

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

WALTHAM FOREST CATERING

SCHOOL MEALS STRATEGY 2011-2014



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Waltham Forest Catering School Meals Strategy: 2011 – 2014

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Timeline



2005: Turning the Tables	2005: School Food Trust	2006-7: School food regulations	2008-9: Nutrient-based standards	2009-11: WF School Meals Strategy
<p>The government announced a transformation of school food which included the introduction on new statutory guidance for school meals and food and drinks served at other times of the school. This was accompanied by £220 million of transitional funding over a three-year period.</p>	<p>The School Food Trust was established in 2005 as non-departmental public body and specialist advisor to Government on school meals, children's food and related skills.</p>	<p>Sept 2006: Mandatory food based standards for school lunch Sept 2007: Mandatory food based standards for food other than school meals.</p>	<p>Sept 2008: Mandatory nutrient-based standards for school lunch in primary schools. Sept 2009: Mandatory nutrient-based standards for school lunch in secondary schools.</p>	<p>The Waltham Forest Catering School Meal Strategy was launched, aimed at increasing the number of children and young people benefiting from having healthy school lunches and increase the sustainability of Waltham Forest Catering Service. In doing so it contributed to targets within the Children & Young People Plan and other key Council and partner strategies.</p>

Introduction

Waltham Forest Catering (WFC), the council's in-house catering service, is the main provider of school meals in Waltham Forest. WFC has operated as a business unit since 1990 and currently provides school meals to 62 primary, secondary, special and nursery schools and 3 Pupil Referral Units in the authority.

Schools can select their own catering providers, with the majority of schools in Waltham Forest (80%) choosing Waltham Forest Catering .

In 2007, schools using WFC made a decision to adopt a co-operative approach to the provision of their school meals service, with all participating schools benefiting equally from economies of scale and service initiatives. This has proved to be a strong and successful partnership.

Waltham Forest Catering and schools within the borough have invested a great deal of time, effort and commitment into ensuring the food they provide for pupils complies with the government food and nutrient based standards. Waltham Forest Catering have also made service improvements, refreshed their primary marketing campaign and increased school meal take-up by 7% overall since 2009.

Increasing school meal take up is vital to providing an important source of nutrition to benefit the growth, development and learning of children and young people, enabling them to be healthy and fully achieve their educational and economic potential. This strategy aims to ensure the future sustainability of Waltham Forest Catering and affordability to the consumer, to help achieve this aim

This strategy aims to increase school meal take up in Waltham Forest and create a culture of continual improvement of both the quality of the school meals and the customer service. Involving and engaging children, their parents and carers, and the school community, will be key to this process as well as partnership working

with key stakeholders to ensure school meals are central to related policy making.

Background

National context

There is strong evidence that diet and nutrition has a major role in the development of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, some cancers, Type 2 diabetes and obesity. Obesity is an important public health issue as it presents an estimated £4.2 billion annual cost to the NHS¹ and is a risk factor for other diseases. In particular, childhood obesity continues to be a national priority² with almost one-quarter of 4-5 year olds and one in three 10-11 year olds classified as overweight or obese³.

The school setting and school meals have been recognised as an important contributor to the health and wellbeing of children and young people⁴; school meals can contribute to one third or more of their daily nutritional intake, thereby benefitting healthy growth, development and learning.

The wider educational benefits of improved school food continue to be of key interest. The School Food Trust has recently published 2 intervention studies which found a positive relationship between improved school food and meal experience and learning related behaviour^{5,6}. Another recent study found a positive relationship between improved school meals and attendance⁷.

¹ Obesity. Department of Health. Accessed on 18 July 2011: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publichealth/Obesity/index.htm>

² Healthy Lives Healthy People. November 2010. DoH.

³ National Child Measurement Programme: England 2009-10 school year. December 2010. DoH.

⁴ What is the evidence on school health promotion in improving health or preventing disease and, specifically, what is the effectiveness of the health promoting schools approach? WHO, 2006.

⁵ School lunch and learning behaviour in secondary schools: an intervention study. School Food Trust, July 2009.

England is undergoing a period of transition following the change of Government in May 2010 and the 2008-09 UK recession. There has been a shift of power from central government to local communities with a resulting change in structures to funding and national programmes. In addition, local governments are going through a process of extensive restructuring following cuts to public sector spending. Changes that have implications for school meals include the School Lunch Grant becoming un-ring-fenced, scrapping of the Building Schools for the Future programme, localisation of the Healthy Schools programme, revision of the curriculum and the new OFSTED inspection framework.

School Meal Take-up

School meal take-up was included as an indicator of healthy eating amongst school age children (National Indicator Set (NIS): NI52 – take up of school lunches). Between April 2009 – 2011 local authorities were required to provide information for all their schools. Whilst the NIS was ceased in March 2011 the new Government has asked the School Food Trust to continue collecting the data on a voluntary basis.

The latest survey shows that school meal take-up has continued to rise nationally with 44.1% (+2.7%) take-up in primary schools and 37.6% (+1.8%) in secondary schools⁸. This equates to an extra 173,000 children having healthier school meals over the last year.

Government School Food Standards

The new government has confirmed that the standards for school food will continue as set out in the Education (Nutritional Standards and Requirements for School

Food) (England) Regulations 2007⁹. The food-based standards apply to both the school lunch and food served across the school day. The nutrient-based standards apply to the school lunch and include 14 key nutrients. Together they are designed to promote physical and mental health including maintaining a healthy weight, good dental health and the development of healthy eating habits to take into adulthood.

School Food Trust

The School Food Trust (SFT) was established in 2005 as non-departmental public body and specialist advisor to Government on school meals, children's food and related skills. In 2006 they led the implementation of the new legal standards for school food and worked in partnership with the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (now Department for Education (DfE)), Department of Health, National Healthy Schools Programme, schools, caterers and other stakeholders. In April 2011 the SFT ceased its status as a public body but continues as a national charity and government advisor with a Community Interest Company.¹⁰

Healthy Schools

In April 2011 Healthy Schools (formerly known as the National Healthy Schools Programme) changed from a centrally driven national programme to a locally led programme. The DfE website¹¹ now hosts the Healthy Schools Toolkit – information, frameworks and templates for schools to download. Healthy eating is one of the four key themes and the Waltham Forest Healthy Schools award includes evidencing provision of food and drink

⁶ School lunch and learning behaviour in secondary schools: an intervention study. School Food trust, July 2009.

⁷ Healthy School meals and educational outcomes. Belot M and James J. Accessed on 18 July 2011 at <http://sheu.org.uk/content/healthy-school-meals-and-educational-outcomes-0>

⁸ Sixth annual survey of take up of school lunches in England. July 2011. School Food Trust.

⁹ Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England. November 2010. Published by The Stationery Office.

¹⁰ School Food Trust: About Us. Accessed on 18 July 2011: <http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/about-us/about-the-trust>

¹¹ Healthy Schools Website. <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/pastoralcare/a0075278/healthy-schools>

compliant with the government standards for school food.

Healthy Lives, Healthy People

This Public Health White Paper presents the Government's "vision for a reformed public health system in England"¹². This document sets out their commitment to developing schools as health-promoting environments, including teaching about diet and maintaining the standards for school food.¹³

Healthy Lives, Healthy People: A call to action on obesity in England¹⁴

This document sets out how the new approach to Public Health will enable effective action on obesity and encourages a wide range of partners to play their part. The Government sets out 2 new national ambitions for our combined efforts:

- A sustained downward trend in the level of excess weight in children by 2020
- A downward trend in the excess weight averaged across all adults by 2020

Importantly, the Government also sets out its commitment to healthier catering provision in local authority and education premises, and recognises that the Government has a crucial role to play in helping people to make healthy food choices, including encouraging healthier eating in key settings such as the education system.

Local Context

Waltham Forest Catering launched the borough's first School Meals Strategy in 2009. This strategy set out to ensure that increasing school meal take-up not only helped to ensure the future sustainability of Waltham Forest Catering, but was a key part of a coordinated approach to

improving the health of children and young people in Waltham Forest. The accompanying Action Plan 2009-2011 was developed to deliver improvements, monitor progress and support the delivery of key local strategies and programmes including the Children and Young People Plan, Waltham Forest Sustainable Community Strategy, Waltham Forest Healthy Schools Programme and Local Area Agreements.

Childhood obesity continues as a priority within Waltham Forest¹⁵ as rates of obesity amongst children remain higher than in the rest of England. The trend of obesity prevalence in both Reception and Year 6 has declined year-on-year since 2006/07, but increased slightly in 2009/10. Reception obesity prevalence increased to 10.9% (+1% compared with 2008/09) and Year 6 obesity rates rose slightly to 21% (+0.4% compared with 2008/09).¹⁶

School meal take-up in Waltham Forest

In 2010-11 the overall meal take-up in schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering was 57% for primary/nursery schools, 47% for secondary schools and 65% for special schools¹⁷. These figures contribute to an upward trend in meal take-up since 2007/08 for secondary and special schools and show take-up is at the highest levels since 2002/03 in primary schools. Schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering also have significantly higher take-up than the national levels (44.1% in primary schools and 37.6% in secondary schools)¹⁸.

Since the School Meals Strategy was introduced in 2009, there has been an overall 7% increase in meal take-up in schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering. This means an extra 1,381 children are having healthier school meals over the last year.

Free School Meal Eligibility (FSME)

¹² Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England. November 2010. The Stationery Office.

¹³ Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England. November 2010. the Stationery Office.

¹⁴ Healthy Lives, Healthy People: A call to action on obesity in England. October 2011. Department of Health.

¹⁵ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2011-12.

¹⁶ National Child Measurement Programme 2009/10.

¹⁷ Waltham Forest Catering, meal take-up figures 2010/11.

¹⁸ Sixth annual survey of take up of school lunches in England. July 2011. School Food Trust.

Eligibility for free school meals (FSME) in Waltham Forest is higher than the national average at 27% (PLASC 2011) compared with 18%¹⁹.

In schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering, FSME in 2010-11 was 28%, of these 87% of pupils took up this entitlement²⁰ (see Figure 2 Page 10) which is a 10% increase since the school meal strategy was introduced in 2009. FSME in these schools has increased to 29% for 2011-12 (PLASC 2011).

School Meals - Health and Learning

School meals and health

A good diet is important for good health and can help to maintain a healthy body weight, enhance general wellbeing and reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, some cancers, Type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis.

Children's lifelong eating habits and preferences are established at an early age and educating them about healthy, balanced food choices when they are young helps to ensure they are more likely to have preferences for healthier foods as they grow older.

The National Diet and Nutrition Survey found that children on average eat only 2.7 (girls) to 3 (boys) portions of fruits and vegetables a day and only 13% of boys and 7% of girls meet the 5-a-day recommendation²¹. In addition, most children in the UK eat too much saturated fat, salt and non milk extrinsic (NME) sugars; soft drinks were the largest contributor of the added sugar.

¹⁹ Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics. June 2011. DfE.

²⁰ Waltham Forest Catering, Meal take-up figures 2010/11.

²¹ National diet and nutrition survey: headline results from years 1 and 2 (combined) of the rolling programme (2008/9-2009/10).

The TellUs4 National Report²² found that nationally most children ate some fruit and vegetables the previous day, with one in ten having had none at all and one in five having had five or more portions. In comparison, a lower percentage of children in Waltham Forest reported eating 3-4 or 5-a-day (31% compared with 35% and 16% compared with 19% respectively).

An average school lunch in schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering provides approximately one third of a child's Dietary Reference Values (DRV's) for nutrients as well as up to 5 portions of fruit and vegetables thereby contributing to healthier nutrient, saturated fat, salt and added sugar intakes. For some children and young people from low socio-economic groups this is of particular importance as a school meal may be their only nutritious meal.

In this way, school meals can factor in the maintenance of a healthy weight as well promote healthy teeth. Dental health is a priority in Waltham Forest as it is ranked 11th out of 28 London PCTs for under 5 year olds with decayed, missing or filled teeth.

School meals and learning

"Healthy eating has a direct impact on behaviour, concentration and ability to learn in schools".

Sarah Teather, Children's Minister²³

The wider educational benefits of nutritious school food in terms of readiness to learn, pupil mood, concentration and behaviour, continue to be of key interest²⁴. In Greenwich evidence of a significant improvement in English and Maths KS2 results were found following the 'Feed Me Better' campaign where low-budget processed school meals

²² Tellus4 National Report. Department for Children, Schools and Families. March 2010.

²³ Sarah Teather welcomes rising school lunch take up. July 2011. Accessed on 18.7.2011 at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a00191913/sarah-teather-welcomes-rising-school-lunch-take-up>

²⁴ School Meal Strategy 2009-11.

were shifted to healthier options²⁵. A recent study by the School Food Trust looking at behaviours associated with learning found that secondary school pupils were 18% more on-task and 14% less off-task in the classroom after lunch following a lunchtime intervention to improve the nutritional quality of the food and improved dining environment²⁶. A similar study found primary pupils to be 3 times more likely to concentrate and be alert in the classroom²⁷. Whilst education is one of the best ways to get people out of poverty, children from poorer households in Waltham Forest are not performing as well at schools as their peers²⁸. The impact of poverty on educational outcomes is complex but there could be particular benefits of healthy school meals for this group of pupils. Increasing take-up of pupils eligible for free school meals has been a key focus of the School Meals Strategy.

School Meals Strategy Aims

The overarching aims of this strategy are to:

- **Increase the take up of school meals in Waltham Forest**
- **Ensure the future sustainability of Waltham Forest Catering**
- **Provide a culture in which Waltham Forest Catering can continually improve**

The strategy will build on current good practice, continuing to work with schools to involve and inspire children, parents and carers to influence their attitude to school meals.

²⁵ Healthy School meals and educational outcomes. Belot M and James J, 2009. Accessed on 18 July 2011 at <https://sheu.org.uk/content/healthy-school-meals-and-educational-outcomes-0>

²⁶ School lunch and learning behaviour in secondary schools: an intervention study. School Food Trust, July 2009.

²⁷ School lunch and learning behaviour in primary schools: an intervention study. School Food Trust, July 2009.

²⁸ Your rights your future: Waltham Forests Children and Young Peoples Plan, 2010-13

Waltham Forest Catering school meals priorities:

1. **Increase the number of pupils choosing to have school meals**
2. **Ensure the future sustainability of Waltham Forest Catering**
3. **Involve and inspire children, parents and carers to influence their attitude towards school meals**
4. **Ensure consideration of school meals becomes central to related policy making**
5. **Work towards achieving excellence as a service**

The School Meals Strategy will also support the delivery of the following key strategies and plans (see Appendix 2):

- Children and Young People Plan 2010-2013
- Waltham Forest Child Poverty Strategy 2009-2020
- Our Place in London: Waltham Forest Sustainable Community Strategy
- NHS Waltham Forest: Healthy Weight Strategy
- NHS Waltham Forest: Waltham Forest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- NHS Waltham Forest: A Healthier, Fairer Waltham Forest: Waltham Forest's Health Inequalities Strategy 2010-15
- Healthy Schools

Working in Partnership with Schools

Ensuring there is a good quality, sustainable in-house school meals service is a partnership between Waltham Forest Catering and schools buying into the service. Schools in the WFC SLA have adopted a co-operative approach to the provision of their school meals and recognise the 'economies of scale' benefits that this brings to them as a collective. Business retention and growth are critical aspects of this partnership if Waltham Forest Catering is to remain a viable in-house service into the future.

Working successfully together on initiatives to increase meal take-up, improve the dining experience and improve kitchen facilities impact positively on encouraging more children and young people to benefit from having nutritious school meals.

Partners

Waltham Forest Catering has been working with a number of stakeholders and organisations in the borough to ensure school meals play their part in a coordinated approach to the health and wellbeing of the borough's children and young people.

Food in Schools Programme

Established in 2006, the Food in Schools Programme sits within the Change for Children Team, Babcock 4S, which also hosts Waltham Forest's Healthy Schools Programme. The aim of the programme is to work with all schools in the borough to ensure healthier food is provided and promoted as part of a whole school approach. Activities of the programme include providing expert advice to schools on food and nutrition, offering training opportunities for school staff, including school nurses, working with parents and pupils to promote healthy eating and the benefits of school meals, supporting schools with meeting the standards for food and drinks served across the whole school day and working with schools to develop food policies. This programme comes to an end on 31st March 2012 and there is currently no funding available to continue with this support.

Healthy Schools

Waltham Forest has a highly successful Healthy Schools programme, of which 100% of schools in the borough are participating and 89% have achieved Healthy School status. Provision of school meals which meet the government standards for school food is a key element of the award.

Primary/Special/Nursery School Meals consultation group

The Primary/Special/Nursery School Meals consultation group was established in 2008 to facilitate formal communications

between schools and Waltham Forest Catering on matters relating to service provision such as marketing, development initiatives and finance. The group meets on a termly basis and has three Headteacher representatives (one from each area partnership across the borough).

Public Health

Waltham Forest Catering is part of the borough's Healthy Weight Steering Group which sits in Public Health. Its remit is to coordinate and develop a healthy weight strategy, action plan and related services in Waltham Forest. The contribution that school meals make to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is recognised in the Healthy Weight Strategy and increasing school meal take-up forms part of the strategy Action Plan.

School Food Trust

London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) has been fortunate in being selected to work in partnership with the School Food Trust on a number of pilots and initiatives. In 2008 LBWF was one of three Local Authorities selected to test a marketing pilot in schools across the borough. In 2008-9 the borough benefitted from a target support initiative which included an action plan to increase school meal take-up; and in 2010 schools took part in the 'Small Step Improvements' pilot to improve the school meal service and increase school meal take-up.

Sustainable procurement

Waltham Forest Catering supports The Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI). This is an initiative launched in 2003 to deliver the Government's Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy. The PSFPI objectives are:

- To raise production and process standards
- To encourage tenders from small and local producers
- To increase consumption of healthy and nutritious food
- To reduce adverse environmental impacts of production and supply
- To increase capacity of small and local suppliers to meet demand

Benefits of which it is hoped will be:

- Sustainable UK Rural and local economies
- Competitive small and medium sized companies
- Improved animal welfare
- Waste minimisation

Waltham Forest Catering is also committed to the Soil Associations Food for Life scheme.

The above are included in the specification and quality evaluation of food supply tenders.

Funding

Turning the Tables

Following growing concern over rising rates of childhood obesity, diabetes and other diet related diseases together with the quality of children's diets including school meals²⁹, the Government announced a transformation of school food. This included new statutory guidance for school meals and food and drinks served at other times of the school day accompanied with £220 million of transitional funding over a three-year period.

In Waltham Forest this funding was used to ensure that the infrastructure for the delivery of healthier school meals was in place and that healthier food and eating was promoted in schools.

School Lunch Grant

In April 2008 a further £240 million of Government funding was allocated to Local Authorities. This new grant, the School Lunch Grant, provided funding until March 2011 to help manage the direct costs of providing a school lunch. A funding formula was applied to the grant to ensure its fair distribution amongst all schools in the borough. Those with private catering arrangements were

devolved their share and the remaining funding was pooled for the benefit of all schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering, who used the majority of the grant to help keep down the cost of school meals and in particular, the price of a paid meal. The grant provided assistance with meeting increased food and labour costs required to meet new nutritional standards and to purchase items of equipment required to support a modern, fresh cook service.

School Lunch Grant: 2011/12

The School Lunch Grant is now included in the Dedicated School Grant and is no longer ring-fenced. However, following consultation with schools, the Schools Forum in Waltham Forest decided to retain the School Lunch Grant allocation centrally for those schools being catered for by Waltham Forest Catering, to be used by WFC to help support keeping the cost of a school meal down.

School meal pricing

Waltham Forest Catering is required to at least achieve a breakeven financial position. On an annual basis, service costs are reviewed and unit cost charges agreed through the School Forum for primary, special and secondary school meals. The School Lunch Grant is used to help off-set the direct costs of food and labour and contribute to reducing the service costs.

Schools catered for by WFC have an expectation that there will be a year on year reduction in the cost of school meals in return for their active participation in increasing meal take-up,

Schools are directly charged for the full cost of each meal provided.

The selling price of a paid school meal is determined by each school Governing Body. Whilst schools largely adopt the majority charge, there are some variations depending on school pricing policy.

Subsidy

All schools currently provide a subsidy for paid school meals funded from the school budget. The subsidy is the difference between the price Waltham Forest

²⁹ Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food, September 2005. School Meals Panel.

Catering charge for a meal and the price the school charge pupils for a paid meal.

This subsidy enables schools to keep the cost of their paid school meals low, making them more affordable to parents and carers, encouraging greater take-up.

Service Level Agreements (SLA)

Waltham Forest Catering provide school meals for 82% of schools in the borough; the service is highly valued and schools appreciate the importance of working collectively for the benefit of all schools. By doing so, participating schools benefit equally from economies of scale, helping to keep the cost and the selling price of a school meal down.

In 2010 participating schools signed up to Waltham Forest Catering for a further four years; the current core Service Level Agreement will expire on 31st March 2014.

School meals provision in Waltham Forest

Waltham Forest Catering produce freshly cooked meals on site using good quality ingredients. Where schools do not have a kitchen, hot meals are prepared in a host school kitchen and then transported to the school.” A team of 311 catering staff provide the service, producing about 13,000 school meals every day.

“The school meals website³⁰ provides useful consumer information, including core menus and popular recipes to try at home.” (SMS p10)

There are 78 schools in Waltham Forest (48 primary including infants and juniors, 13 secondary, 2 all-through, 8 special schools including 3 Pupil Referral Units, 3 nurseries and 4 academies.)

Waltham Forest Catering provide school meals for 80% of schools in the borough (45 primary including infants and juniors, 5 secondary, 1 all-through school, 8 special schools/PRU's, 1 nursery and 2 Academies) with a total of 23,214 pupils on roll. Of these 28% are entitled to free school meals (FSM)³¹.

Of the remaining schools, 8% are in-house (3 primary and 3 secondary) and 10% have alternative caterers (1 primary, 6 secondary and 1 all-through school).

Following the ‘turning the tables’ initiative, the number of pupils choosing school meals in Waltham Forest fell between 2005-2009, a trend seen across England. However, school meals take-up is now on the increase; schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering have seen a significantly higher increase than the national trend with 7% rise over the last two years (primaries +6% and +8% in secondaries (compared with +4.8 and +2.6% nationally) . Please note that the

³⁰ Waltham Forest Catering website
<http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/schoolmeals>

³¹Waltham Forest Catering, meal take-up figures, 2010-11

data pre-2009 is not comparable due to different methods.

In schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering, it is encouraging that the number of meals actually taken by children and young people who are eligible for free school meals has increased by 10% since 2009. This increase is significantly ahead of national trends (Primary sector +0.3% and +3.6% in secondaries).

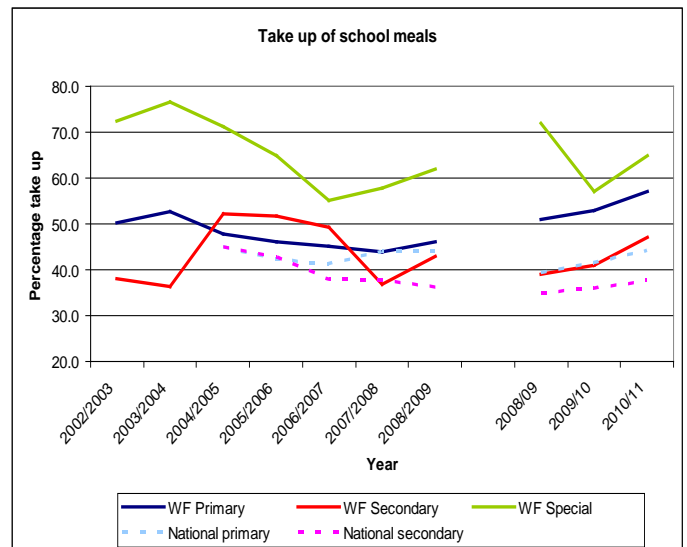


Figure 1: Take up of school meals in schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering compared with national data *2008/09-2010/11 National primary includes special schools

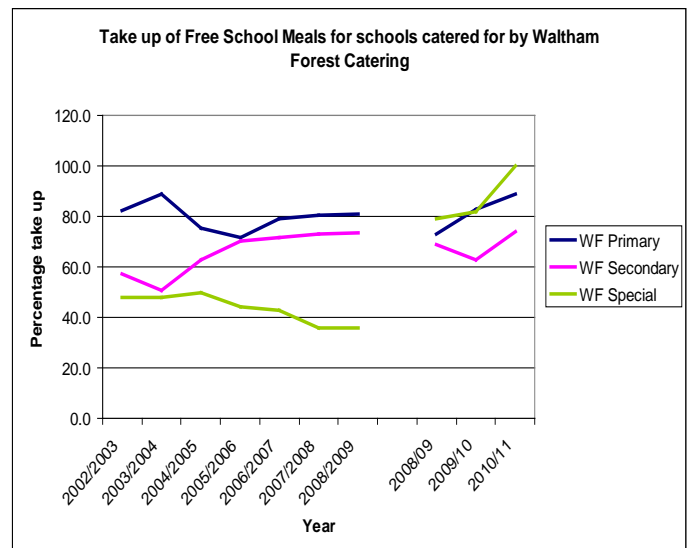


Figure 2: Take up of free school meals in schools catered for by Waltham Forest Catering

Impact of the School Meals Strategy 2009-2011

Waltham Forest Catering's key achievements since 2009 include:

Increased school meal take-up

- Overall, school meal take-up against PANDA pupil role has increased by 7% since April 2009, against a target of 10%.
- The actual take-up of children and young people who are eligible for free schools has increased by 10% since April 2009, against a target of 10%.

Lower costs

- Waltham Forest Catering have reduced their costs year on year since April 2009.
- Increased meal take-up, effective management of costs and prudent use of the School Lunch Grant have all contributed in reduced charges to schools for each meal provided
- The table below identifies that over the past 2 years the cost of producing a primary meal has reduced by 14p, secondaries by 15p and specials by 30p

year	Primary Charge	Special Charge	Secondary Charge
2009-2010	£2.14	£3.10	£2.38
2010-2011	£2.05	£2.80	£2.34
2011-2012	£2.00	£2.80	£2.23

- Schools currently subsidise paid school meals, which on average are charged out £1.75 in primary and special schools and £1.80 in secondary schools. Reductions in charges help schools to maintain lower charges for paid meals.

Improved FSM application process

Administration of entitlement to Free School Meals was transferred to LBWF Benefits in June 2010.

- Accessibility has been significantly improved from one contact point to multi-points, i.e. On-line, by phoning

Waltham Forest Direct (WFD), by visiting a WFD shop or when claiming benefits.

- Pupils eligible for FSM's increased by 9% (data from PLASC Jan 2010 and Jan 2011).

Refreshed 'Lunch Bunch' primary school meals communication campaign

- The primary school meals 'Lunch Bunch' campaign was refreshed in June 2010, and launched at an event enjoyed by pupils and parents at Whitehall Primary School.
- Effective communications with parents is central to increasing school meal take-up in primary schools. Termly parent's newsletter's provide interesting information on school meals and other healthy eating matters, as well as menus for the next term. Favourite school meal recipes are also now available to parents to try at home.
- School meal Welcome Packs were introduced in June 2010 as part of the 'Lunch Bunch' refresh. All Reception pupils parents are now presented with welcome packs at school induction to encourage school meal take-up at the point of entry to full-time education.

Nutritional standards for all sectors

- All schools catered for by WFC are provided with interesting, varied menus that fully meet government food and nutritional standards for school meals and also cater for diverse cultural needs.
- School meals are made fresh each day from raw, good quality produce using recipes developed for taste, quality and nutritional value.

Staff training

- Customer Care training for all catering staff was introduced in October 2010, aiming to improve the dining experience for all children and young people using our service.
- The Council's School Improvement Provider, Babcock 4s, supported increasing school meal take-up by:
 - Providing training on promoting healthier lunchtimes to 146 school

mid-day assistant's in 23 primary and special schools.

- Delivering 21 parent sessions in 18 primary and secondary schools aimed at increasing knowledge of the benefits of school meals and healthy eating.

Partnerships

- Links have been established with school nurses, Public Health and NHS Waltham Forest, which has improved partnership working to achieve key objectives. These include contributing to reducing childhood obesity through the inclusion of school meals in the WF Healthy Weight Strategy 2011-15 and working with school nurses to understand and promote school meal take-up.

Kitchen and dining upgrades

- 14 primary schools benefitted from improvements to kitchens and dining areas through the 'Capital for Kitchens' grant secured by WFC and the School Organisation, Partnership and Development team in 2009.
- Kitchen equipment has progressively been replaced with modern alternatives, including installation of salad bars and a return to use of plates and dishes rather than 'flight trays' in many schools.
- Provision has been set aside from a modest school meals trading surplus made in 2010-11 to contribute towards providing and improving kitchen facilities in schools.

Small Step Improvements Programme

The School Food trust worked in partnership with Waltham Forest Catering Services and the Change for Children team, Babcock 4S, to deliver the Small Step Improvements programme to 14 schools in October 2010.

- The aim was to improve the school meal service provided by making small, cheap or cost-free changes and bring about an increase in meal uptake. School leaders and their catering supervisors worked in

partnership to design and implement these improvements.

- A variety of changes were made including refreshed marketing of school meals to pupils, introduction of a self serve salad bar with pupil consultation on salad choice, £1 meal of the day promotions and handing out taster pots of dishes from the school menu.

Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Waltham Forest has a large number of hot-food takeaway outlets, many located near schools and residential areas and most of which serve high fat/sugar foods. Despite most secondary schools having closed-gate policies at lunchtime, these are highly frequented by children and young people before and after school. Following concerns raised by residents about the proliferation and environmental and health impact of these takeaways, the council pioneered new planning regulations and introduced restrictions on applications for new hot food takeaway businesses which seek to a) prevent high concentrations and clusters of takeaways, and b) prevent them locating near schools, youth facilities, parks and residential areas. When the SPD was introduced in March 2009 there were 256 takeaways across the borough; by May 2010 this number had reduced to 241 – no new venues had been granted planning permission and 12 were closed on environmental grounds³².

³² A Healthier, Fairer Waltham Forest.

Challenges and Opportunities

Increased autonomy for schools

The education system is being reformed as the government 'steps back' and schools are given more autonomy. 2010 saw the introduction of 'free schools' and new legislation enabling all existing schools to apply for academy status; now one in ten secondary schools is an academy. This has implications for the quality of school food provision as the new Model Funding Agreement does not require academies and free schools to comply with the school food standards. "They are free to promote healthy eating and good nutrition as they see fit"³³.

The funding agreement for academies opened before September 2010 included a requirement that the food and drink comply with the school food standards. These academies can move to the new Model Funding Agreement and they would then no longer have to comply with the school food standards.

In Waltham Forest, there are currently 4 Academies; 2 primary schools that are part of the Waltham Forest Catering SLA have chosen to remain with WFC as their provider and continue with the current nutritional meal provision.

With the introduction of new free schools and as more Waltham Forest schools explore and achieve Academy status, it is critical to the future financial sustainability that Waltham Forest Catering retains the business.

Increasing demand for primary school places

Increasing demand for primary school places in Waltham Forest, has required the Council to make new provision within schools to accommodate this demand, including re-commissioning closed schools. This presents both challenges and opportunities for the school meals service; producing more meals within established kitchens, working with SODP to establish production kitchens in re-opened sites and encouraging new pupils to take school meals.

Capital Investment in Schools Catering Facilities

During 2010/11 and 2011/12 the Council, in partnership with schools, has invested approximately £450,000 in upgrading existing kitchens across 14 primary schools. The investment from the match-funded "Capital for Kitchens" Grant was geared towards proposals to increase the uptake in school meals and thereby support healthy eating.

The funding for the grant has now expired and no alternative source is identified. There is unlikely to be opportunities for the Council to self-fund a programme of further improvements. The overwhelming priority in the Schools Capital Programme is to provide additional school places for Primary School age children, and all resources are directed at this aim. However in such projects, requirements to enhance or increase the capacity of existing kitchens are likely to arise. In such cases a proportion of project funds will be used for such improvements. However, it should be noted that identified resources for the Primary Capital Programme are not sufficient to meet the known need for places. Accordingly, proposals for any kitchen improvements will be developed within a very limited budget unless an alternative additional source of funding is identified.

³³ General FAQs. School Food Trust.
Available at
<http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/children-young-people/faq/general-faqs#nineteen>
accessed on 18 July 2011.

Building on Success - Achieving Excellence

Quality recognition

It is important that parents and young people have confidence in the quality of our school meals, to encourage take-up and increase the future sustainability of the Council's in-house school meals service. Independent quality accreditation helps to provide such confidence and on-going assessment helps to ensure that quality is maintained.

Food for Life

Increasing numbers of children and young people in schools catered for by WFC are choosing to take school dinners. Ensuring the quality of our school meals continues to improve is core to our service plans.

WFC is committed to working with the Food for Life (FFL) Partnership to achieve the FFL Catering Mark, recognising best practice and providing an independent quality guarantee that the food on our menus is freshly prepared, free from undesirable additives, is better for animal welfare and supplies are from sustainable sources.

All procurement of future food provisions will support our commitment to FFL.

Once achieved, the FFL Catering Mark will feature in marketing material, providing our customers with greater confidence in the quality of our school meals.

Good Egg Award

The Compassion in World Farming organisation recognises companies and services that support higher welfare policies through their procurement. As part of its ongoing commitment to using quality produce, WFC use only free range eggs in the preparation of their schools meals.

Application for the Good Egg Award has been made and once achieved, will feature in marketing material.

Developing staff

Focus remains on improving Customer Care, ensuring that the service meets the needs of children and young people. All catering staff will participate in the Customer Care development programme over 2011 – 2012.

Cookery skills and knowledge will continue to be developed to ensure staff are equipped to meet the demands of a modern, fresh cook school meals service.

An excellent in-house trainee cook programme provides opportunities for Kitchen Assistants to progress to Cook Supervisors in charge of units.

Cashless payment in schools

There are a number of significant benefits which can be realised from introducing cashless payment systems in schools, particularly secondary schools. These include:

- Improved turnover through shorter queues
- Increased school meal take-up
- Removal of free school meal stigma
- Reduced cash handling, including the need for banking
- Convenient method for parents to pay for school meals and other school events

Schools have recently shown interest in working as a collective to investigate the introduction of cashless payments. Whilst schools need to lead on this initiative, WFC will actively lend its support and participation.

Investing in school kitchens

Improving kitchen facilities continues to present a significant challenge to schools and WFC. Earlier government match funding, 'Capital for Kitchens', enabled 14 primary schools to improve their kitchen and dining facilities, but there is currently no further government funding available for this purpose.

In 2011, £169,000 was set aside from the school meals surplus to help schools fund improvements to kitchen facilities. WFC

have commissioned an equipment condition survey to help identify priorities and target proposed match funding with schools. It is expected to start rolling out further improvements over years 2011 and 2012

Listening to our customers

A parent / pupil survey was last undertaken in 2008, with further targeted surveys being undertaken as part of School Food Trust supported marketing pilots conducted in 2009.

Parents and pupils views are important to the development of the future service and increasing meal take-up. WFC will take appropriate steps to consult further with parents and pupils on school meals during 2012.

Appendix 1: Web links to references used in the School Meals Strategy

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5. School lunch and learning behaviour in secondary schools: an intervention study. School Food Trust, July 2009. <http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/schools/reports/school-lunch-and-learning-behaviour-in-secondary-schools-an-intervention-study>
6. Healthy School meals and educational outcomes. Belot M and James J. Accessed on 18 July 2011 at <http://sheu.org.uk/content/healthy-school-meals-and-educational-outcomes-0>
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15. National diet and nutrition survey: headline results from years 1 and 2 (combined) of the rolling programme (2008/9-2009/10).
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH_128166
16. Tellus4 National Report. Department for Children, Schools and Families. March 2010.
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR218.pdf>
17. Sarah Teacher welcomes rising school lunch take up. July 2011. Accessed on 18.7.2011 at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a00191913/sarah-teather-welcomes-rising-school-lunch-take-up>
18. Waltham Forest Catering School Meal Strategy 2009-11.
<http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/school-meal-strategy-aug09.pdf>
19. School lunch and learning behaviour in primary schools: an intervention study. School Food Trust, July 2009. <http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/partners/reports/school-lunch-and-learning-behaviour-in-primary-schools-an-intervention-study>
20. Your rights your future: Waltham Forests Children and Young People Plan
<http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/cypp-2010-13-revised.pdf>
21. Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food, September 2005. School Meals Panel.
<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/SMRP%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>
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28. NHS Waltham Forest: Waltham Forest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2012-13
http://www.walthamforest.nhs.uk/Downloads/News-and-publications/Strategies-and-plans/Waltham_Forest_JSNA_2012-13_FINAL.pdf

Appendix 2: How the School Meals Strategy contributes to related strategies in Waltham Forest

This School Meals Strategy will support the delivery of the following key strategies and programmes

1. **Your rights, your future: Waltham Forest’s children and young people plan 2010-2013³⁴**, in particular, every child and young person in Waltham Forest has the right to:

Right	Priority
2. Access good quality education, health and welfare services	2.2. Improve physical and mental health – by providing nutritional food in schools to support helping overweight children to lose weight
4. Be supported to fulfil their potential and become resilient	4.3. Reduce the number of children and young people living in poverty – by increasing free school meal take-up

2. **Waltham Forest Child Poverty Strategy 2009-2020³⁵**, May 2009

Priority Outcome	Action
3. Getting young people off to the best possible start in their education - raise aspirations and close the educational attainment gap whilst raising standards for all	3.5. Promote school meal take-up across Waltham Forest

³⁴ CYPP 2010-13 <http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/cypp-2010-13-revised.pdf>

³⁵ WF Child Poverty Strategy 2009-2020 <http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/child-poverty-strategy.pdf>

Priority	Commitment
Ensure residents are fit and healthy for work	24. Tackle childhood obesity by focussing on diet and exercise

3. **Our Place in London: Waltham Forest Sustainable Community Strategy, May 2009**³⁶

4. **NHS Waltham Forest: Healthy Weight Strategy (draft document)**

Priority	Objective
<p>To promote healthy eating by increasing the availability of and access to healthy food choices and reducing the availability of and access to food that are high in fat, sugar and salt</p> <p>To provide consistent, evidence based advice, support and treatment for people who are overweight or obese and their families</p>	<p>4. Increase the availability of healthy food choices in schools and in local hospital</p> <p>2. Slow down the increase in levels of obesity in children in year 6(10-11 year olds)</p>

³⁶ WF Sustainable Community Strategy <http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/index/community/ourplace.htm>

5. NHS Waltham Forest: Waltham Forest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2012-13³⁷

Recommendation
6) Continue sustainable school based interventions to prevent overweight and obesity in partnership with relevant agencies. Parental family involvement should continue to be actively facilitated. This should include increasing the take-up of nutritional school meals with a focus on those eligible for free school meals.

6. NHS Waltham Forest - A Healthier, fairer Waltham Forest: Waltham Forest's Health Inequalities Strategy 2010-15³⁸

Theme	Aim
2. Enable all children and young people to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives (5-19 years)	Making every penny count - Provide adequate prevention services to address key risk factors smoking, diet, exercise, and alcohol for children and young people

³⁷ WF JSNA 2012-13 http://www.walthamforest.nhs.uk/Downloads/News-and-publications/Strategies-and-plans/Waltham_Forest_JSNA_2012-13_FINAL.pdf

³⁸ WF Inequalities Strategy 2010-15 http://www.walthamforest.nhs.uk/Downloads/News-and-publications/Strategies-and-plans/WF_health-inequalities-strategy_2011-15.pdf

7. Waltham Forest Healthy Schools³⁹

Priority Outcome	Criteria
4. School culture and environment	4.2 How does your school environment promote health and wellbeing? (for example through access to clean and palatable drinking water and access to healthy food and drink in line with best practice)

³⁹ WF Healthy Schools <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/pastoralcare/a0075278/healthy-schools>