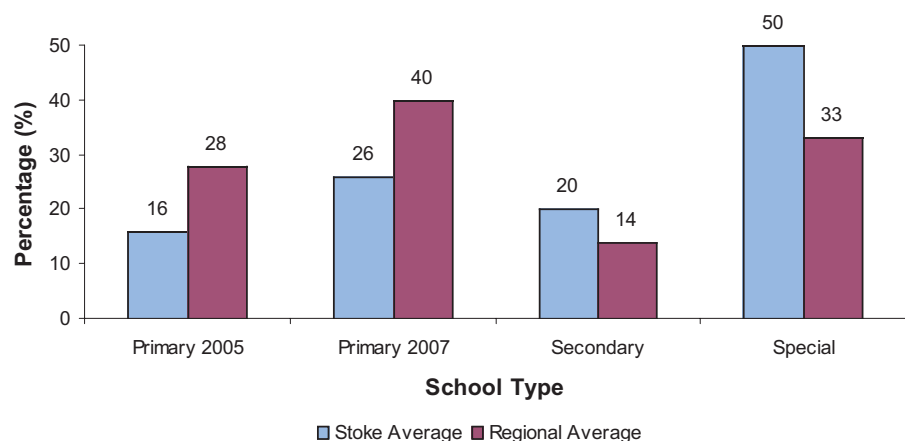
10: Does your school have a cooking club?

Although there has been a slight decrease in the number of primary schools with cooking clubs, all schools were above the regional average.



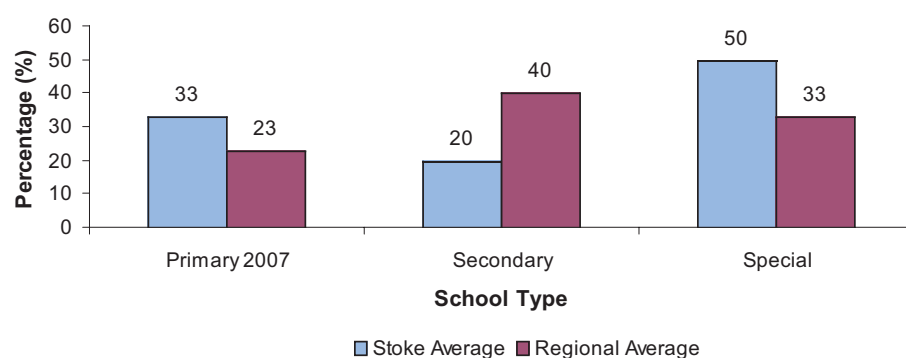
11: Does your school have a growing club?

Since 2005 there has been a 10% increase in the number of primary schools with growing clubs, however in both in 2005 and 2007 this was below the regional average. On the other hand, both secondary and special school were above the regional average.



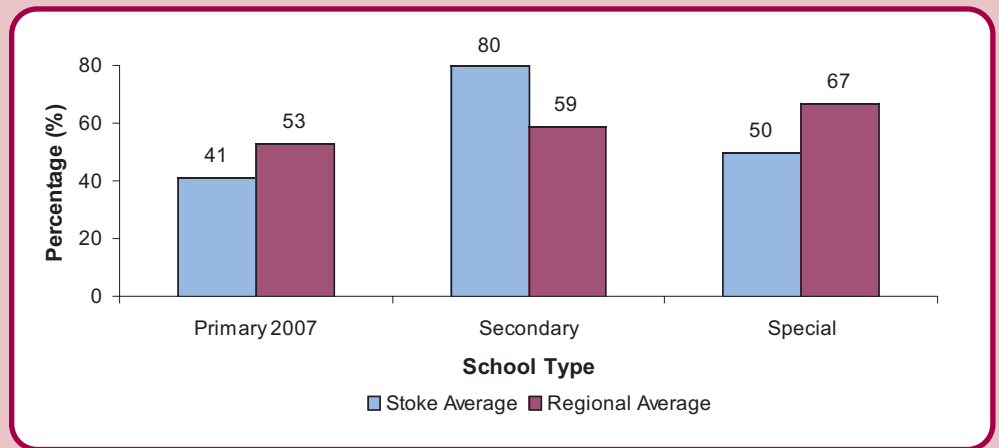
12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

Both primary and special schools were above the regional average for providing pupils with extended school activities. However secondary 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?

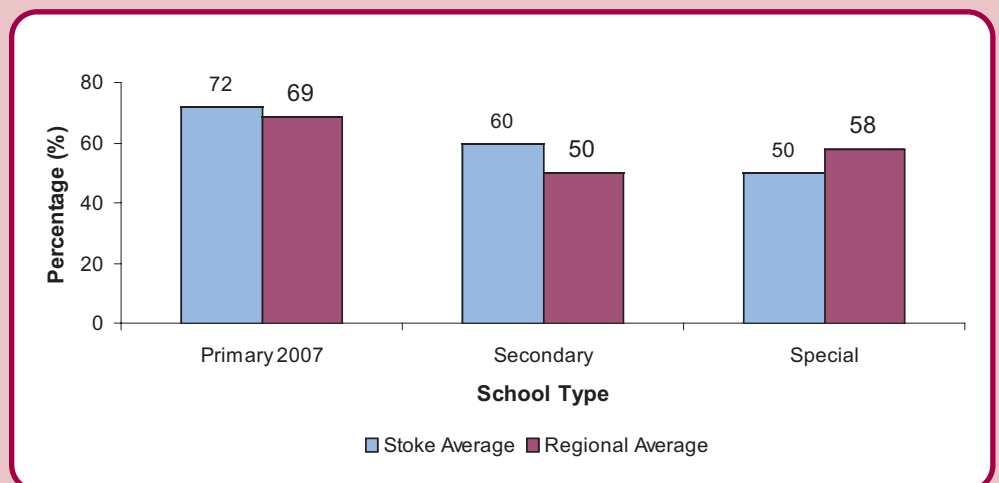
Primary and special schools were below the regional average for providing opportunities within the school CPD plan for training on food related areas. Conversely secondary schools were above the regional average. The majority of personal development noted was in basic food hygiene.



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

Both primary and secondary schools were above the regional average for involving 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 cook and eat sessions and healthy lunchbox training.
- 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 positive changes children were making to food choices as a result of the introduction of new school food standards. Within Stoke-on-Trent 30 primary schools, 3 secondary schools and 1 special 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.

"We stopped having chips last September. Now we have them every three weeks and they don't sell. Our pupils are making healthier choices"

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 independently choosing more fruit and vegetables and they are more willing to try new foods"

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.

"On entry to this school children were reluctant to try new foods and eat fruit. They couldn't identify common fruit and vegetables, but by the end of the year there has been a big improvement in these areas and parents have given very positive feedback"

Although not specifically reported on within Stoke-on-Trent 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 were around examples of good practice and the difficulties encountered.

Examples of Good Practice – Food tasting days, themed days such as Chinese day or fish day.

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 ▶▶

In many areas Stoke-on-Trent were above the regional average, however, there are certain areas that need work.

Breakfast clubs – Stoke-on-Trent has a lower than average number of secondary and special schools providing breakfast clubs for children. The Food in Schools Toolkit provides guidance on setting up breakfast clubs in schools. www.foodinschools.org.uk

Continuous personal development - Stoke-on-Trent has a lower than average number of primary and secondary schools providing training opportunities for staff in food related areas. It is advised that at least one member of staff is trained in basic food hygiene.

Growing clubs - Stoke on Trent has a lower than average number of schools providing 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 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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