

food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food in Schools
Survey 2007



▶▶ **Warwickshire**

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 This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.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

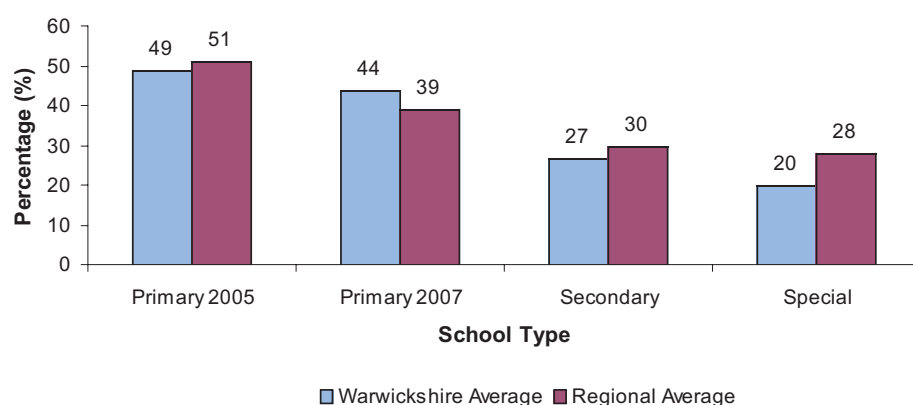
- Over three quarters of responding schools in Warwickshire promote healthier lunchboxes to pupils and parents.
- Over half of responding primary schools are undertaking growing activities in schools.
- 83.5% of schools are participating in the healthy schools programme.
- Free school meal uptake in Warwickshire is below average – primary schools 80.3% (average 82.5%): secondary schools 69.5% (average 73.5%) (School Trust Fund).
- 14.9% of Year 6 pupils within Warwickshire are obese which is below the national average of 17.3% (NCMP, 2006/07).

Table 1: Response Rate

Warwickshire Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Range across LEA's (%)
Primary 2005	181	89	49%	38-77%
Primary 2007	199	87	44%	20-58%
Secondary	37	10	27%	11-50%
Special	10	2	20%	0-75%
Other		2		
2007 Total	246	99	40%	21-56%

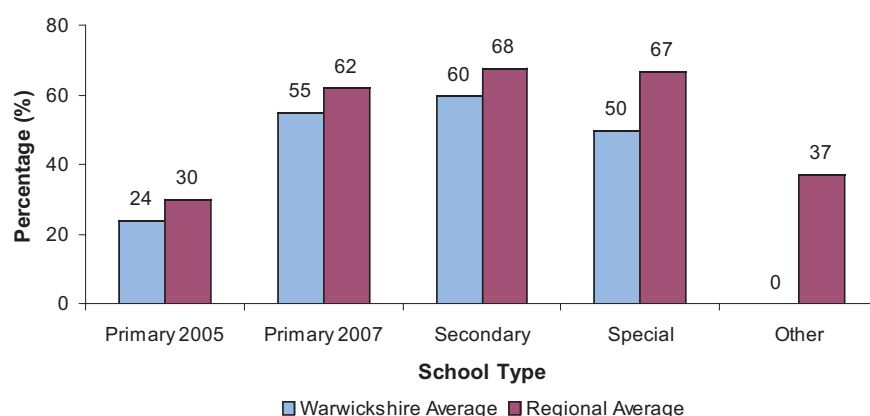
1: Response Rate

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 Warwickshire this section is made up of one PRU and one school who did not specify which category it fell into.



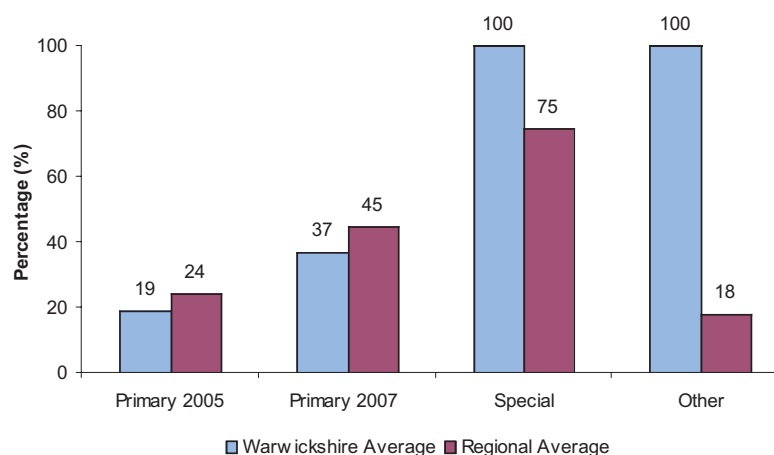
2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

Although there has been a 31% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a whole school food policy this is still lower than the regional average.



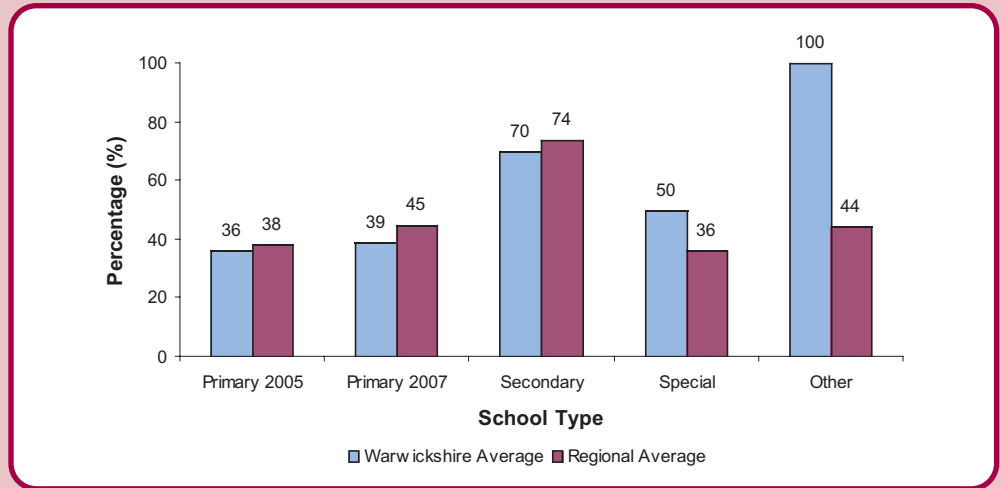
3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Since 2005 Warwickshire has seen an 18% increase in the number of primary schools providing fruit and vegetables at KS2. However, in both cases it was below the regional average.



4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

Warwickshire has a lower than average number of primary and secondary schools with breakfast clubs. In contrast special and other schools were above the regional average.



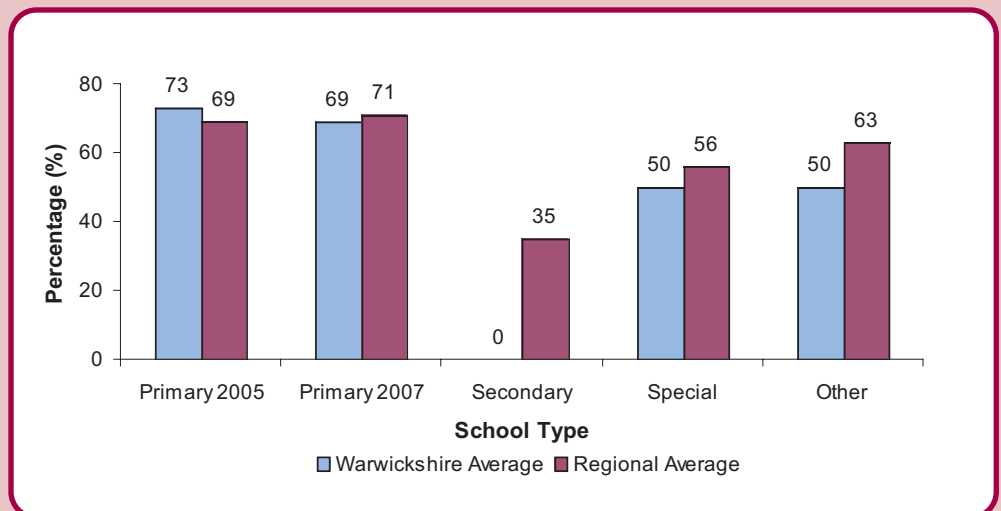
5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

Both secondary and special schools were above the regional average for providing a tuckshop. However, primary and other schools were below the regional average.



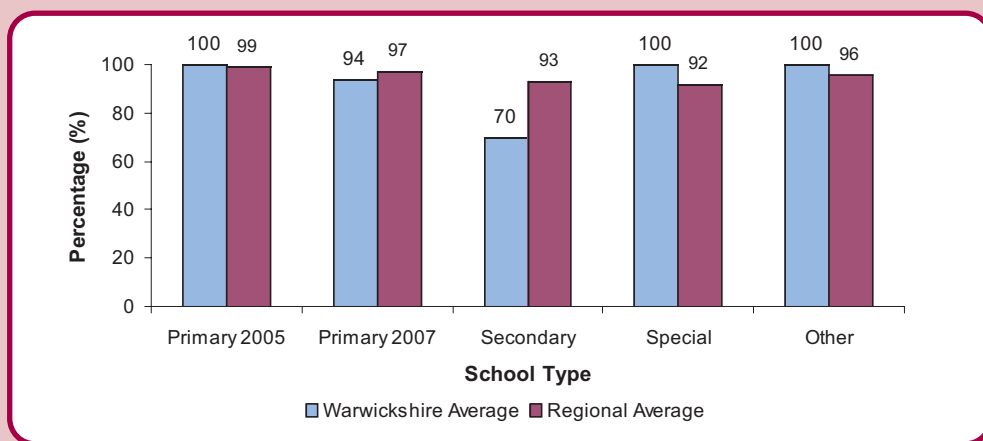
6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

Warwickshire has a lower than average number of schools with a healthy snacking policy. 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%. Warwickshire were just below this with 92% which was the lowest in the region.



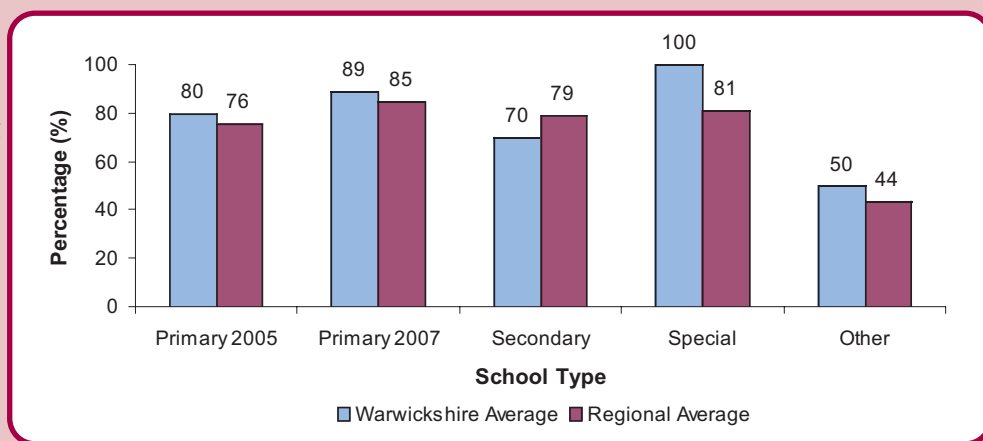
8: Does your school have a dining room that is an attractive and sociable place to eat?

Since 2005 the number of Warwickshire primary schools reporting having an attractive and sociable dining environment increased by 9%. Primary, other and special schools were above the regional average. However, secondary schools scored just below the regional average.

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

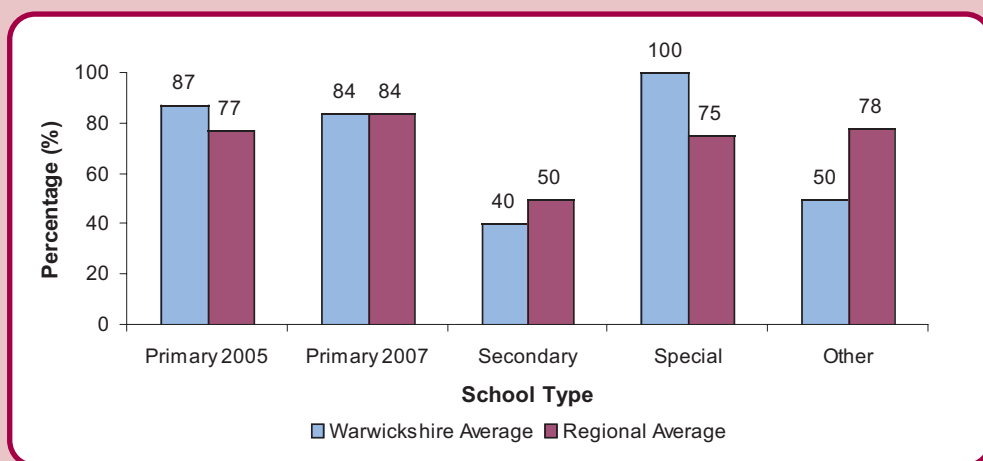
- Improvements** - A number of primary schools said they were in the process of developing their dining environments.
- Lack of facilities** - Many primary schools only have the option to eat in their classrooms
- School Hall** - Multi-purpose halls are often the only available place for children to 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.

Although no schools within Warwickshire reported any specific examples of good practice some areas within the region reported examples such as the introduction of fun tablecloths displaying artwork and playing music.



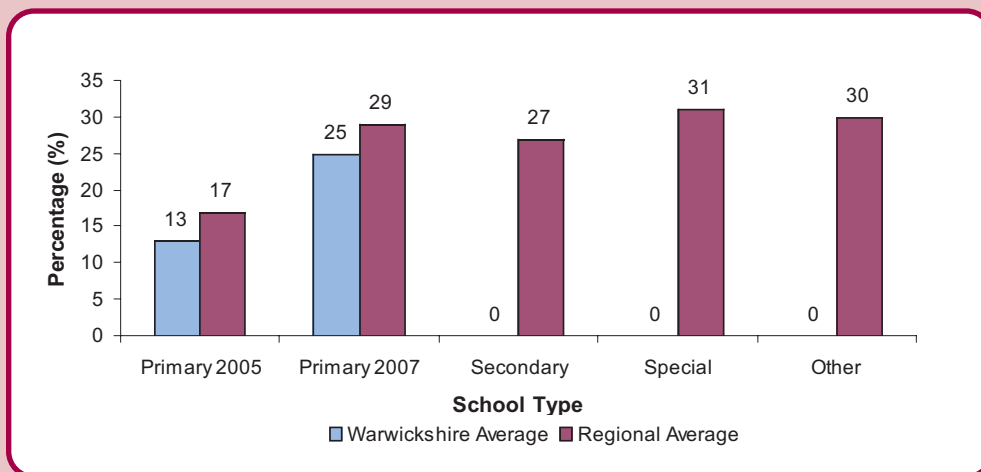
9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

Figure 9 illustrates the percentage of schools promoting healthier lunchboxes. It is encouraging to see that a very high proportion of primary schools are promoting healthier lunchboxes in school – 84% which is in line with the regional average. Special schools were above the regional average, whereas secondary and other schools were below the regional average.



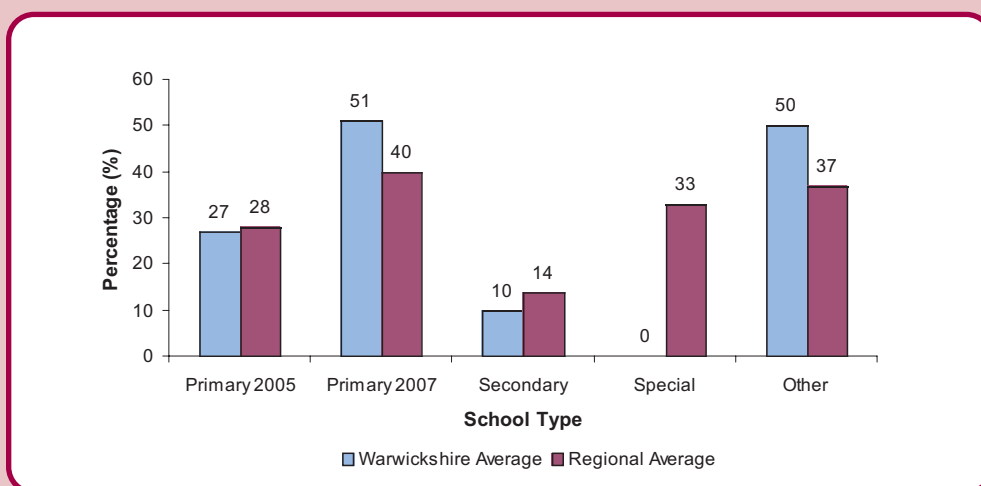
10: Does your school have a cooking club?

There was a 12% increase in the number of primary schools with cooking clubs between 2006/7. However, primary, secondary, special and other schools were all below the regional average.



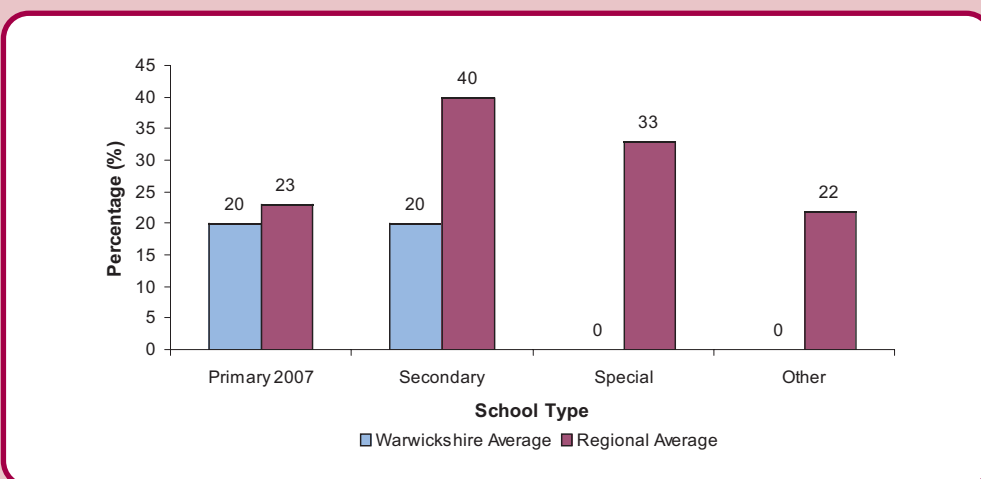
11: Does your school have a growing club?

Since 2005 Warwickshire has seen a 24% increase in the number of primary schools with a growing club which is now above the regional average. However, secondary and special schools were both below the regional average.



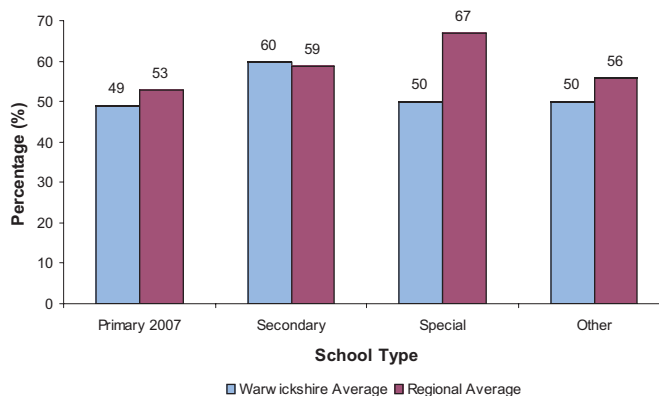
12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

All schools within Warwickshire were below the regional average for providing extended school activities.



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

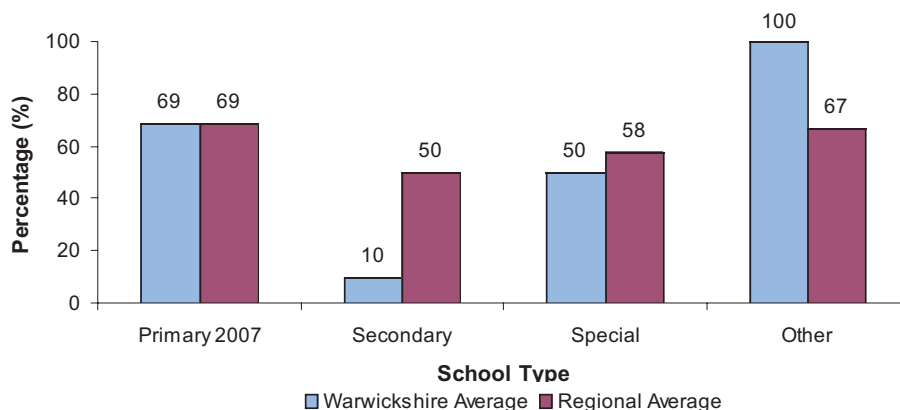
Primary, special and other schools were below the regional average for providing opportunities within the school CPD plan for training on food related areas. The majority of personal development noted was in basic food hygiene.



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

Primary schools were in line with the regional average for involving parents in school food activities. However, secondary and special schools were below the regional average only 1 secondary school involved parents. 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 and consulting on food policy.



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 Warwickshire 63 of primary schools, 8 secondary schools and 2 special schools had noted changes. None of the other schools that responded reported any changes. On further analysis four broad themes emerged, including:

Making healthier choices ▶

These included, eating more fruit and vegetables, healthier lunchboxes, increased school meal uptake and increased water consumption.

“Since getting involved in the healthy schools initiative lunchboxes have become very healthy and with a good balance”

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.

“Students have not resisted our changes to healthy food in schools. Many of them have made positive comments about it”

“Children generally seem more enthusiastic about food they are offered by school at lunchtime”

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.

“I feel that the children, even from a very young age, are aware of what constitutes a healthy diet”

Behaviour ▶

One primary school in Warwickshire also commented on the change in the children’s behaviour.

“Two families stopped eating junk food, we found a considerable difference in the children’s behaviour and concentration”

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 an introduction of a cashless catering card.

Difficulties - Many schools reported that although consistent messages around food were being given at school these were often undermined in the home environment. Furthermore, some schools have reported decreased school meal uptake due to the new guidelines.

“We have introduced a cashless catering card where parents can top up money over the internet ensuring that money is not spent elsewhere”

Recommendations ▶▶

In many areas Warwickshire was below the regional average. Areas of note include:

Key Stage 2 Fruit and Vegetables 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.

Cooking and growing clubs- Cooking and Growing Clubs - Warwickshire has a lower than average number of secondary and special 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

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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