



Schools Food Panel

First survey of head teachers – February 2007

Jo Nicholas and Lesley Wood

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* Question from questionnaire provided in footnote to table. See [Appendix 1](#) for complete questionnaire.

Key Findings

1. The Schools Food Panel (SFP) consists of head teachers in a representative sample of approximately 400 English schools (primary and secondary). Each half-term, head teachers are sent a short questionnaire on current issues. The expectation is that 150 primary and 90 secondary head teachers will respond in each wave, and that a longitudinal view of the changing school food landscape can be developed over the next few years.
2. The findings represent the views of head teachers regarding catering provision in their schools. They may not, therefore, be wholly representative of findings reported by the Local Authorities in which the schools lie. Nevertheless, the findings represent important perceptions and experiences of a nationally representative sample of primary and secondary school head teachers, and provide an appropriate basis for engaging with school head teachers.
3. The first questionnaire was distributed in February 2007. 206 primary and 74 secondary schools responded.
4. Changes in take up are shown in the following table. The general picture is satisfactory.

Change in take up of school meals in Autumn term 2006 compared with Autumn term 2005

Take up	Primary		Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Decreased	37	18.0	22	29.7
Increased	68	33.0	22	29.7
No change	101	49.0	30	40.5

Base 206 primary, 74 secondary

5. Of those reporting an increase in take up, half of primary and two-thirds of secondary head teachers attributed it to the provision of healthier food.
6. Of those reporting a decrease in take up, over two-thirds attributed the fall to a dislike of healthier options or new menus; a recognition of existing poor quality; and more packed lunches being brought. Sometimes the decrease followed consultation with parents, pupils or caterers, suggesting that the management of the change process failed to engage pupils and parents adequately or to result in provision of food that was perceived to be tastier as well as healthier.
7. Most head teachers believed that a better meal experience (nicer environment, less queuing, etc.) would increase take up, with two-thirds of secondary heads believing that improving the meal experience could influence take up a lot. 80% had introduced some changes in the last year, and over half said that they would introduce further changes in the coming year.

8. The most important changes in meal experience focused on the dining rooms themselves (cutlery, plates, tables, design or location of dining room), the provision of better quality/healthier food, seating and queuing, and changes in menu promotion. Twenty primary schools (12%) had introduced reward schemes.
9. Most head teachers introduced changes in the meal experience to encourage better eating or simply to improve the dining experience for pupils. One-sixth were responding to new standards set by local authorities/government.
10. Less than half of schools reported receiving the full Grant 5B (central government funding to support the change in school food). Another quarter had received the grant in part, and over one-quarter reported not having received it.
11. The Grant 5B was spent mainly on new kitchen equipment, dining furniture or other aspects of the dining environment, or on better food.
12. The main support head teachers wanted to improve school food focused on more funding, guidance on menus, help persuading parents, promotion and publicity about improving school food, and help to make meals healthier or more appealing. In secondary schools, one-quarter wanted more or better dining space.

Introduction

The School Food Trust (SFT) has been established to support and monitor the implementation of changes in school food in England that reflect the new standards for school food published in May 2006 by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

In January 2007 Taylor Nelson Sofres (TNS) was commissioned by the SFT to establish a panel of head teachers from a representative sample of schools in England. It was intended that the panel should comprise 240 schools, 150 primary and 90 secondary. The sampling frame was those schools that will be required to adopt the new government standards for the provision of food in schools. It is intended that the same panel will be approached on a regular basis (twice each term) and will provide information on key issues. This will facilitate the work of the SFT in monitoring the success of their activities over time.

The aim of the Schools Food Panel surveys is to help shape the SFT agenda for action, and to complement knowledge gained from cooks, catering providers, Governors, and other agencies involved in the provision of school meals.

The findings represent the views of head teachers regarding catering provision in their schools. They may not, therefore, be wholly representative of findings reported by the Local Authorities in which the schools lie. Indeed, some of the findings may present views which are discrepant from those of the school catering providers. Nevertheless, the findings represent important perceptions and experiences of a nationally representative sample of primary and secondary school head teachers, and provide an appropriate basis for engagement with head teachers.

Aims

The specific objectives of the first survey were to assess, within the target schools:

- the level of engagement with implementing the new food standards
- changes in the take up of school meals compared with the equivalent period in the previous year
- perceived reasons for any changes in the take up
- changes to the pupils' meal experience in the past year
- planned changes to the pupils' meal experience
- level of support from Grant 5B
- level of change of catering contracts in the current academic year

Methods

Survey design

The survey was designed jointly by researchers from the School Food Trust and TNS. There were 15 questions asked on the topics outlined above, and responses from each questionnaire were linked to the school's demographic information, but not to the school name or any other information that could identify individual schools. The survey questions can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Sample selection

The sample was drawn from the Edubase database held by the School Food Trust. The sample frame included all primary and secondary schools in England which were open in January 2007. Community, Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled, and Foundation schools were included in the sample, as well as Academies and City Technology Colleges. Schools with fewer than 50 pupils and special schools were excluded. Prior to drawing the sample, the sample frame was stratified using Edubase variables ([Appendix 2](#)).

A letter was sent to head teachers of a representative random sample of 390 primary and 280 secondary schools in February 2007. This initial letter outlined the aims of the repeated surveys and offered £100 as a token of appreciation to each school where the head teacher completed three of the four questionnaires up to the end of the summer term 2007.

TNS followed up the letters with a telephone call to the head teacher of each school, asking if they were willing to join the panel. 19 schools (3 primary and 16 secondary) were unable to be contacted at this stage. If the head teacher agreed to participate, the survey was carried out at that time over the telephone, or an appointment was made for a further telephone call. Interviews were carried out between 5th February and 16th March 2007 inclusive. By the final date responses had been received from 206 primary and 74 secondary schools.

Data entry and coding

The data collected were entered by researchers at TNS during the interview itself, using CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). Coding was done on both open-ended questions and on other answers given to closed questions, by the experienced TNS coding team.

Statistical analysis

Results presented below are based on statistical analysis carried out using SPSS Version 15.0.1.

Quality assurance

The TNS Quality Policy entails the formulation, implementation and maintenance of an effective quality assurance system, in accordance with BS EN ISO 9001 and adherence to BS 7911 as the service standard. TNS is also accredited to the Market Research Quality Standards Association (MRQSA).

The quality policy is driven by the quality team, which is headed by a Director of Quality, assisted by full time Quality Managers. In each department, there is a quality representative who is responsible for keeping the department up-to-date on quality issues.

All divisions within TNS are adherents to the ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice. In addition, within the UK, all researchers are bound by the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society (MRS).

Field forces (telephone and face to face) are members of the Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS).

Results

Response rates

206 of the 387 primary schools and 74 of the 264 secondary schools agreed to participate, giving a response rate of 53% for primary and 28% for secondary schools.

Table 1 shows the profiles of participating primary and secondary schools by GOR, school size band and rural/urban location.

The participating primary schools showed good agreement with the database and the issued sample, with the only difference being more rural and fewer urban schools in the achieved sample (participating schools 35.9% rural 63.6% urban; database 27.8% rural 71.6% urban; issued sample 31.3% rural 68.2% urban). This difference was more apparent for secondary schools (participating schools 29.7% rural 70.3% urban; database 15.6% rural 83.7% urban; issued sample 17.1% rural 82.1% urban), and differences in GOR (fewer schools from London, more schools from the North West in the achieved sample), and school size (more smaller schools in the achieved sample) were also apparent in the secondary school profile. Full details of the database, issued sample and participating schools can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

The participating primary schools were from 82 of the 150 Local Authority areas, and the secondary schools from 52 Local Authorities.

Of the 371 schools (181 primary and 190 secondary) that did not join the panel, nearly half (46%) of head teachers cited 'lack of time' and 'other commitments' as their reason for not participating, whilst a third did not give any reason. A small number of heads (3.5%) refused to participate because of their 'policy not to take part in surveys' and 'staff issues', such as new, temporary or retiring heads accounted for a further 8.6% of refusals. 6 heads refused because they were already involved in projects or research linked to meals or healthy eating.

Table 1. Profiles of participating primary and secondary schools

		Primary		Secondary	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Government Office Region	East Midlands	21	10.2	7	9.5
	East of England	28	13.6	12	16.2
	London	21	10.2	5	6.8
	North East	11	5.3	3	4.1
	North West	27	13.1	15	20.3
	South East	28	13.6	12	16.2
	South West	20	9.7	8	10.8
	West Midlands	25	12.1	7	9.5
	Yorkshire and The Humber	25	12.1	5	6.8
School Size Band (Primary)	50-99	25	12.1	-	-
	100-199	61	29.6	-	-
	200-299	68	33.0	-	-
	300-399	30	14.6	-	-
	400-499	17	8.3	-	-
	500+	5	2.4	-	-
School Size Band (Secondary)	100-499	-	-	13	17.8
	500-749	-	-	12	16.4
	750-999	-	-	16	21.9
	1000-1249	-	-	15	20.5
	1250-1499	-	-	13	17.8
	1500+	-	-	4	5.5
Rural/Urban	Rural	74	35.9	22	29.7
	Urban	131	63.6	52	70.3
	Unknown	1	0.5	0	0.0

Base 206 primary, 74 secondary

Implementation of new standards for school meals

New food-based standards for school food, announced by DfES in May 2006, were due to be introduced in all primary and secondary schools in September 2006. Table 2 shows the extent to which schools had implemented these new standards in the previous term. Approximately 10% of schools had not tried to implement the new standards. Reasons for this were not collected.

Table 2. Attempted to implement the new food-based standards in Autumn 2006, primary and secondary schools, England*

	Primary		Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	189	91.7	66	89.2
No	17	8.3	8	10.8

Base 206 primary, 74 secondary

*Question asked: "Last term, did the school try to implement the new standards for school meals?"

Meal take up

Head teachers were asked about the take up of school meals, specifically whether take up had changed compared to the previous year, and perceived reasons for change in take up.

Table 3 shows the reported change in meal take up between Autumn term 2006 and Autumn term 2005. Over 80% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools reported that take up had either increased or remained the same. There was no evidence of an association between whether schools had tried to implement the new standards and a reported change in take up for either primary or secondary schools.

Table 3. Change in take up of school meals in Autumn 2006 compared with Autumn 2005, primary and secondary schools, England*

	Primary		Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gone down	37	18.0	22	29.7
Gone up	68	33.0	22	29.7
Not changed	101	49.0	30	40.5

Base 206 primary, 74 secondary

* Question asked: "Was there a change in take up of school meals in Autumn term 2006 compared with Autumn term 2005? Has it gone down; gone up; not changed."

Schools in which take up had increased or remained the same were asked what factors they thought were responsible for this. They were encouraged to provide at least three responses which were then coded, and grouped into categories (Table 4). The reasons most commonly given by both primary and secondary head teachers were linked to an improvement in the food provided at lunch time, particularly the provision of more healthy options and improved meal quality. The percentages refer to the proportion of the number of schools reporting an increase or no change in take up in the past year (see 'Base').

These findings agree generally with those found in the SFT's first annual survey of take up of school meals in England, carried out in April 2006, in which local authority catering providers were asked a similar question. Staffing, school policy, and changes to the kitchen or dining room were also commonly reported as having contributed to an increase or maintenance of take up.

Table 4. Main reasons for maintained or increased take up of school meals, primary and secondary schools, England*

Reason	Detail	Primary		Secondary	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Food improved	Better quality and choice, more (or only) healthy options	83	49.3	35	67.2
Staff	Better/better trained caterers, cooks and other staff, more staff	19	11.3	3	5.7
No changes made		17	10.1	5	9.6
School policy	Whole school food approach, removed vending, introduced locked gate policy	16	9.5	6	11.5
Kitchen or dining room issues	Improvement in facilities for provision, reorganisation of arrangements for meals (e. g. Shorter queues, change in timetable)	16	9.5	6	11.5
Promotion	Adult/parent taster sessions, advertising	14	8.3	2	3.8
Media coverage		12	7.1	1	1.9
Parental support		11	6.5	0	0
More pupils/FSM pupils	Increase in paying/FSM pupils on roll, high proportion FSM	9	5.4	0	0
No change in prices	With or without change in meal quality	7	4.1	2	3.8
No cooked meals provided		6	3.6	2	3.8
Other		47	27.8	18	34.6
Don't know/Not stated		4	2.4	1	1.9

Base 169 primary, 52 secondary

*Question asked: (If take up stayed the same or went up compared with last year) "What do you think were the main reasons for maintaining or increasing take up?"

A similar question was asked of those schools who reported that take up had decreased. Again they were encouraged to provide at least three responses which were coded and grouped into categories (Table 5). The percentages refer to the proportion of the number of schools reporting a decrease in take up in the past year (see 'Base').

The main reasons given for a decrease in demand in both primary and secondary schools were linked to a change in the food provided, with the provision of more healthy options resulting in pupils disliking the food, and so buying meals elsewhere or bringing in packed lunches. Reductions in the number of pupils buying lunch and in the frequency of pupils buying lunch were reported. Price increases were also seen as an important factor.

Table 5. Main reasons for decreased take up of school meals, primary and secondary schools, England*

Reason	Detail	Primary		Secondary	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Food changed	Healthier options disliked; more packed lunches brought	32	94.5	21	95.4
Change in number or frequency of pupils buying		15	40.9	6	27.2
Poor quality food	Existing poor quality recognised	8	21.6	1	4.5
Price increase	Due to inflation/use of better quality ingredients/increase in labour needed/increased training provision	6	16.5	5	22.7
Kitchen or dining room issues	Disruption in facilities for provision, organisation of meals acts as deterrent	3	8.1	2	9.0
Food changed following consultation	With governors, LAs, parents pupils or caterers	3	8.1	0	0
Media coverage		2	5.4	1	4.5
Fewer pupils/FSM pupils	Decrease in paying pupils/FSM pupils on roll	1	2.7	0	0
More local alternatives available		0	0	1	4.5
Other/Not stated		7	18.9	5	22.7

Base 37 primary, 22 secondary

*Question asked: (If take up went down compared with last year) "What do you think were the main reasons for decreasing take up?"

Overall, a change in the food provided, and specifically the provision of healthier food was the main reason given for changes in demand.

Meal experience

Head teachers were asked a number of questions about meal experience. Meal experience was explained as anything to do with:

- The physical dining environment
- Lunch time management (including time available for lunch and queuing)
- Food presentation (including menus and marketing) and
- Pupil and staff management (such as supervision and behaviour management)

The majority of head teachers believed that it was possible to influence meal take up by improving the meal experience (Table 6), with a greater proportion of secondary heads than primary heads believing that improving meal experience could have a big effect on take up. This may reflect the particular difficulties that secondary schools perceive in terms of the practical problems associated with feeding large numbers of pupils in a short period of time. Only one-sixth of head teachers believed that changing the meal experience would have no effect on take up.

Table 6. Believed meal take up could be influenced by improving the meal experience, primary and secondary schools, England*

	Primary		Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes a lot	78	37.9	48	64.9
Yes a little	94	45.6	23	31.1
No	34	16.5	3	16.5

Base 206 primary, 74 secondary

*Question asked: "Do you believe you can influence meal take up by improving the meal experience?"

Table 7 shows that the majority of schools had reviewed the pupils' meal experience in the past year.

Table 7. Reviewed pupils' meal experience at lunch time within the last year, primary and secondary schools, England*

	Primary		Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	186	90.3	62	83.8
No	20	9.7	12	16.2

Base 206 primary, 74 secondary

*Question asked: "Within the last year, have you reviewed the meal experience that your pupils have at lunch time?"

Approximately 80% of head teachers reported having made changes to the meal experience in the past year and more than half knew of changes likely to occur in the coming year (Table 8). For both primary and secondary schools, Head teachers who reported reviewing the meal experience were more likely to have made changes in the last year compared with those who had not carried out a review (Table 9).

Table 8. Made changes last year and likely to make changes next year to pupils' meal experience, primary and secondary schools, England*

	Primary				Secondary			
	Changes made last year		Changes likely next year		Changes made last year		Changes likely next year	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	169	82.0	125	60.7	59	79.7	40	54.1
No	37	18.0	81	39.3	15	20.3	34	45.9

Base 206 primary, 74 secondary

*Questions asked: "Have there been any changes to pupils' meal experience in the past year (either planned or by circumstances)?" "Do you know of any changes to the pupils' meal experience likely to occur in the coming year (either planned or imposed)?"

Table 9. Associations between whether the meal experience had been reviewed and whether changes had been made in the last year

Changes to the meal experience in last year	Reviewed the meal experience in the last year									
	Primary					Secondary				
	Yes		No		Total	Yes		No		Total
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Yes	160	86.0	9	45.0	169	53	85.5	6	50.0	59
No	26	14.0	11	55.0	37	9	14.5	6	50.0	15
<i>Base</i>	<i>186</i>		<i>20</i>		<i>206</i>	<i>62</i>		<i>12</i>		<i>74</i>

Heads were asked what changes they had made to the meal experience in the last year, and what changes were likely to occur in the coming year. The changes most commonly made, or most likely to occur in all schools were focused on the dining rooms themselves, and on the food provided. In primary schools, food promotion/advertising and changes to the management of the lunch time period were also common. In secondary schools, physical changes to the dining area were commonly reported, with more heads planning further changes next year than had made changes in the last year (Table 10). Approximately a quarter of primary heads and 1 in 5 secondary heads reported having carried out or planning to carry out consultation with pupils and parents. More changes relating to staff were planned than had already been carried out.

Table 10. Changes to pupils' meal experience made in the last year and likely to occur in the next year, primary and secondary schools, England*

Change	Detail	Primary				Secondary			
		Changes made last year		Changes likely next year		Changes made last year		Changes likely next year	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Food	Menu changed; increased/reduced choice; better quality/healthier food; water provided	78	45.2	31	24.8	31	52.4	10	25.0
	Promotion/advertising/improved presentation of food; more/flexible choices; other activities to promote healthier eating	66	39.1	31	24.8	7	14.2	8	20.0
	Packed lunches (all mentions)	1	0.6	12	9.6	0	0	1	2.5
	Changing to provide cooked meals on site	0	0	5	4.0	0	0	1	2.5
	Removed vending machines/unhealthy snacks	0	0	0	0	5	8.5	0	0
		145	84.9	74	59.2	43	75.1	19	47.5
Management	Introduction/removal of staggering; reorganisation of seating/sittings; increased/ reduced time available for lunch/play; mixed tables/ages/packed lunches; Change in queuing procedure/management	36	21.4	11	8.8	9	15.3	3	7.5
	More/better lunch time supervision; introduction/removal of dining room rules/teachers eating with pupils	27	16.0	2	1.6	11	18.6	1	2.5
	Reward schemes/initiatives	26	15.5	6	4.8	3	5.1	1	2.5
	Change in paying procedure	20	11.8	3	2.4	3	5.8	1	2.5
		2	1.2	2	1.6	2	3.4	3	7.5
		111	81.4	24	19.2	28	35.9	9	22.5
Physical environment	Change in furnishings/design of dining area/dining location	83	49.1	45	36.0	27	45.7	19	47.5
	Introduction/loss of additional/ separate dining/serving space; change in size of dining space	7	4.2	2	1.6	8	13.6	4	10.0
	Music/outside dining in summer	5	3.0	4	3.2	1	1.7	4	10.0
	Kitchen refurbishment	4	2.4	2	1.6	2	3.4	3	7.5
		95	58.7	53	42.4	38	64.4	30	75.0
Consultation	With pupils on menu	16	9.5	13	10.4	6	10.2	4	10.0
	Including parents in choices/education	14	8.3	10	8.0	1	1.7	1	2.5
	With pupils on dining space	11	6.5	9	7.2	5	8.5	2	5.0
		41	24.3	35	25.6	12	20.4	7	17.5
Education	Introduction of other activities to increase learning about healthy food	10	5.9	8	6.4	1	1.7	1	2.5
	Discussion/consultation about food/better education on health	9	5.3	11	8.8	2	3.4	2	5.0
		19	11.2	19	15.2	3	5.1	3	7.5

Staff	Training of catering/supervisory staff on behaviour management	8	4.7	5	4.0	2	3.4	1	2.5
	More/better cooks/kitchen staff	7	4.1	2	1.6	2	3.4	1	2.5
	Changing contractors	2	1.2	9	7.2	1	1.7	2	5.0
		17	10.0	16	12.8	5	8.5	4	10.0
	Other/Not stated	17	10.1	26	20.8	10	17.0	5	12.5

Base 169 primary, 59 secondary for changes made last year, 125 primary, 40 secondary for changes next year

*Questions asked: "What changes have been made?" "What changes are likely?"

Reasons given by heads as to why the changes were introduced last year or were likely to be introduced next year are summarised in Table 11. Improving the physical environment and encouraging healthy eating were both seen as important by primary and secondary heads, with the majority of heads viewing the changes as positive.

Table 11. Reasons for the introduction of changes to pupils' meal experience made in the last year and likely to occur in the coming year, primary and secondary schools, England*

Reason	Detail	Primary				Secondary			
		Reasons for changes made last year		Reasons for changes likely next year		Reasons for changes made last year		Reasons for changes likely next year	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
To improve physical environment	Dining environment/experience; facilities/furniture/equipment	51	30.2	40	32.0	17	28.8	16	40.0
To encourage healthy eating	To encourage healthy eating; impact on behaviour	45	26.6	38	30.4	13	22.1	13	32.5
	Trying to qualify for Healthy Schools Award	5	3.0	3	2.4	1	1.7	0	0
		50	29.6	41	32.8	14	23.8	13	32.5
External pressures	Response to Jamie Oliver campaign	6	3.6	1	0.8	3	5.1	0	0
	Standards set by local council/authority/government	31	18.3	10	8.0	9	15.3	3	7.5
		37	21.9	11	8.8	12	20.4	3	7.5
To improve management	To reduce queuing	8	4.7	2	1.6	7	11.9	0	0
	To supervise/monitor children	9	5.3	4	3.2	0	0	0	0
	More students/increase in number of students	1	0.6	0	0	1	1.7	2	5.0
		18	10.6	6	4.8	8	13.6	2	5.0
Result of consultation	With pupils/staff	15	8.9	10	8.0	8	13.6	3	7.5
Other/Not stated		17	10.1	26	20.8	10	17.0	5	12.5

Base 169 primary, 59 secondary for reasons for changes made last year, 125 primary, 40 secondary for reasons for changes next year

*Questions asked: "Why were they introduced?" "Why are they being introduced?"

Pupils allowed off site

Secondary head teachers were asked if pupils were allowed off site at any times in the day, and 30 schools (40.5%) reported that they were.

Grant 5B

Table 12 shows the numbers of head teachers who reported that they had received Grant 5B, either in full or in part. For those schools that received the grant, Table 13 shows the range of grant payments received and the averages (53 primary and 25 secondary heads did not know the amount of grant received). Of the schools that did not receive the grant, Table 14 shows why the heads thought this was so.

Table 12. Grant 5B received, primary and secondary schools, England*

	Primary		Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Yes in full	89	43.2	35	47.3
Yes in part	60	29.1	18	24.3
No	57	27.7	21	28.4

Base 206 primary, 74 secondary

*Question asked: "Did the school receive the Grant 5B?"

Table 13. Grant 5B money received (£), primary and secondary schools, England*

	<i>n</i>	Primary		Secondary	
		Received in full	Received in part	Received in full	Received in part
Minimum		500	250	1000	425
Maximum		4000	4000	2500	5000
Mean		1394	1370	1800	1846
SD		619	751	385	1259

*Question asked: "How much did you receive?"

Table 14. Why Grant 5B not received, primary and secondary schools, England*

	Primary		Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Do not know whether or not we received the full grant	10	17.5	3	14.3
May have gone to the catering company	9	15.8	1	4.8
May have gone to the Local Authority	8	14.0	4	19.0
Other	11	19.3	2	9.5
Don't know	22	28.6	12	57.1

Base 57 primary, 21 secondary

*Question asked: "Why did your school not receive the Grant 5B?"

Table 15 shows what the Grant 5B was spent on. Both primary and secondary schools had spent money on physical changes to the kitchen or to the dining room, and over a third had put money towards food. The Grant 5B was not ring-fenced, and in nearly 10% of secondary schools it had been absorbed into the overall budget.

Table 15. Spending of Grant 5B money, primary and secondary schools, England*

		Primary		Secondary	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Physical changes	Items/equipment for kitchen	44	29.5	13	24.5
	Improving dining room environment; furniture	50	33.6	14	26.4
		94	63.1	27	50.9
Food	Healthier menu/better quality food	20	13.4	10	18.9
	Promotion of healthy meals	14	9.4	4	7.5
	Purchasing salad bar/water dispenser	12	8.1	6	11.3
	Free meals/ free fruit at breaktimes	8	5.3	2	3.8
	54	36.2	22	41.5	
Staff	More staff/catering staff	11	7.4	2	3.8
	Staff training	11	7.4	3	5.7
	22	14.8	5	9.5	
Grant not yet spent		8	5.4	1	1.9
Money went to LEA		8	5.4	0	0
Absorbed into overall budget		1	0.7	5	9.4
Other		29	19.5	5	9.4
Don't know		3	2.0	7	13.2

Base 149 primary, 53 secondary

*Question asked: "What was the grant spent on?"

Level of change of catering contracts

Only a small number of schools, 8 primary (4.0%) and 6 secondary (8.1%), had changed their catering contracts since September 2006. Ten schools had changed their catering provider, 2 schools had varied their existing contract, and 2 had started providing meals when previously none had been offered. Four of the 6 secondary schools had changed to in-house catering. The main reason for a change of contract was in order to provide better quality food. Other reasons were financial, dissatisfaction with the previous provider, and the school wanting more control.

Feedback

The majority of head teachers (187 primary and 73 secondary) gave feedback on the ways in which the changes to school meals were progressing in their schools (Table 16). The main issues causing problems were different for primary and secondary schools. Primary heads saw parents as a key factor, including issues linked with packed lunches. Secondary heads were facing financial issues, together with lack of facilities and space.

Table 16. Comments on ways in which the changes to school meals were progressing, or any problems being encountered, primary and secondary schools, England*

		Primary		Secondary	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Positive feedback	Impressed/happy with changes/no problems	37	19.8	11	15.1
	We offer a wide range of healthy options	30	16.0	9	12.3
	Schemes/initiatives run by the school	25	13.4	9	12.3
	Take up improving slowly as children get used to it	8	4.3	5	6.8
	Menus sent home/parents can view/help choose meals	7	3.7	0	0
	School has good record for promoting healthy eating/teaches nutrition	6	3.2	3	4.1
Issues	Need to widen food education to society/home/parents; difficulty convincing parents	28	24.9	8	11.0
	Packed lunch issues (all mentions)	28	15.0	2	2.7
	We do not have the facilities/insufficient dining area	26	13.9	14	19.2
	Staff issues (all mentions)	19	10.2	5	6.8
	We need more money/funding; other financial issues	16	8.5	16	22.0
	Need to change/improve contractor	12	6.4	1	1.4
	Need to improve quality of food/meals/more fruit and vegetables	12	6.4	2	2.7
	Problems with take up/children don't like food	12	6.4	9	12.3
Others	49	26.2	19	26.0	

Base 187 primary, 73 secondary

*Question asked: "Is there anything else that you would like to tell us now about the ways in which the changes to school meals in your school are progressing, or any problems that you are having?"

Needs

Head teachers suggested the types of assistance that could be given to schools to help them meet the new standards for school food (Table 17). The needs of both primary and secondary heads were similar, with financial help at the top of the list.

Secondary heads also needed more, bigger, or better facilities.

Table 17. Assistance wanted to help school to meet the new school food standards, primary and secondary schools, England*

	Primary		Secondary	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Financial help/funding	45	21.8	28	37.8
Would like more guidance/menu guidance	40	19.4	14	18.9
Help to persuade/educate parents on healthy choices	40	19.4	9	12.2
Promotion of healthy meals/publicity	30	14.6	10	13.5
Help to improve meals/healthier/more appealing meals	28	13.6	8	10.8
More/better staff training	18	8.7	6	8.1
Help to persuade/educate children on healthy choices	17	8.3	6	8.1
More space/bigger/better kitchen/hall/dining room	15	7.3	19	25.7
Would like a kitchen, so meals do not have to be brought in from elsewhere	15	7.3	1	1.4
More help/guidance for healthier packed lunches	10	4.9	2	2.7
More freedom/flexibility	4	1.9	4	5.4
Other	27	13.1	6	8.1
No/none	17	8.3	6	8.1
Not stated	9	4.4	2	2.7

Base 206 primary, 74 secondary

*Question asked: "What assistance, if any, would you like the School Food Trust, the DfES, or your Local Authority to provide to help your school meet the new school food standards?"

Discussion

Overall, the picture that emerges from this first SFP survey is encouraging. Most schools had tried to implement the new standards for school lunches, and the majority of head teachers reported an increased or steady demand for meals, which they attributed mainly to healthier, better quality food. Those that reported a decreased demand also attributed it to the provision of healthier food which the children didn't like. This suggests either that encouraging and educating pupils about the new provision is an important part of successful management of the transition to healthier food, or that eating habits in some areas are very entrenched and special measures may be needed to encourage healthier consumption.

Head teachers, particularly in secondary schools, see improving the meal experience as a key part of the drive to encourage increased take up of meals. Changes have already been made in over 80% of schools, and more are planned for the coming year. Responses collected as part of recent SFT work on meal experience from a variety of staff in primary and secondary schools broadly support these findings.

It is of concern that less than half of schools reported receiving the Grant 5B in full. This is funding that has notionally been allocated directly to every school to help with the transition to healthier food, and further amounts will be provided over the next 2 years. It is vital that this money reaches schools, as funding was one of the main needs identified by the head teachers. Some schools may have entered into agreements with their Local Authorities to pool the Grant 5B funding on behalf of a group of schools in which case more information is needed to understand how this money is being spent.

A survey of Local Authorities, also carried out in February, enquired whether they knew how the Grant 5B money had been spent in primary and secondary schools in their areas. Of the 102 that responded, approximately a third did not know how the money had been spent in primary or secondary schools. 17 responded that all or some of the money allocated to primary schools had been returned to the central fund, with 10 LAs centrally managing some or all of the money allocated to secondary schools. Several LAs had sent guidelines or recommendations to schools indicating how the money should be spent, although the actual spending was not followed up.

This first survey indicates a number of areas seen by head teachers as important in the process of improving school food, and indicates what support is needed. This will inform future SFT work providing help and guidance for schools. Future surveys will help to clarify the emerging picture of the changes in school food provision, and help to chart progress.