

Hunter's Bar Junior School Feedback Report

Observations: 7th March 2024

Dear Mr Watson,

Thank you very much for being part of our Fix our Food in Schools network of primary schools in Yorkshire. It was great for us to have the opportunity to come in and experience a full school day at Hunter's Bar Junior School.

What was particularly good...

There were a number of things we noticed throughout the day which were particularly great.

- The school food provision offers vegetarian meal options alongside non-veg options, as well as an option to have a piece of fruit for dessert.
- The school is passionate about instilling good values and providing quality education to the children, ensuring that children understand why certain policies are in place before they are implemented.
- The school has made efforts to incorporate food into the curriculum, and is seeking methods to improve this.
- Despite the school's urban location and limited space, senior leadership have attempted to utilise the space and resources positively to encourage diversity in teaching methods.
- The school leadership team were particularly aware of the current quality of school food provision and would like to see improvements to the food offered.

Overall...

As well as general observations throughout the day, during our visit we also held a leadership interview and a child focus group. Please find below an overview of what we heard and observed, linked to eight key whole school approaches to food themes.

This report provides information which is directly relevant to your school, but more support within each area can be found on the [CONNECTS-Food resource](#). For each set of recommendations, the resource will provide more tips/advice and showcases how other schools have achieved each of the principles.

Whole School Approach to Food theme		What we heard and observed	Recommendations
1. School leadership (e.g. instilling good food culture throughout school)	<p>Priority of Headteachers/ leaders</p> <p>School governor priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school has catering contracts with Lime Trees for breakfast and after school clubs, as well as Taylor Shaw for school dinners. In both these instances, the school leadership expressed limited input or flexibility to negotiate catering decisions. As a result, they have considered the possibility and implications of taking school catering in-house. The senior leadership realises that the quality of the food being offered at lunchtime can be improved, and suggested that the food being offered can often contradict the lessons taught throughout the school day around the healthy plate. The senior leadership realises that increasing the quality of the meal will result in a cost increase, which may be financially difficult for already struggling parents, therefore realising the difficulty in balancing quality with financial value. The school council receives complaints from their peers regarding school dinners. Although these complaints are passed onto senior leadership, the FixOurFood team heard that nothing gets actioned. One pupil said, <i>"I'm going to be honest, pretty much all the complaints are about school dinners, then you're allowed to say in the school council meetings I've had quite a few complaints about this and they will try and fix that or put that into action. But it doesn't really..."</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was great to hear that the school leadership has acknowledged that the quality of school food could be substantially improved and would like to see improvements be made. We recommend adding 'Food' as a regular agenda item to the Governing Board meetings. School food is a statutory requirement for Governors (see here for more information (1)). To further improve on your current practice, we recommend that you appoint a named school food champion(s) to monitor achievement of whole school approaches to the food strategy (including school council rep). Where appropriate, consider speaking to other schools that are supplied by Taylor Shaw, to submit a joint complaint and call for improvements in the quality of school meals. You have not already done so, you may find the following guidance from the government and School Food Matters of help with regards to school food contracting:

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			<p>Government guidance (2)</p> <p>School Food Matters (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may also find tips and resources within the School Food Plan (4) useful.
2. Food curriculum (e.g. incorporating food across broader curriculum)	Priority of teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The headteacher delivers up to five assemblies a year focused on the eat well plate, in order to complement teaching within PE. Currently, a half term unit is delivered within Design Technology focusing on food and nutrition, where children can learn to prepare a healthy snack or meal, though there are some constraints caused by limited facilities. Senior leadership have sought ways to improve the integration of food in the curriculum. There are plans to move food, and conversations around healthy eating, out of Design Technology, as this is primarily focused on marketing and packaging as opposed to nutritional value, into PE. The school only has one oven available for children to use, which limits the activities undertaken within Design Technology. To address this, 5 portable stoves were purchased, though difficulties were faced around storage space and finding enough plugs to use them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep up the good work to provide provisions to support and extend learning about healthy diets. It's fantastic that you are already incorporating cooking as part of the curriculum, despite your limited capacity and resources - keep up the good work! You may consider increasing opportunities to use the portable stoves more frequently, where possible. If you have not already done so, consider taking part in national initiatives such as health week (5). You may wish to expand this to include reward initiatives such as 'food for life' (6) or 'eco-schools' (7) ensuring that the whole school is involved. Make time for teachers to attend training/professional development on how to incorporate food into the existing curriculum. As a first step, we recommend considering subscribing to a (free) educational package such as TasteEd (8).
	Food on the curriculum		

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign a named teacher to be a 'food champion', to lead on incorporating food into the curriculum across all core subjects (e.g. science, maths, PSHE). Explore funding avenues for purchasing additional cooking ingredients and kitchen resources e.g. catering companies and food suppliers who often have funding available for public engagement, such as School Kitchens (9).
3. School food provision (e.g. menus, staff training, nutritional standards)	Skills/passion of lunch staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An assortment of options are provided at breakfast club. We observed toast (white bread), butter, strawberry jam, milk, fruit, and a choice of 4 cereals: Honey nut (stored in a cupboard due to potential nut allergies, and offered occasionally as a "treat"), shreddies, weetabix and corn flakes. Crumpets and butterscotch pancakes are also available at the start of the week only. We were informed that an effort is placed in opting for lower-sugar options. The children can help themselves to as much fruit as they would like at breakfast club. There is a fixed lunch menu offered by Taylor Shaw for the whole of Sheffield local authority schools, that cannot be amended even if the school offered to pay more. There is a general opinion throughout the school, after speaking with senior leadership, staff, and pupils, that the quality of lunch food is relatively poor. <i>"I'm not a massive fan of them, but they're not too bad. I think there is room for improvement"</i> [Child in focus group]. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was great to see that the food during breakfast club offered fruit and low-sugar cereal options. Where possible advise Lime Trees to refrain from high-sugar, high-salt options. It is fantastic that initiatives are taken to encourage children to eat more vegetables during lunch (2 servings of vegetables offered alongside a salad), and consume less refined sugar (e.g. fruit in dessert). To encourage children to consume more vegetables within their diets consider adding both salad and vegetables on all plates, rather than making this optional. Other schools provide a few different types of salad and ask the
	Quality of catering provision		
	Lunch menu design		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetarian options are offered alongside meat options. • Children in the focus group complained about the quality of the vegetarian meals, <i>“the vegetarian options they just like are not up to standard with the rest.”</i> • Children informed us that the dessert options are made healthier by embedding hidden fruit, such as raisins, which they do not always find tasty, and highlighted that they are not informed of this modification beforehand, <i>“they put like chunks of fruit in it sometimes. Like, they put these hard chunks of things in it. It’s like multi-coloured thing and I don’t know what they are.”</i> • Children highlighted that the fruit often looks out of date, which prevents them from choosing it as a dessert option, <i>“The fruit, might just be me, but it always looks a bit out of date”</i>. • When asked what they would change to the school meal, the children agreed that it would be the quality or variations to the cooking technique, <i>“I would probably change, like I said, like the quality of the food... things like the vegetables or the pasta, just better quality. Or like cooked differently or better”</i>. • The children did not consider the water in the jugs and cups provided to be clean, and that they did not trust the school hygiene rating. • Children voiced many concerns regarding the quality and quantity of served at lunch, with many stating that they felt hungry after eating, <i>“personally I don’t think they actually fill me up that much. I still feel hungry after I’ve eaten them, so I think it could do with a slightly larger portion size”</i> and some expressed 	<p>children to choose at least 2 options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may consider providing additional support to kitchen staff , for example, through Chefs in Schools training (10). • Also see recommendation for catering contract support above

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		<p>concerns with the quality of the food served which has prevented their consumption, “usually with the green beans and the broccoli, like they're quite mushy and sloppy”.</p>	
4. School policies and culture (e.g. packed lunch policy, snack policy, water only)	School health initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chocolate and crisps are not allowed during break times. In such instances, the child is told to return it to their lunchbox and choose a healthier alternative. If the child does not have a healthier alternative, the school offers them a piece of fruit. Rules are always implemented alongside knowledge development so that the children know why certain rules are in place. A strict packed lunch policy was previously in place; however, this was abolished after one student developed an eating disorder that was felt to be as a consequence and the nutritional expert at the hospital advised against categorising food as healthy and unhealthy. The school now no longer has a packed lunch policy, but rather a guidance which parents mostly adhere to. There is an emphasis on communicating what a balanced diet is, and not implementing policies or rules without teaching the children about it first (usually through assemblies). As such, chocolate bars are permitted at lunchtime only, as those on school dinners are offered puddings. There is a no fizzy drinks policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recommend that, rather than focusing conversations on “healthy” and “unhealthy” foods, conversations should be centred around the nutritional benefits that some foods offer over others. Some schools have found a way to implement packed lunch policies in a positive way. For example, some schools provide recommendations to parents to swap out crisps and sweets/high sugar items with other foods. There is guidance here to help with this (including offering ‘food swaps’ (11)). Schools that have chosen not to allow certain foods in their packed lunch policies have also changed their lunch offer - to ensure that there is consistency (e.g. one school told us that they do not allow chocolate in packed lunches and have therefore amended their menus so that there is also no chocolate in puddings).
	School food culture		

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5. Eating environment (i.e. pleasant eating experience for children)	School eating environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior leadership expressed that the dining area is outdated and does not get much sunlight. Renovations were explored, but were considered to be too costly to implement. • The dining area is overly cramped. The school building has limited capacity, and generally has small rooms to accommodate all pupils comfortably. • Children with sensory problems have the opportunity to eat their lunch in the library area, in order to avoid the loud noise and strong smell within the canteen. • Entry to the canteen is staggered (per year group) with 15 minutes intervals. In the summer, those on packed lunches can enjoy their lunch outdoors, freeing up space in the canteen. • Packed lunches and school dinners can sit together in the canteen. • The children voiced their dislike for some of the approaches taken by the catering staff and dinner staff to encourage children to eat their food and vegetables. e.g., <i>“I think there are ways that they deal with like leftovers, they try not to make you have leftovers. Like let's say this is your first time ordering something and it turns out you really don't like it, they don't let you like hand it back in or put it in the bin or whatever, you still have to eat it”</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is commendable that the school is working hard to provide for children in light of capacity constraints. • You may consider adapting the eating space to offer a vibrant and appealing atmosphere to eat. This could include sticking up artwork produced by the children to cover the chipping paint. • Given the very busy lunchtime experience, it's good to see that you are able to stagger entry to the canteen. You may consider extending the lunch break to reduce queues. This may provide children with more time to eat in a non-rushed environment. However, we understand that ‘curriculum time’ is important in schools, and that extended lunch may feel a bit out of your control. • We would recommend making the most of teachers supervising the dining hall, and catering staff, by encouraging children to eat their vegetables, use their cutlery, and try new things. The way this is done could be discussed with children to prevent negative attitudes towards food and the dining experience.

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6. Stakeholder involvement	School staff /community/ children's engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The catering staff and lunchtime supervisors try to encourage children to opt for healthy options, "<i>I think the dinner ladies who serve you try to make you eat healthier stuff generally, I think</i>" • The FixOurFood team did not witness any staff eating with the children during school lunches; however, space issues may not have allowed this at the time. • Catering staff have the ability to discuss menu options with Taylor Shaw based on what they think children will eat. However, in reality, they must always follow Taylor Shaw recipes. • Catering staff do not get involved in teaching children cooking or food preparation. • One of the teaching assistants runs a lunchtime gardening club, where they make use of the raised beds. • Although the children often voice their feedback on school meals to the senior leadership, an opportunity to provide feedback to Taylor Shaw is only provided every four years, and as such no systemic changes are felt. • Children were engaged and interested in the food provided. • The senior leadership believes it's important to inform the children and families in advance of implementing changes to practice and food provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend that teachers eat alongside the children (perhaps on a rota) to model good eating practices and encourage children to experiment with new foods, though appreciate there are space constraints within the dining hall. • Ensure lunch and kitchen staff are key members of the school team and aim to involve them in other areas of the school day e.g., reading to children or delivering cooking lessons • Other schools have found that involving parents in decisions, including development of policies such as healthy packed lunches and snacks, increases 'buy-in' and can even encourage key messages to be mirrored at home. • Consider engaging with wider members of the community e.g. grandparents, allotment growers and fruit and veg sellers to develop growing and cooking lessons/education. • Enable the children to be more involved with decision making around school food and sustainability policies and initiatives, alongside methods to encourage them to eat their vegetables and

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			their selected food choices in order to alleviate the concerns highlighted in section 5 (e.g. food / eco-clubs)
7. Pastoral care	Eligibility of free school meals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School staff keep an eye on packed lunches to ensure that the food being consumed is not expired or mouldy. The school offers children who complain of being hungry a free breakfast or snack. Using pupil premium funding, the school provides a 50% subsidy for all school trips, clubs and residentials, as well as for breakfast club and after school club. In instances where the senior leadership is aware that families are really struggling, they will offer an additional subsidy or cover complete costs. We were informed that not many struggling parents require the use of breakfast or after school clubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep up the great work you are doing to ensure that no child is hungry at school Use food events as a way to bring families and local community together to build social cohesion e.g., religious festivals, school lunch events Provide staff training on eating behaviours of concern and how to approach parents if needed. Consider working with organisations such as TasteEd (8) to support this.
	Social cohesion		
8. Environmental sustainability	Priority of leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the catering staff are cooking according to quantities of orders received (daily by 10am), there is limited leftover wastage, and any leftovers are usually offered to the final sitting. However, the senior leadership informed us that they felt there is high school dinner wastage from unfinished meals, which they raise with the catering staff to look into when it occurs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's fantastic that you are utilising the limited space you have to grow herbs and vegetables. Keep up the good work! Consider establishing a school eco-team that can flag any eco concerns and work towards approaches to tackle them.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taylor Shaw collects all waste generated by school lunches • The school does not run a meat free day though they would be open to it should Taylor Shaw offer it as an option. • The senior leadership was of the opinion that the school does not offer many eco-friendly initiatives, but also believes they are constrained by their urban environment (i.e. no access to an allotment or grass). • The school has raised beds and a garden club which runs during lunchtimes, where children can grow vegetables and herbs, showcase them to the school during assembly, and take the produce home. • The school has been on the waiting list for an allotment space for approximately 3 years. • The children informed us that plastic spoons are provided with some desserts, which are later disposed of. • Plastic wrap is used to cover each individual portion of desserts. The children suggested it would be more environmentally friendly to have the pudding served off of one large tray. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise food-based school trips e.g. sustainable farms and supermarkets to support learning about food and the food system (12). • We recommend adding sustainable diets into your curriculum to diversify children's learning and knowledge. This could later support any potential roll out of "meat free" days. • We recommend that you speak to your caterers about other options that ensure adequate protein via beans, pulses etc (rather than meat-alternatives). • Consider using other free resources to help children learn more about the influence of food on the environment (e.g. Flash game: http://climatefoodchallenge.online/game/ • Planet pizza resources: https://www.takeabitecc.org/planet-pizza.html • Take a bite flash cards: https://www.takeabitecc.org/flashcards.html

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a bite calculator: https://www.takeabitecc.org/calculator.html

- (1) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/school-food-guidance-for-governors>
- (2) <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools-things-to-consider-before-you-start/catering-services>
- (3) <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Six%20Tips%20for%20Schools%20NEW.pdf>
- (4) <http://whatworkswell.schoolfoodplan.com/articles/category/39/developing-and-managing-contracts>
- (5) <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthy-eating-week/>
- (6) <https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/>
- (7) <https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/>
- (8) <https://www.tasteeducation.com/primary/>
- (9) <https://www.schoolkitchens.com/kitchen-funding-information-england.asp>
- (10) <https://chefsinschools.org.uk/>
- (11) <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/resources/sugar-swaps-activity-cards>
- (12) <https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/>

We hope you have found this feedback of our observations useful.

If you have any further questions or queries then please do not hesitate to get in touch with Sundus Mahdi sundus.mahdi@york.ac.uk, or Maria Bryant maria.bryant@york.ac.uk

Thanks again for your involvement in this work.