

APPENDIX

West Berkshire Council School Meals Policy (Draft)

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define the policy of West Berkshire Council regarding school meals. This will assist governing bodies to form their own school policies regarding food in schools, and lay a benchmark for the procurement of a school meals service which reflects the values of this authority.

West Berkshire Council attaches particular importance to the continued provision of school meals across the district as an integral part of our key strategic objective of promoting health and wellbeing in the community. This policy seeks to provide a foundation to support the continued development of the school meals service.

Our Policy

- The school meals service shall contribute to and support the promotion of health and a sustainable life-style as part of the corporate plan of West Berkshire Council.
- In our schools, a midday meal shall be available for every child who wants one and the meal shall be of such quality and nutritional value as to serve as the main meal of the day for that pupil
- The school meals menu shall provide pupils with the opportunities to make healthy choices, putting into practise the theories learned in the classroom.
- The school meals service shall be an integral part of the school day representing an educational and social occasion, providing opportunities for social development.
- The dining environment shall be conducive to the enjoyment of food and provide facilities which encourage children and young people to appreciate the social role played by sharing a meal in our society
- Opportunities shall continuously be sought to increase the uptake of school meals to facilitate the development of the service and assist schools in achieving Healthy Schools Awards.

Legal Responsibilities

School governing bodies have a duty to provide free lunches to all qualifying pupils and a paid meal to any other pupil on request. There are also a number of Acts and statutory instruments governing the supply of school catering (see appx.).

The provision of school meals will also incorporate due diligence and good practise by the service provider in matters to include purchasing, food delivery and storage, preparation and handling of food, health and safety, cleaning and equipment maintenance. To this end, all staff employed in the delivery of food in schools must be appropriately trained in all aspects of food production to ensure the optimum service delivery.

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Why Schools need this Policy Guide

- There is currently a high level of focus on the health of the Nation, particularly the diet of young people. Statistics show that 17% of children aged between 2 and 15 years (the population of our schools) are obese, with a further 15% being overweight. This means that a third of all children in school face health problems in the future because of their diet. (source 2002 Health Survey of England). This shameful state of affairs has led to new initiatives by many bodies to try to change the way we feed children whilst they are in school.
- The Department of Health have launched a Food in Schools programme, a cross-government food and health action plan focusing on the link between sustainable farming and food, whose output will affect the healthy eating strand of the National Healthy Schools standard. This authority encourages its schools to join the Healthy Schools Award scheme.
- Several local authorities are now looking at incorporating support for Rural Food Procurement and local foods, seasonal foods, and support for ethical fair trade goods when selecting their service provider.
- West Berks Council has a stated objective to improve health in the community and to support sustainable lifestyles, including local land based industry such as farming.
- The Department of Education and Skills has recently issued its Healthy Living Blueprint to all schools. This gives schools five clear objectives, one of which is to ensure that the food and drink available across the school day reinforces the healthy lifestyle message. School governors are urged to consider the extent to which their current practise reflects these objectives and to seek opportunities to improve. The whole school food policy should include the promotion of school meals.

Why Promote School Meals?

- Providing food in school gives us the opportunity to ensure that healthy food is available for all children. We can monitor the nutritional content of food eaten while at school and ensure that our menus incorporate food lower in salt, fat and additives and include more fruit and vegetables.
- “Innovation in Healthy School Meals”, a joint report by the Soil Association and Business in the Community, provides evidence that healthy school meals lead to better behaved pupils in class. The benefit to individuals, schools and society are healthier, happier children who are better behaved and more able to learn.
- The Child Poverty Action Group acknowledges that many children from low income families rely on school meals for their main meal of the day.
- A recent national survey of lunch boxes brought from home showed that 74% of those tested failed to meet the minimum nutritional standards set by the government in 2001 and many contained double the recommended amount of saturated fat and sugar and half the recommended daily intake of salt. One West Berks school took part in the survey.

- Increased uptake of school meals means that the higher costs of providing good quality, fresh foods are spread over more meals and therefore the cost to the consumer need not increase.
- The impact of devolved funding means that it is necessary to encourage schools to stay with a central provision in order to keep it viable. This is one area where best value (as opposed to price, profit or financial gain) should be paramount in choosing a service provider.

Appx. 1 Legislation

- Food safety (General food Hygiene) regulations 1995
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 etc.
- Food Act 1984
- Food Labelling Regulations 1984 and 1996
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994 and 1999
- Food Safety Act 1990
- National Nutritional Standards 2001
- S114 School Standards and Framework Act 1998 – gave the secretary of state power to make regulations relating to nutritional standards in school lunches
- The Education (Nutritional Standards for School Lunches) Regs. 2000 – providing food based nutritional standards

See also;

- “Healthy Living Blueprint for Schools” from Dept of Education and Skills
- “Choosing Health” - government white paper on improving health
- Food in Schools programme by Dept of Health

Web links:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthyliving/foodanddrink/schoollunches

www.cpag.org.uk/campaigns/press080904

www.food.gov.uk

www.myschoollunch.gov.uk

www.dh.gov.uk/policyandguidance/healthandsocialcaretopics/foodinschools

www.dh.gov.uk/policyandguidance/healthandsocialcaretopics/healthyliving