

# food in schools

within the West Midlands

Food In Schools  
Survey 2007



**Worcestershire**

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 This target has been superseded by a broader long-term ambition with an initial focus on children: 'By 2020, we aim to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to 2000 levels'.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

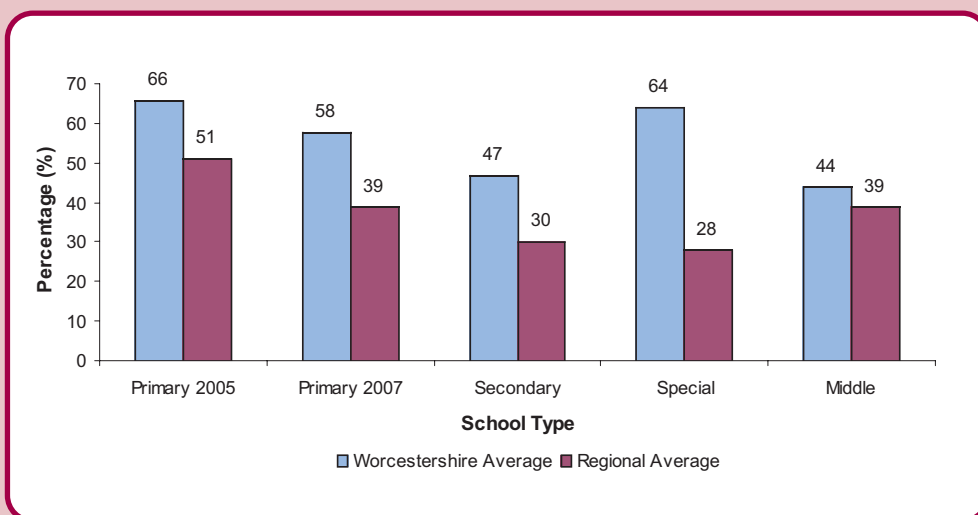
## Headlines ▶▶

- 58% of primary schools in Worcestershire responded to the survey – this was the highest response rate in the West Midlands.
- 80% of responding primary schools in Worcestershire report having a whole school food policy. This is a 49% increase since the previous survey in 2005.
- Over three quarters of responding primary schools promote healthier lunchboxes to pupils and parents
- 64% of responding secondary schools in Worcestershire have a cooking club
- 98% of schools in Worcestershire are participating in the healthy schools programme
- Free school meal uptake in Worcestershire is above average – Primary schools 85.3% (average 82.5%); Secondary schools 76.6% (average 73.5%) (School Food Trust, 2007)

Worcestershire Schools	Number of Schools	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)	Range across LEA's (%)
Primary 2005	194	129	66%	38-77%
Primary 2007	194	112	58%	20-58%
Secondary	30	14	47%	11-50%
Special	11	7	64%	0-75%
Middle	32	14	44%	0-44%
Other		5		
2007 Total	267	147	55%	21-56%

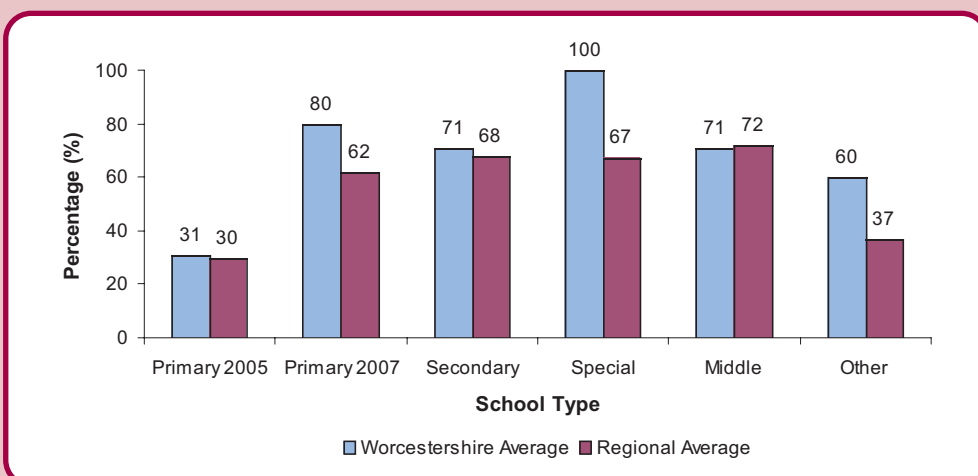
## 1: Response Rate

The regional response rate for primary schools was higher than that for special, middle 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 Worcestershire this section is made up entirely of four PRU's and one school who did not specify which category they fell into.



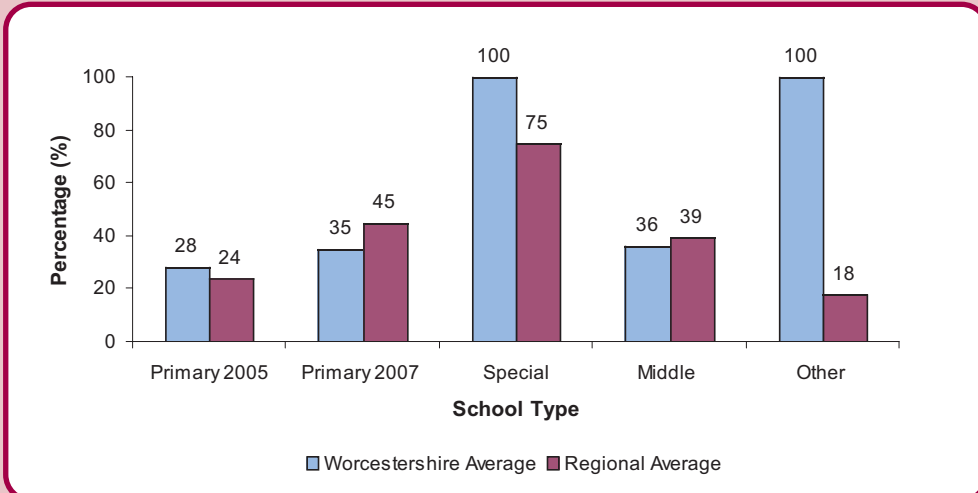
## 2: Does your school have a whole school food policy

Since 2005 there has been a 49% increase in the number of primary schools reporting having a whole school food policy. Primary, secondary, special and other schools were all above the regional average and middle schools were only just below the regional average.



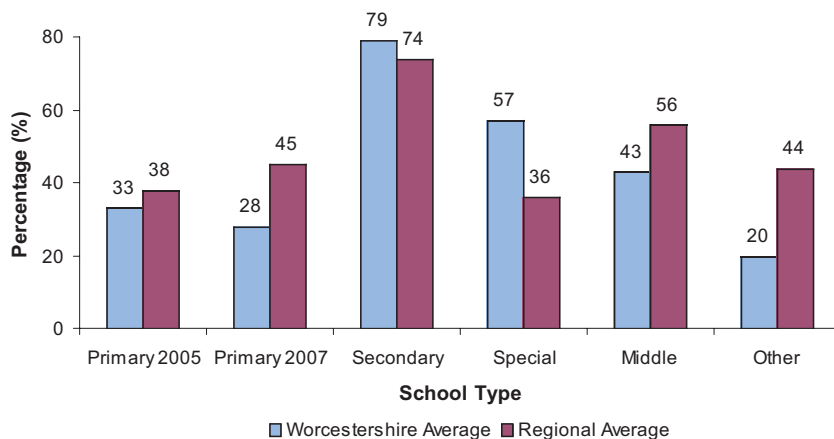
## 3: Does your school provide fruit at Key Stage 2?

Primary and middle schools were just below the regional average for providing fruit at key stage 2. On the other hand 100% of special and other schools that responded provided fruit and vegetables at key stage 2.



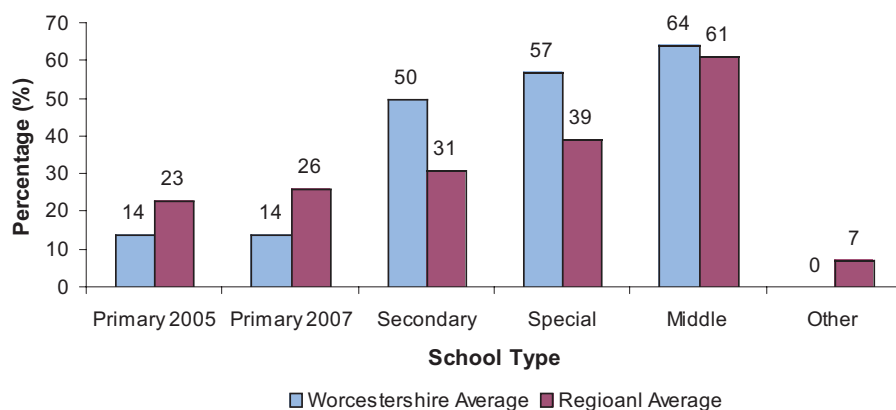
## 4: Does your school have a breakfast club?

Worcestershire has a higher than average number of secondary and special schools providing a breakfast club. However, primary, middle and other schools were all below the regional average.



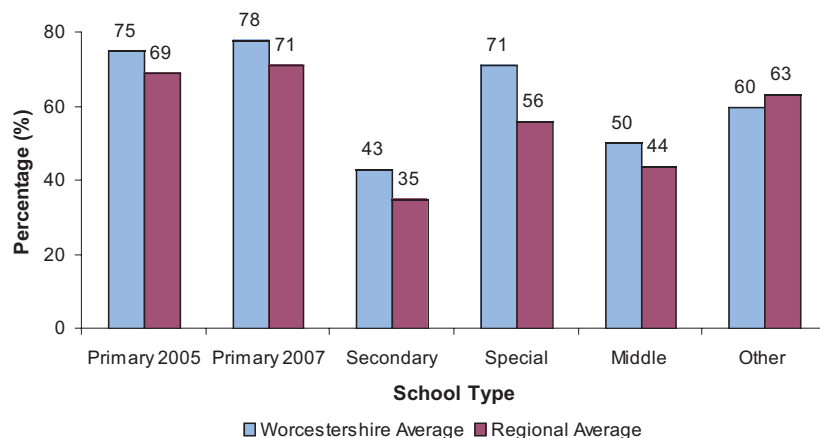
## 5: Does your school have a tuckshop?

Between 2005 and 2007 there has been no change in the number of schools providing a tuckshops. Primary and other schools were below the regional. However, secondary, special and middle schools were above the regional average.



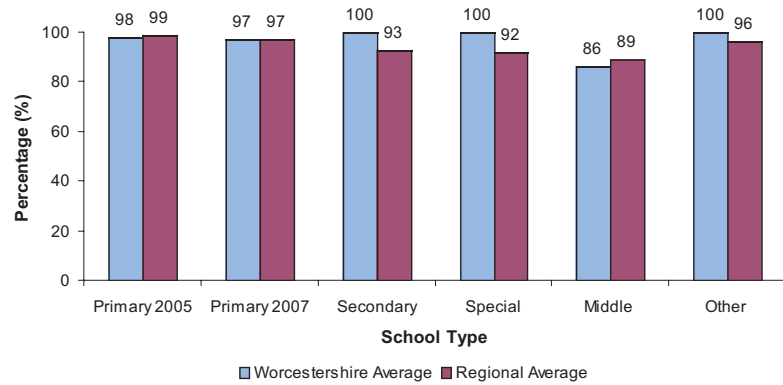
## 6: Does your school have a healthy snacking policy?

Within Worcestershire primary, secondary, special and middle schools were all above the regional average for implementing a healthy snacking policy. Other schools were just 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%, Worcestershire scored just above this with 97%.

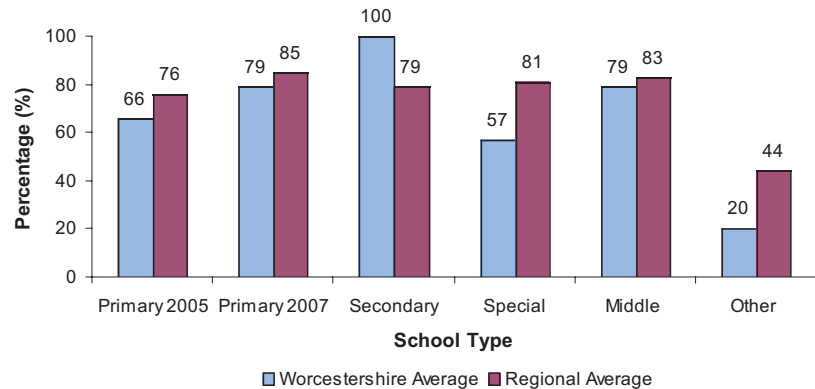


## 8: Does your school have a dining room that is an attractive and sociable place to eat?

Since 2005 the number of Worcestershire primary schools reporting that they had an attractive and sociable dining environment increased by 13%. However, primary, special, middle and other schools were all below the regional average.

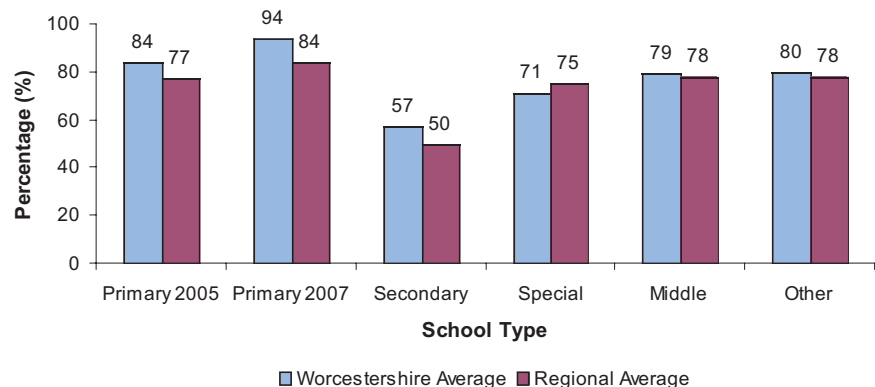
Some of the key themes related to the dining environment include:

- 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.
- 5. Examples of good practice** – Family grouping - meals served at table by older children and fun tablecloths.



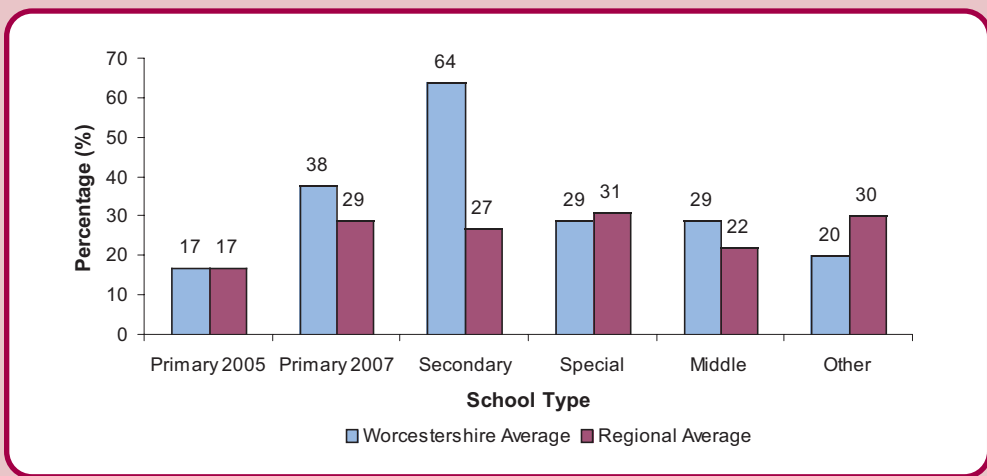
## 9: Does your school promote healthy lunchboxes?

A very high proportion of primary schools promote healthier lunchboxes in school – nearly 95% which is above the regional average. Furthermore, secondary, middle and other schools were also above the regional average.



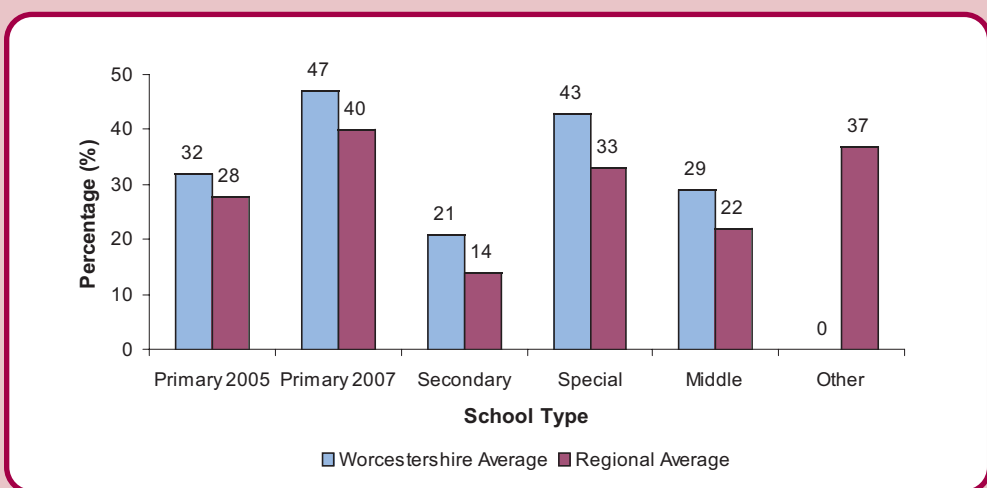
## 10: Does your school have a cooking club?

Since 2005 there has been a 21% increase in the number of primary schools with cooking clubs. Primary, secondary and middle schools were above the regional average, whereas special and other schools were just below the regional average.



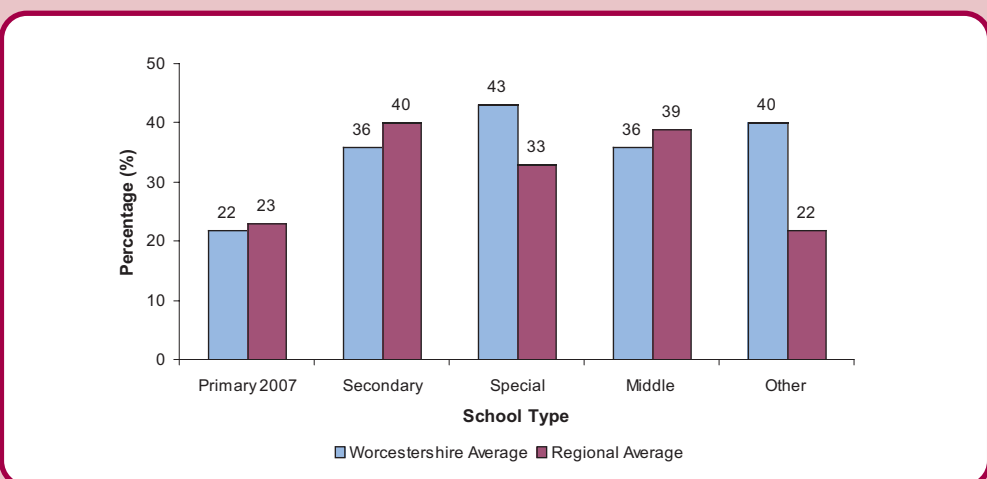
## 11: Does your school have a growing club?

Not only has there been a 15% increase in the number of primary schools with growing clubs but primary, secondary, special and middle schools were all above the regional average.



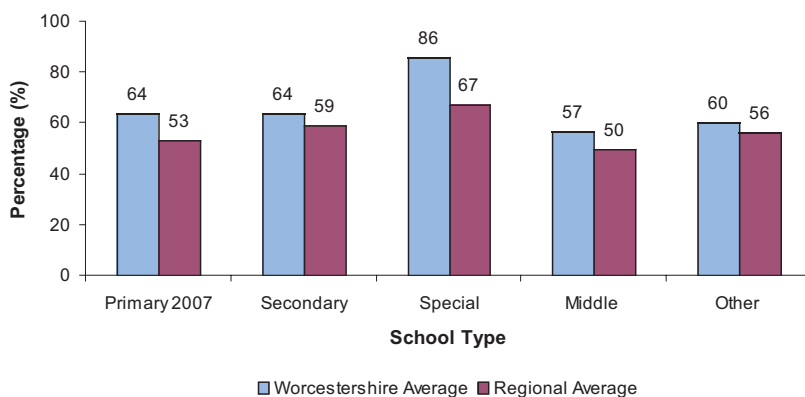
## 12: Does your school have any extended school activities around food in schools?

Worcestershire has below the average number of primary, secondary and middle schools providing extended school activities. However, special and other schools 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 Worcestershire were above 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.

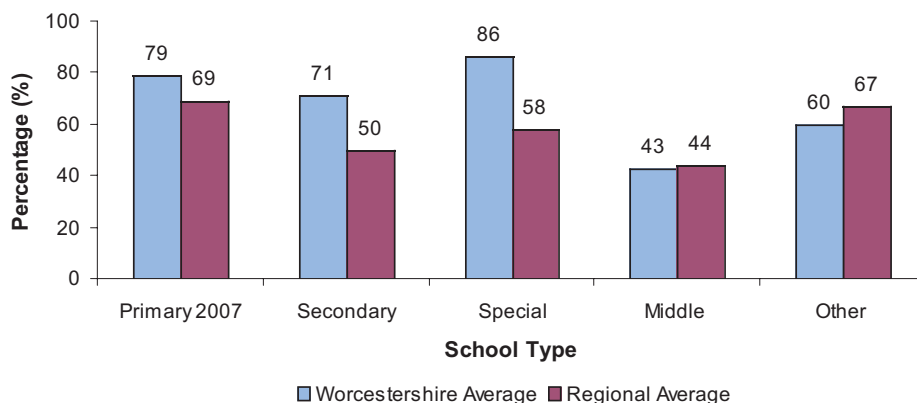


## 14: Does your school involve parents in school food activities?

A relatively high proportion of schools involve parents in school food activities. Primary, secondary and special schools were above the regional average. However, middle and other were below the regional average. The data suggests two main themes in which 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 Worcestershire 81 primary schools, 9 secondary schools, 6 special schools, 11 middle schools and 5 'other' schools had noted changes. On further analysis four broad themes emerged, including:

## Making healthier choices ▶

Schools reported that children were eating more fruit and vegetables, bringing in healthier lunchboxes. They also reported an increase in school meal uptake and water consumption.

Many of the secondary schools in Worcestershire noted that unhealthy snacks had been removed and more healthy sandwiches and drinks were being consumed.

"Gone are packets of crisps and chocolate biscuits for snacks. All our children eat healthy snacks -especially fruit. They have got very involved also in composting their fruit waste - fabulous change!"

## 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.

"Pupils now look forward to buying fruit from the healthy tuck shop. We now take orders in advance"

"Children are much more conscious of healthy choices and more children are eating healthy snacks at school"

## 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.

"There is an increased awareness about healthy food amongst our children. This has resulting in us seeing healthier eating behaviour"

## Behaviour ▶

Two primary schools in Worcestershire also commented on the change in the children's behaviour.

"We have been serving hot lunches for 7 weeks and some pupils are showing more engagement after lunchtime than previously".

"We recently started the provision of hot school meals- this has generated a lot of discussion on healthy eating and how it seemed to have improved the pupil's concentration in the afternoon".

## 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 and motivational stickers.

**Difficulties** - Many schools reported that although consistent messages around food were being given at school these were often undermined in the home environment.

"We are trying to discuss food choices with pupils to empower them to make the correct choices but it difficult to get parental support".

"Stickers are rewarded to children during lunchtime for bringing fruit. Most children are motivated by this and some KS2 children also bring fruit for break".

## Recommendations ▶▶

In many areas regarding food in schools Worcestershire was above the regional average. However some areas of note include:

Key Stage 2 Fruit and Vegetables is an area for additional work for Worcestershire primary schools. We would like to see all school providing fruit and vegetables for pupils at KS2 either though healthy snacking policies, through fruit tuckshops or by purchasing additional fruit from the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme distributor.

Dining room environment - Although only slightly below the regional average the dining environment was an issue for primary, special, middle and other school. 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)



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