

food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food in Schools
Survey 2007



▶▶ **Walsall**

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 This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.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

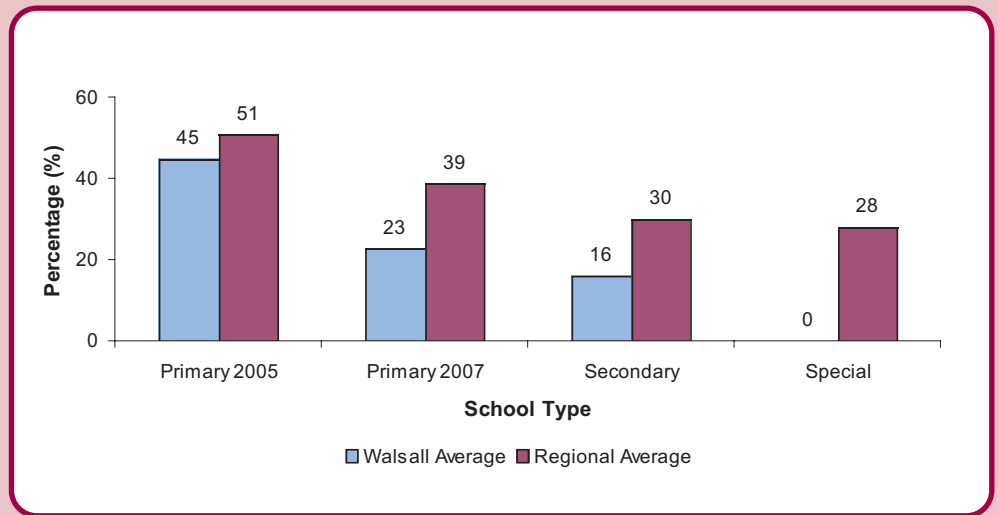
Headlines ▶▶

- 100% of responding schools in Walsall reported that provided access to free drinking water.
- 83% of responding primary schools in Walsall reported that they promoted healthier lunchboxes to pupils and parents.
- 86% of schools in Walsall are participating in the Healthy Schools Programme.
- Free school meal uptake in Walsall is below average – primary schools 79.1% (average 82.5%); secondary schools 73.2% (average 73.5%) (School Food Trust 2007).

Walsall Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Range across LEA's (%)
Primary 2005	89	40	45%	38-77%
Primary 2007	99	23	23%	20-58%
Secondary	19	3	16%	11-50%
Special	6	0	0%	0-75%
Other		5		
2007 Total	124	26	21%	21-56%

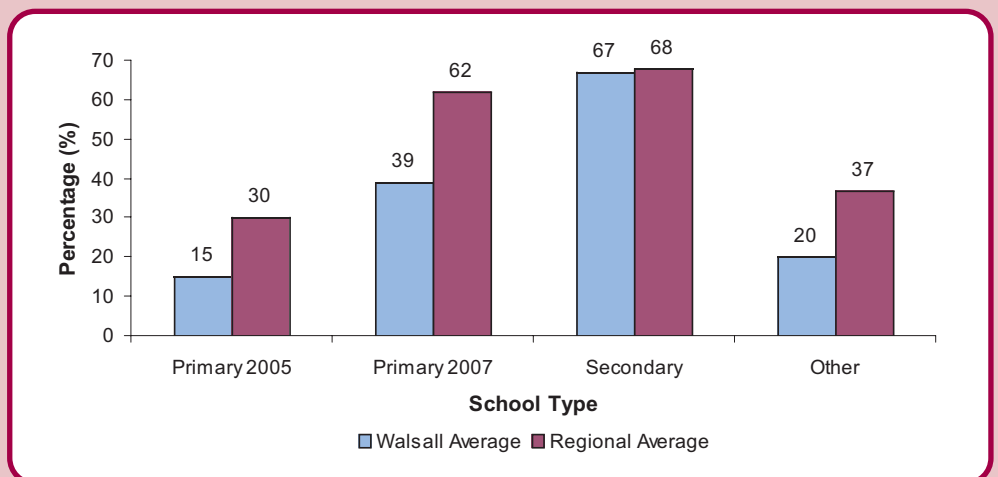
1: Response Rate

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. Within Walsall this section is made up entirely of schools who did not specify which category they fell into. It is important to note that only 3 secondary schools in Walsall responded to the survey and a very low percentage of primary schools, this needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting the data.



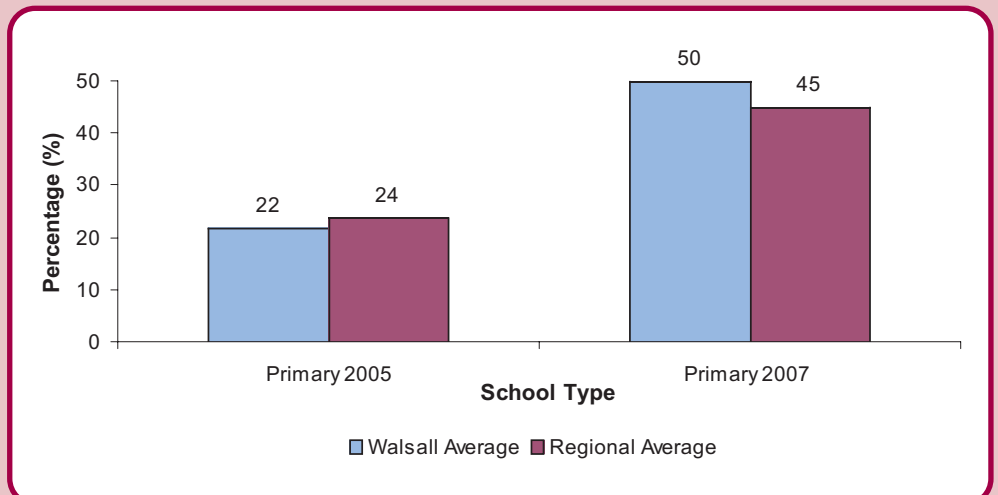
2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

Although there has been a 24% increase in the number of primary schools reporting that they have a whole school food policy this is still considerably below the regional average.



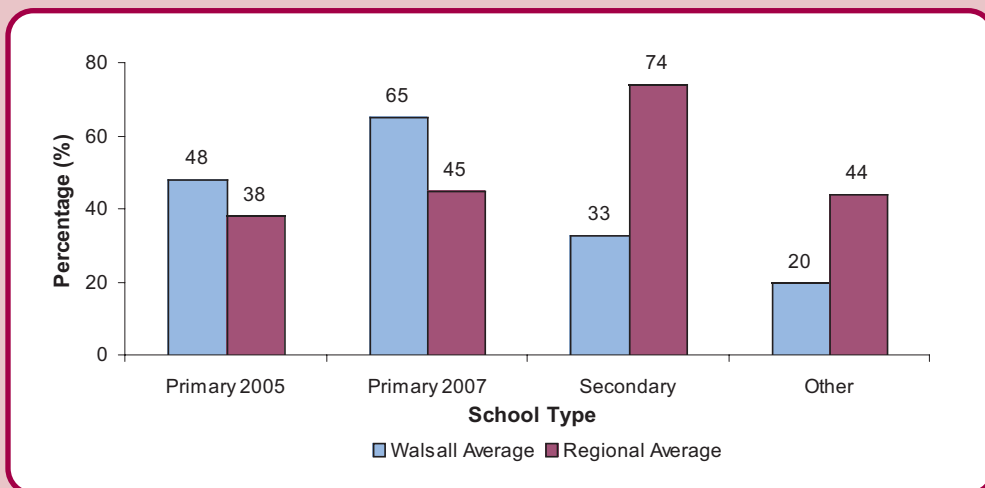
3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Since 2005 Walsall has seen a 28% increase in the number of primary schools reporting that they provide fruit and vegetables at key stage 2, this is now above the regional average.



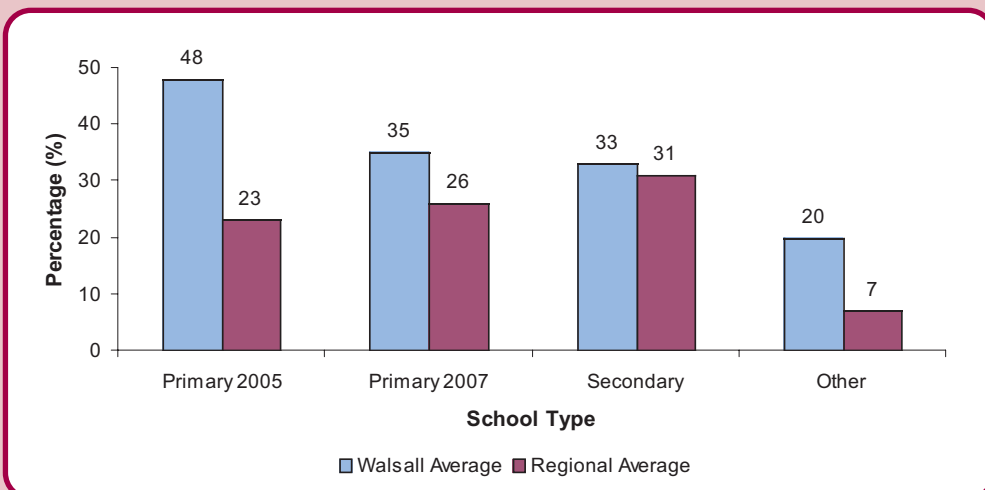
4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

Walsall has a higher than average number of primary schools reporting that they have a breakfast club.



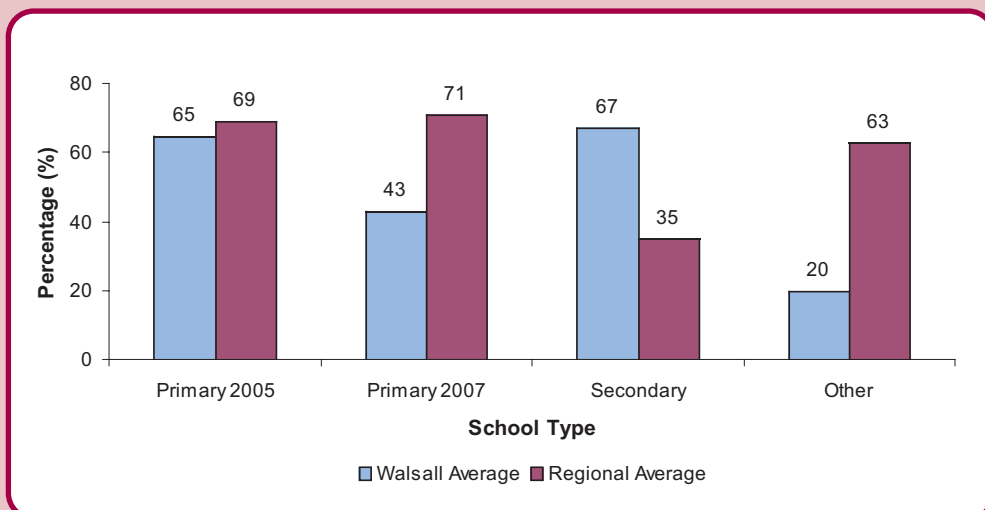
5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

Since 2005 Walsall has seen a 13% decrease in the number of primary schools with tuckshops. However, overall Walsall has a higher than average number of schools with tuckshops.



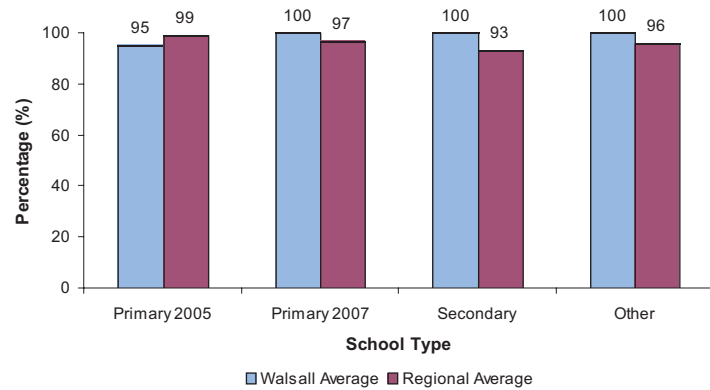
6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

Since 2005 there has been a decrease (22%) in the number of primary schools reporting having a healthy snacking policy. Primary and other schools were below the regional average. However, secondary schools were well above 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%. Walsall was above this with 100% of the schools that responded providing access to free drinking water.



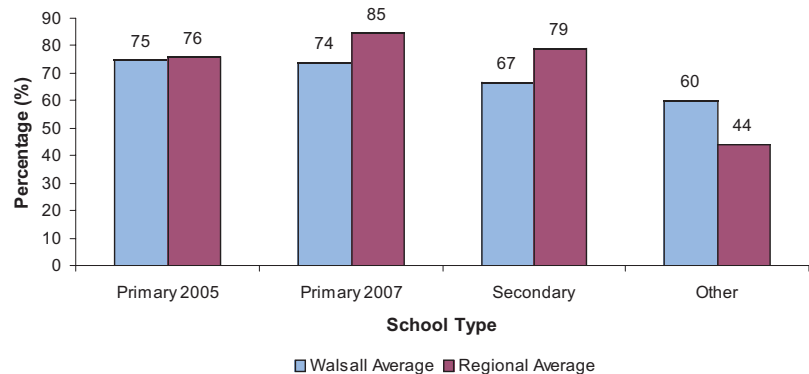
8: Does your school have a dining room that is an attractive and sociable place to eat?

Primary and secondary schools were below the regional average for reporting that they provided pupils with an attractive and sociable dining environment.

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

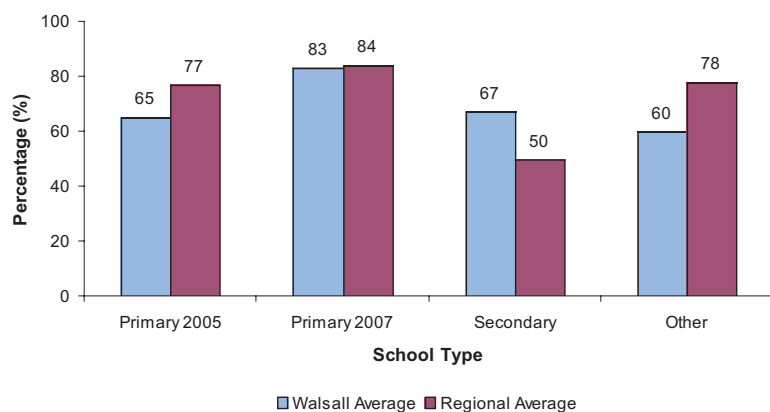
- 1. Improvements** - A number of primary schools said they were in the process of developing their dining environments.
- 2. Lack of facilities** - Many primary schools only have the option to eat in their classrooms
- 3. School Hall** - Multi-purpose halls are often the only available place for children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



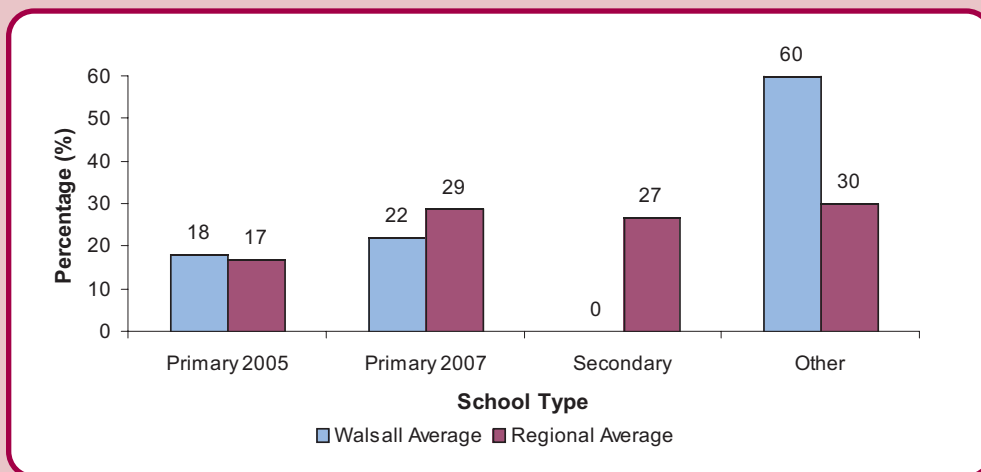
9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

A high proportion of primary schools are promoting healthier lunchboxes in schools. Both primary and other schools were just below the regional average. Secondary schools on the other hand were above the regional average.



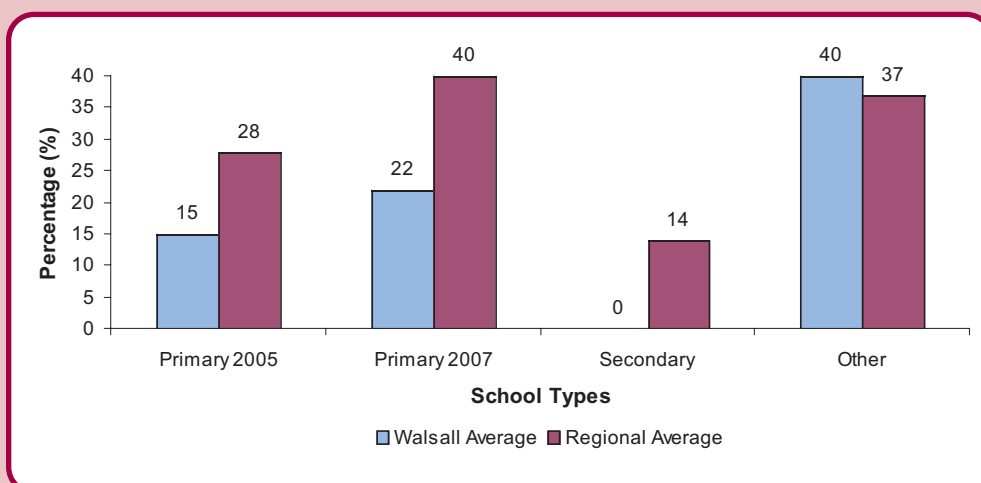
10: Does your school have a cooking club?

Walsall has a lower than average number of primary and secondary schools with cooking clubs.



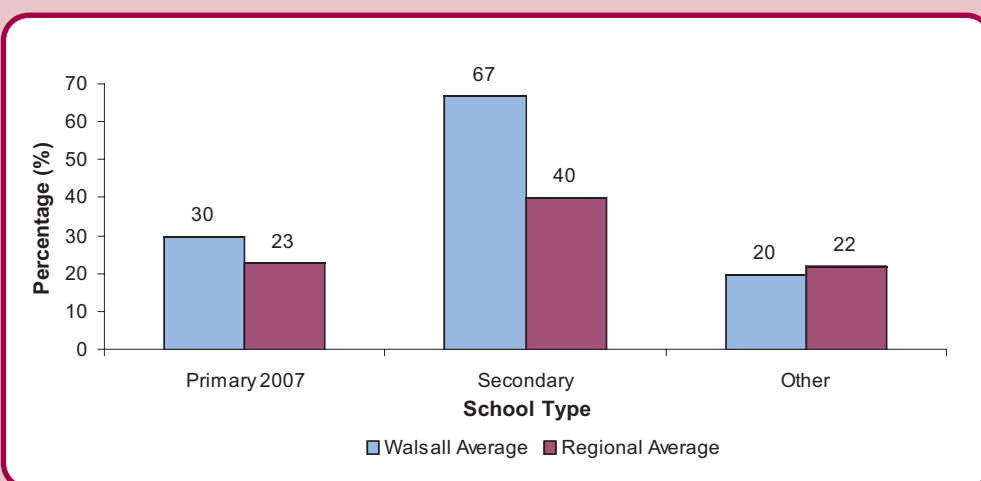
11: Does your school have a growing club?

Since 2005 there has been a slight increase in the number of primary schools with growing clubs. Both primary and secondary schools were below the regional average.



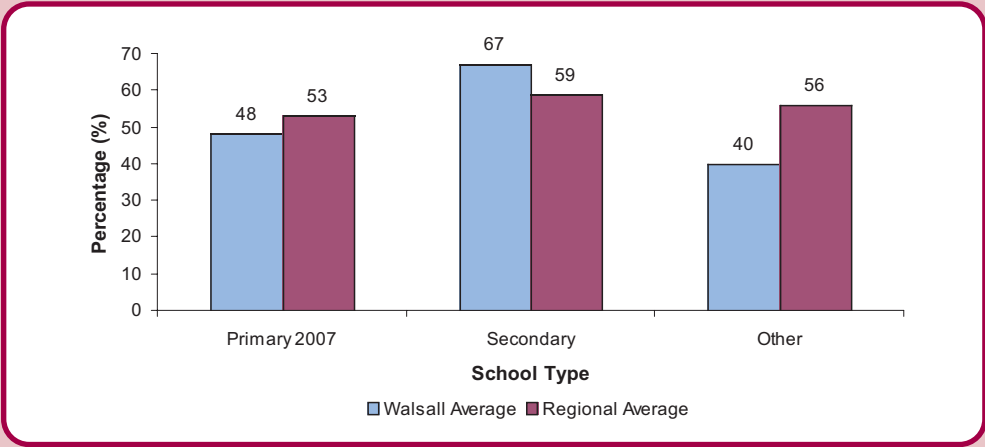
12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

Primary and secondary schools were both above the regional average for providing pupils with extended school activities.



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

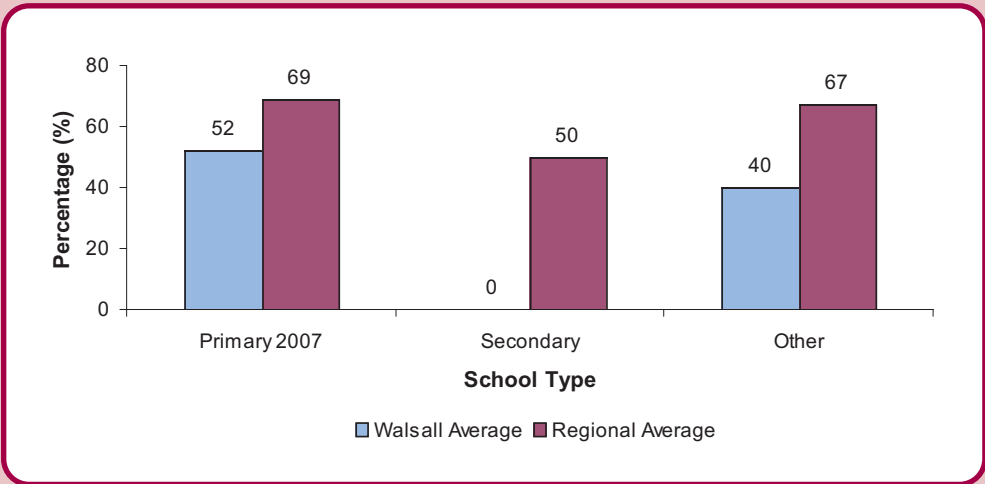
Primary and other schools were below the regional average for providing opportunities within the school CPD plan for training on food related areas. The majority of personal development noted was in basic food hygiene.



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

Walsall has a lower than average number of schools 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, 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 Walsall 16 primary schools, 3 secondary schools, and 1 'other' 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.

"Children are eating less sweets and don't really demand them anymore. They are now having healthier options when giving birthday treats"

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.

"More children are having schools dinners and they are more enthusiastic about healthy eating"

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.

"More children are choosing healthier options and they know why"

Although not specifically reported on within Walsall 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 - Many schools reported on their involvement with the national healthy schools programme as well as the development of parent workshops.

Difficulties - Some schools commented on there being a reduction of school meal uptake. One school also felt that some children were taking healthy eating messages the wrong way and becoming weight obsessed.

“There are some problems with pupils worrying too much about what they eat, they’re weight obsessed. Also acid in fruits have led to tooth decay and parent have commented”

Recommendations ▶▶

In many areas Walsall was below the regional average. Some areas of note include:

Whole school food policy - Walsall has a lower than average number of primary schools with a whole school food policy. It is a requirement of healthy schools status that schools have a whole school food policy in place. For more advice on the development of whole school food policy look at the Food in School Toolkit which is available online at www.foodinschools.org. The toolkit provides an audit tool and sample policy to support the development of a whole school food policy.

Dining room environments were a particular issue for both primary and secondary schools. 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

Cooking and growing clubs - The number of primary and secondary schools with cooking and growing clubs in Walsall was below the regional average. 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

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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Date of publication: February 2008

