

# food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food In Schools  
Survey 2007



## Telford and Wrekin

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 This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.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

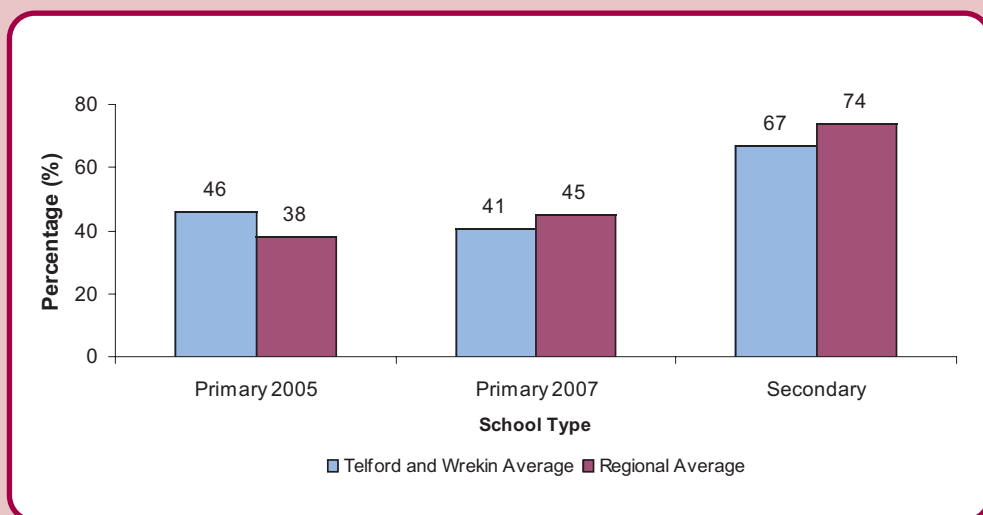
- 76% of responding primary schools within Telford and Wrekin report having a whole school food policy
- 47% of responding primary schools report that they have both cooking and growing clubs
- Free school meal uptake in Telford and Wrekin was above average for primary schools 86% (average 82.5%) but below average for secondary schools 73.1% (average 73.5%) (School Food Trust 2007).
- 19.4% of year 6 pupils are obese which is above the national average of 17.3%
- 97.3% of schools in Telford and Wrekin are participating in the Healthy Schools Programme

Table 1: Response Rate

Telford and Wrekin Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Range across LEA's (%)
Primary 2005	51	28	55%	38-77%
Primary 2007	62	17	27%	20-58%
Secondary	13	3	23%	11-50%
Special	4	0	0%	0-75%
2007 Total	79	20	25%	21-56%

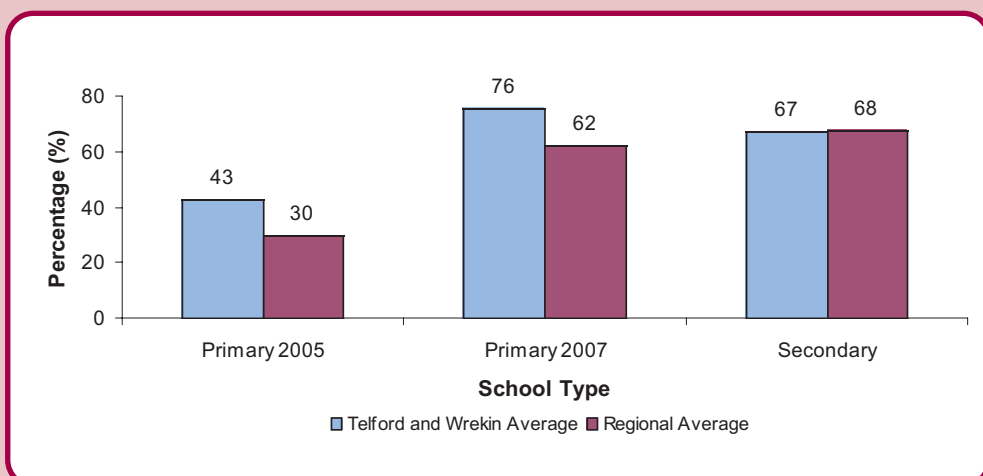
## 1: Response Rate

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



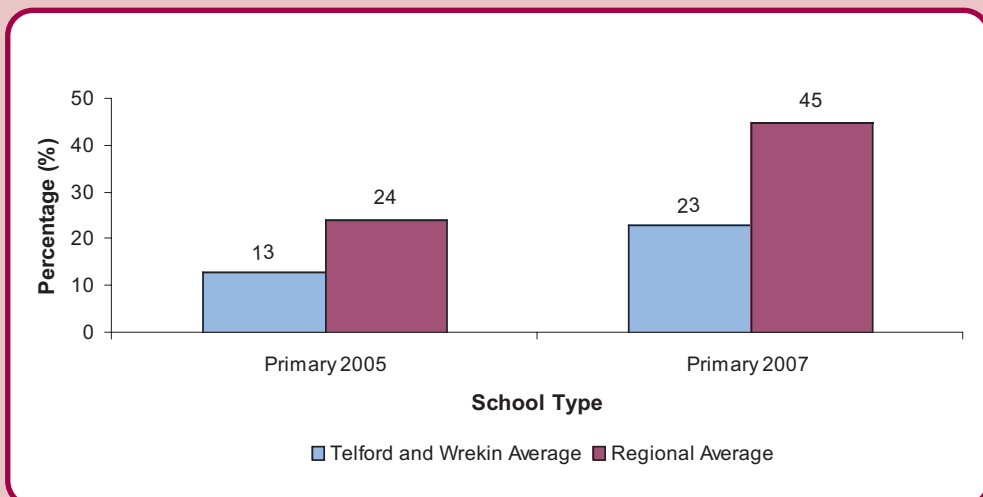
## 2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

Since 2005 Telford and Wrekin has seen a 33% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a whole school food policy, this is above the regional average. In contrast secondary schools were just below the regional average.



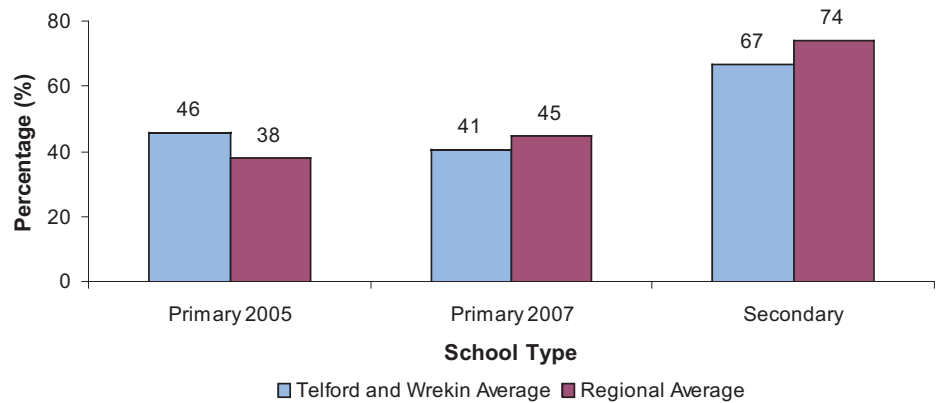
## 3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Although there has been a 10% increase in the number of primary school reporting providing fruit and vegetables at key stage 2 since 2005, Telford and Wrekin was still below the regional average.



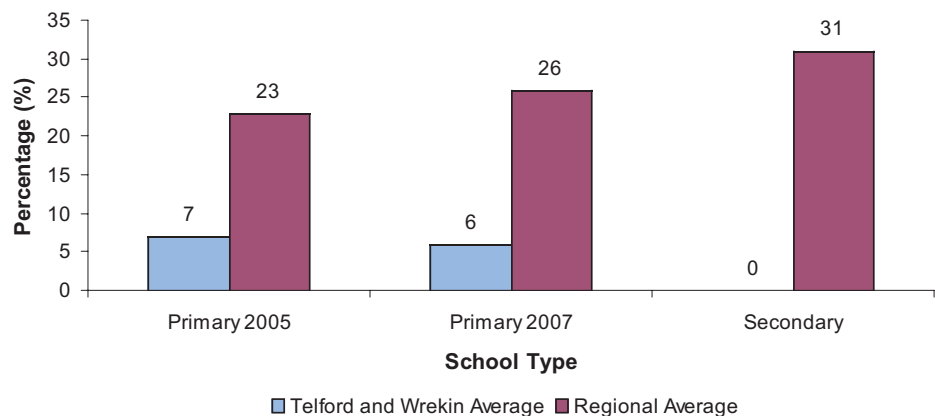
## 4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

Telford and Wrekin has a lower than average number of schools reporting providing a breakfast club for children.



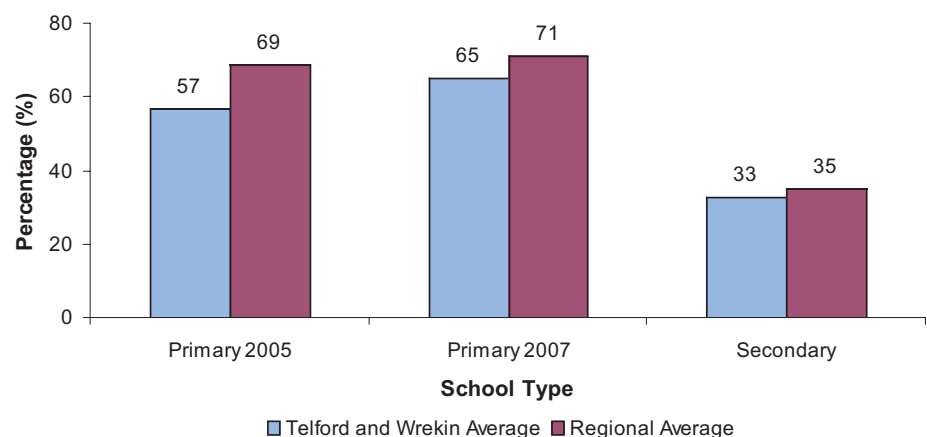
## 5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

Both primary and secondary schools within Telford and Wrekin were below the regional average for providing pupils with a tuckshop.



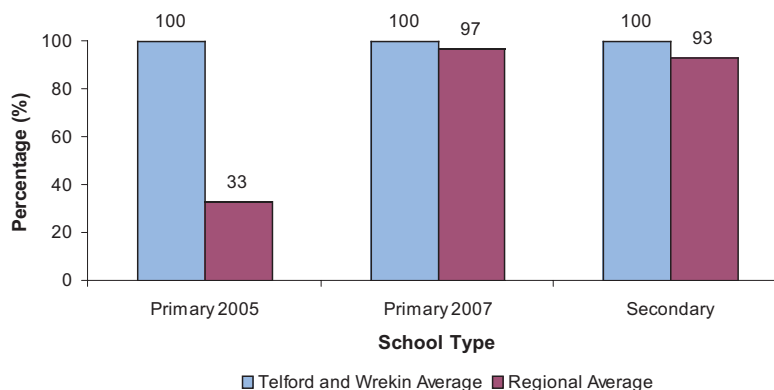
## 6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

Although Telford and Wrekin primary schools have seen an 8% increase in the number of schools with a healthy snacking policy, both primary and secondary schools 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%. Telford and Wrekin were above this with 100% of the schools that responded provided access to free drinking water.



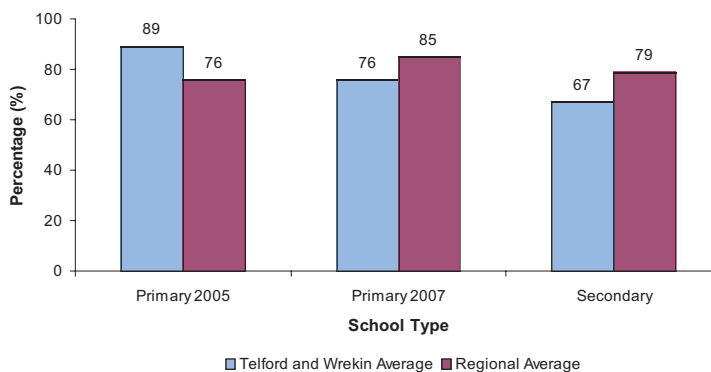
## 8: Does your school have a dining room that is an attractive and sociable place to eat?

Between 2005 and 2007 the number of Telford and Wrekin primary schools reporting that they had an attractive and sociable dining environment decreased by 13%. Primary and secondary schools were both below the regional average.

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

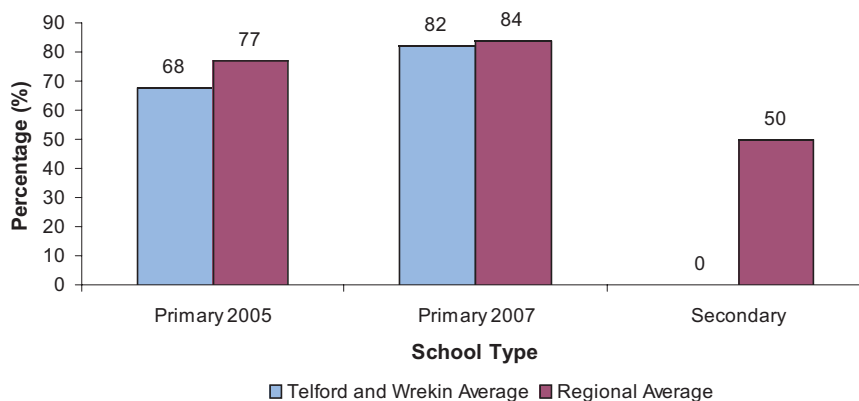
1. **Improvements** - A number of primary schools said they were in the process of developing their dining environments.
2. **Lack of facilities** - Many primary schools only have the option to eat in their classrooms
3. **School Hall** - Multi-purpose halls are often the only available place for children 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 Telford and Wrekin noted any specific examples of good practice, some areas within the region reported examples such as introduction of fun tablecloths, and displaying pupils artwork and playing music in the dining room environment.



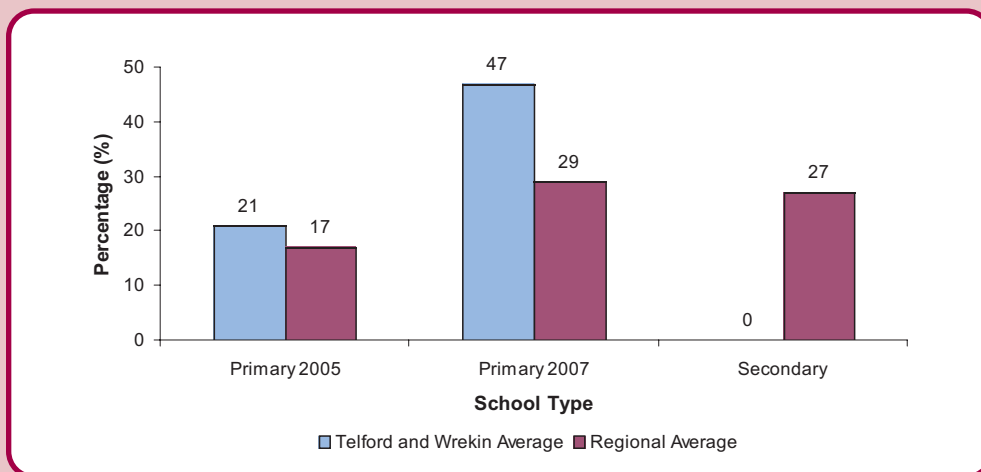
## 9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

Since 2005 Telford and Wrekin has seen a 14% increase in the number of primary schools reporting promoting healthier lunchboxes to children and parents, in both cases this was below the regional average. Furthermore none of the secondary schools that responded reported that they promoted healthy lunchboxes.



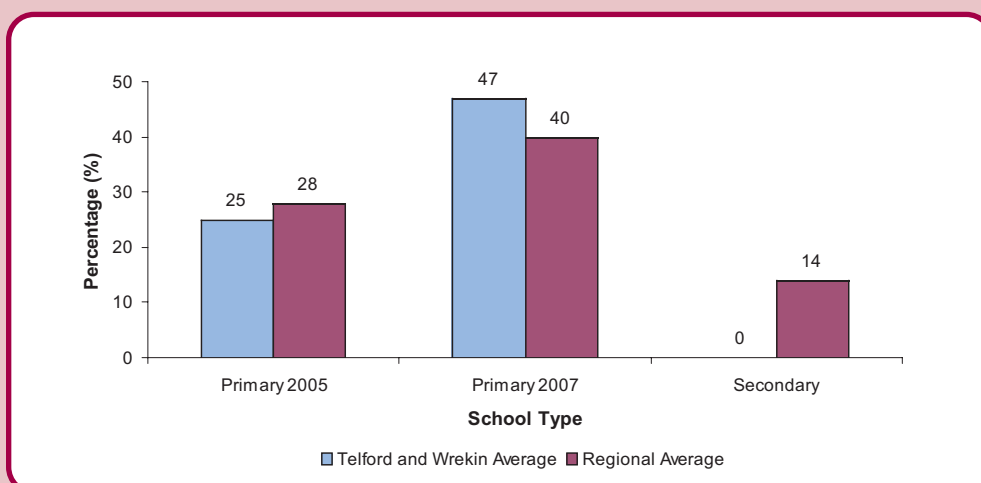
## 10: Does your school have a cooking club?

Although none of the secondary schools that responded had a cooking club. Between 2005 and 2007 there has been a 26% increase in the number of primary schools with cooking clubs and this is significantly above the regional average.



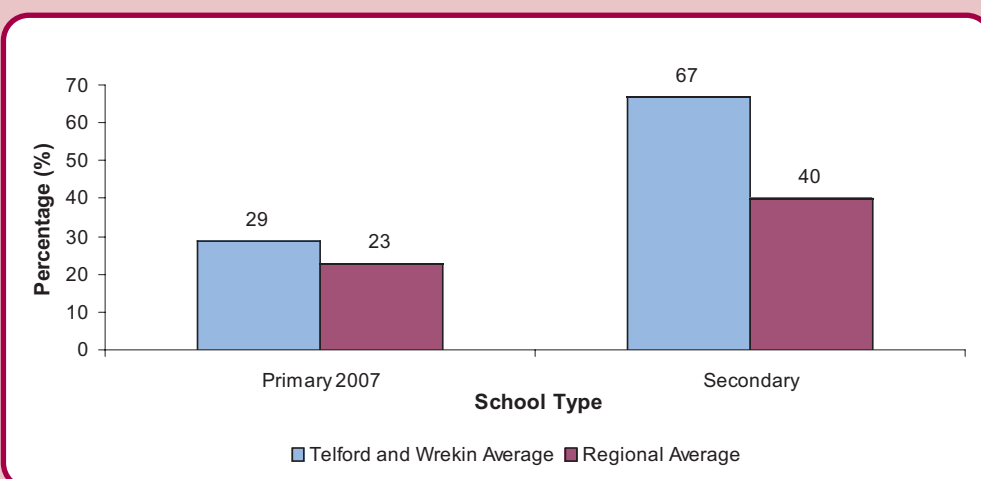
## 11: Does your school have a growing club?

Since 2005 Telford and Wrekin have seen a 22% increase in the number of primary schools with growing clubs. Primary schools were above the regional average, whereas none of the secondary schools that responded had growing clubs.



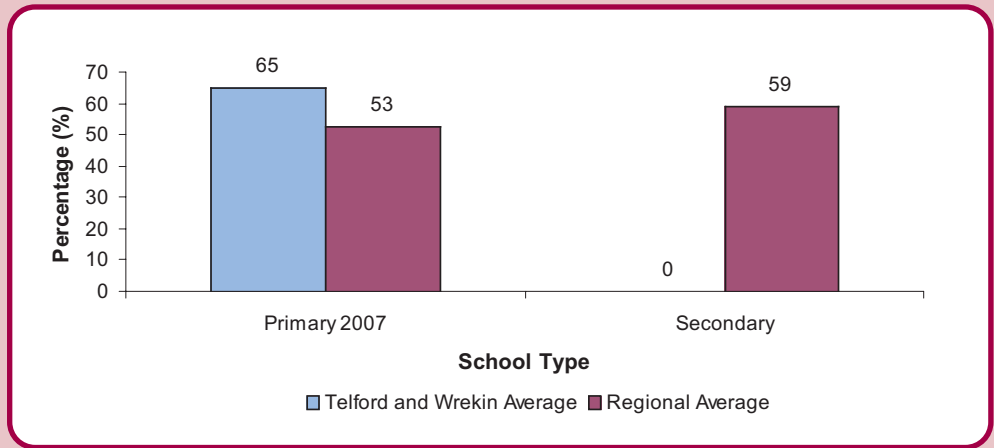
## 12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

Telford and Wrekin had a higher than average number of schools providing extended school activities for pupils.



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

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

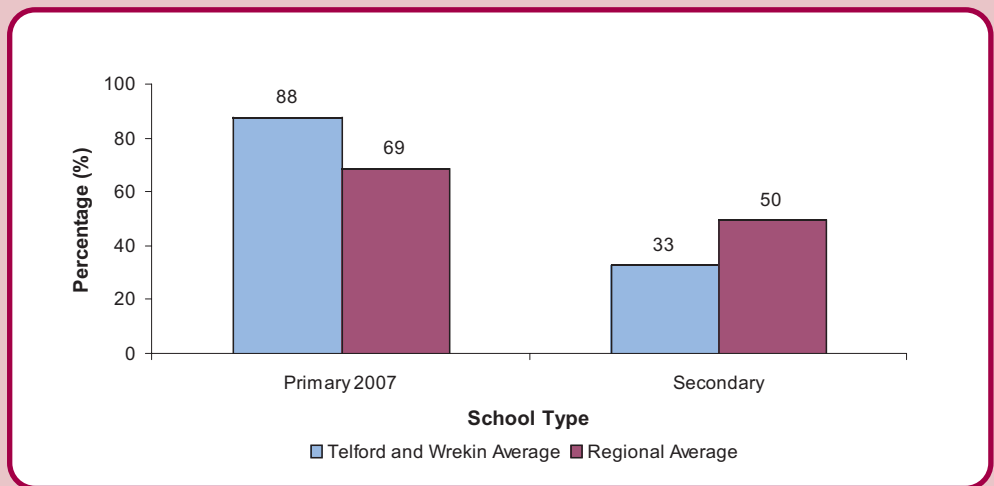


### 14: Does your school involve parents in school food activities?

Primary schools were above the regional average for involving parents in schools food activities. However, secondary 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 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 Telford and Wrekin, 13 primary schools and 3 secondary schools 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.

“Children now eat fruit and ask their parents to provide it for them”

## 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 more prepared to try new foods and they are aware of the choices they are making”

## 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 able to speak about healthy choices and its benefits”

“Children and staff are very aware of healthy foods and what constitutes a good choice”

## Behaviour ▶

One school noted that children behaviour has changed and they believe it is due to children eating healthier food.

## 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** – Many schools reported on their involvement with the national healthy schools programme as well as the development of parent workshops, healthy lunchbox sessions and healthy eating weeks.

**Difficulties** – Although no difficulties were specifically reported within Telford and Wrekin many schools in other areas reported that although consistent messages around food were being given at school these were often undermined in the home environment.

## Recommendations ▶▶

In many areas Telford and Wrekin Primary schools were above the regional average. In contrast many of the secondary schools were below average, however it is important to consider the low response rate for secondary schools when interpreting this data. Some 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 environment – We would recommend looking at the school food trust resource – ‘A fresh look at the school meal experience’ for advice and 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)

Cooking and growing clubs – Telford and Wrekin has a lower than average number of secondary schools providing cooking and 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.

### 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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