

## Table about school meals

# Discussion on school meals

Challenges in arranging school meals in the participating schools:

- money
- interest in school meals; how to match the individual tastes
- interest in having school meals in general
- supervising (teachers, dinner ladies, parents)
- the length of the lunch time
- timetable/rest time for teachers
- diets
- hygiene
- local priorities and regulations

The existing three different systems:

1. free lunches (in some cases paid for all, in others only low income parents are eligible)
2. lunches that have to be paid
3. nothing organized

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<b>Areas</b>	<b>UK Schools</b>
<b>Interest and takeup of school meals</b>	Varies between schools, but take up of school meals not high (from 20 –40% depending on the menu). Many children bring in their own packed lunch (with no controls on this)
<b>Cost of school meals</b>	Approximately 2 euros (but free to low income families)
<b>Interference from local and national organisations</b>	There is a lot of government interest from media and government on making school meals healthy and better quality but without any additional funding. Tight nutritional and hygiene controls
<b>How are meals produced and distributed?</b>	Varies between schools and local authorities but could be a private or local company responsible for menus and food deliveries. Meals generally cooked on school site.
<b>How are special diets catered for?</b>	Vegetarian option with every meal. Special diets (e.g. allergies and religious restrictions e.g. no pork for muslims aged locally)
<b>Support and views of the parents</b>	Parents generally have a poor view of school dinners in terms of quality, cost and size of portion. Consequently many send in packed lunch.
<b>How are healthy options ensured?</b>	Menus are supposed to be balanced to ensure variety and quality. Low unit cost of lunch means poor quality ingredients (much frozen not fresh)
<b>Lunchtime organisation within school</b>	Lunchtime staff supervise children while they eat lunch and outside for play. Teaching staff have lunchtime free.
<b>Do you think the school meals system impacts upon behaviour of the children?</b>	Yes definitely Current system does not ensure a healthy enough option for all
<b>Key issues</b>	Poor quality of food Not a health enough option for all Low take-up of school meals Problems of supervision at lunchtimes
<b>Key strengths of current system</b>	The systems are probably in place to improve quality and take-up but will require significant extra funding
<b>What ideas will you take away from the project meeting with regard to school meals?</b>	The free and simple system of Finnish school meals has many advantages. One distributor with effective quality control. The need fro free meals for all.

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<b>Areas</b>	<b>Swedish Schools</b>
<b>Interest and takeup of school meals</b>	Almost all children eat school meal every day so the interest for eating school meals is large from both parents and children.
<b>Cost of school meals</b>	The school meals are free of charge. Every school has to offer a free meal every school day.
<b>Interference from local and national organisations</b>	The right to a free school meal is regulated by law.
<b>How are meals produced and distributed?</b>	It varies between schools Meals generally cooked in a central kitchen and delivered to the different schools. In some schools the meals are cooked on site.
<b>How are special diets catered for?</b>	The has to provided different options for children with special needs like allergic or religious reasons
<b>Support and views of the parents</b>	The parent are well informed of the need for healthy and tasty food and they often discus that issue with the school and community
<b>How are healthy options ensured?</b>	Menus are supposed to be balanced to ensure variety and quality but sometimes the desire to press the unit costs effect the quality of the food.
<b>Lunchtime organisation within school</b>	The lunch break is usually about 40-60 minutes. Usually some of the teachers eat whit the children and supervise them at the same time
<b>Do you think the school meals system impacts upon behaviour of the children?</b>	Yes of course, no car drives properly with out the right fuel. It is the same with children. They can't perform with out the right food.
<b>Key issues</b>	Problems of supervision at lunchtimes. The cut in costs effects the quality of the food.
<b>Key strengths of current system</b>	The strength of the system is that every child is offered a free meal, it doesn't matter if you are poor or rich.
<b>What ideas will you take away from the project meeting with regard to school meals?</b>	I have been reinforced in my belief that the only way to make almost every child to eat a healthy school meal is that the school offer a free meal for the children.

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<b>Areas</b>	<b>Italian Schools</b>
<b>Interest and takeup of school meals</b>	Schools provide snacks and lunches. In some schools children are no longer allowed to bring in their own meals (educational approach), in others this is still possible (quantities are deemed to be inadequate) even if officially forbidden (lack of control)
<b>Cost of school meals</b>	Approximately 2 euros (free to low income families – totally paid by some municipalities)
<b>Interference from local and national organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tight nutritional and hygienic controls performed by municipalities and local health agencies.</li> <li>•Some schools organize courses on nutritional education.</li> <li>•Media and government take an interest only after scandals (e.g. Intoxication).</li> </ul>
<b>How are meals produced and distributed?</b>	General regulations are fixed by municipality nutritionists. They may vary between schools, towns and private nutritional distributors.
<b>How are special diets catered for?</b>	Special diets are available (e.g. allergies certified by doctors; temporary sicknesses and religious restrictions certified by parents).
<b>Support and views of the parents</b>	Parents' nutrition committees can control all the food preparation. Parents are not only very attentive, but also ready to co-operate.
<b>How are healthy options ensured?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Through the controls of municipality, distributors' quality office, nutritionists (of both municipality and local health agencies).</li> <li>•A lot of biological food and all fresh (sometimes the adequate portion is sacrificed to quality).</li> <li>•Meals must be eaten only inside the school premises to avoid any contamination.</li> </ul>
<b>Lunchtime organisation within school</b>	Lunchtime is divided into shifts (2 or 3 according to space and number of children). Teachers can get free lunches. The rest of the school staff supervise but cannot get the school meals (not even paying).
<b>Do you think the school meals system impacts upon behaviour of the children?</b>	During the last 3 years a lot of attention has been paid on the problem of children's obesity (e.g. slight reduction of portions, no course given twice, no fried food). Lunchtime is regarded as an educational and socializing moment. Good educational and nutritional habits affect children's behaviour.
<b>Key issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Children should be educated to try and taste all kinds of food (even those looking less attracting).</li> <li>•The selection of biological food, often scarcely used at home, impairs the taste, which may cause the reduced assumption of school meals.</li> <li>•The short time dedicated to each shift reduces the possibility to socialize and causes also remarkable waste.</li> </ul>
<b>Key strengths of current system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Quite satisfactory (though everything depends on local authorities' funding and investments)</li> <li>•Services provided directly by schools achieve more satisfactory results in the long run.</li> </ul>
<b>What ideas will you take away from the project meeting with regard to school meals?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•As in every educational action all the people involved (teachers, lunchtime staff, parents and children) must co-operate to reach a common aim.</li> <li>•A correct nutritional education can be attained by testing the system validity every day and reinforcing one's own level of satisfaction.</li> </ul>

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<b>Areas</b>	<b>Finnish Schools</b>
<b>Interest and takeup of school meals</b>	The law obliges the schools to offer a free lunch for schoolchildren. The lunch has to be healthy and nourishing.
<b>Cost of school meals</b>	Free to all children. One primary school lunch costs 2€ and one secondary school lunch 2,2€ to the city, all the costs included.
<b>Interference from local and national organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•the recommendations of the national consultative committee</li> <li>•food industry</li> <li>•several associations connected with health and nutrition</li> <li>•Department of Health and Security</li> <li>•Ministry of Education</li> </ul>
<b>How are meals produced and distributed?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•in every school either a delivery kitchen (food is produced in a central kitchen in the city) or a school kitchen where meals are both cooked and delivered</li> </ul>
<b>How are special diets catered for?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•special diets (allergies, religious restrictions) available</li> <li>•vegetarian diet is served if a student has a doctor's or a nurse's statement</li> <li>•one option for the rest, individual tastes are not taken into account</li> </ul>
<b>Support and views of the parents</b>	The most parents consider the system very good. Some of them forget that there are certain restrictions when food is produced for hundreds of students and expect their children to get individual à la carte meals at these costs.
<b>How are healthy options ensured?</b>	Meals have to be of high quality in every respect.
<b>Lunchtime organisation within school</b>	Well-educated kitchen staff produces the meals and takes care of the delivery. Teachers supervise the meals and eat with students. Students must be supervised during the whole schoolday. In upper classes of secondary school and in vocational school there is no obligation to supervise.
<b>Do you think the school meals system impacts upon behaviour of the children?</b>	Yes. If students are hungry, they become restless. If they don't have a proper meal, they eat sweets and become hyperactive.
<b>Key issues</b>	Maintaining the respect for free meals; they are paid in taxes! Nutritional challenges: reducing fat, increasing the amount of vegetables. Avoiding the waste of food.
<b>Key strengths of current system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•free to students</li> <li>•supervising arranged</li> <li>•teaching good table manners and healthy eating habits is a part of curriculum</li> <li>•requirements for environmental education and hygiene must be fulfilled</li> <li>•the meal must cover 1/3 of daily nutrition</li> </ul>
<b>What ideas will you take away from the project meeting with regard to school meals?</b>	Paid snacks could be a good addition to the current system.

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<b>Areas</b>	<b>Haupt-und-Realschule Steimbke, Germany</b>
<b>Interest and takeup of school meals</b>	Each of our students has got one day a week when he/ she has to stay at school until 3.45 pm ( obliged day because of their schedule and our system of a school that runs classes all day). Lunchbreak is from 12.50 to 1.40. The students aren't allowed to leave school, so about 75% to 80% of them (90 to 100 students) eat a warm lunch. The others bring cold food (sandwiches, fruit, drinks) from home and eat it.
<b>Cost of school meals</b>	Students as well as teachers have to pay 2,50 Euro for each meal. There aren't any financial subsidies for families.
<b>Interference from local and national organisations</b>	Germany and especially Lower Saxony has only a limited number of schools that run classes all day and that are able to offer a warm lunch. According to international surveys and results it's necessary to have more of these schools in our country. Lower Saxony doesn't have an official controlling body.
<b>How are meals produced and distributed?</b>	Lunch is cooked by private companies which have to follow registered guidelines given by the Public Health Department. These private companies cook the meals where they have their company buildings (ours about 3o kilometres away) and bring them to our school at about 11 o'clock. They use special containers to keep everything warm. Our school assistant and some parents hand the food out at 12.50. Students and the school assistant have to wash up the dishes after lunch break.
<b>How are special diets catered for?</b>	Every second month (depending on the holidays) students have to choose and order what kind of food they like, that means they have the possibility to choose between three given set lunches. One is with meat and vegetables, the second one is something like a soup or rice-milk and the third one is completely vegetarian, so even the Muslims (we only have 6 of them) should be able to find a suitable meal. There aren't any meals for diabetics.
<b>Support and views of the parents</b>	Parents think it's a good possibility to allow their children to have lunch at school but only a few of them are willing to come to school and help. They expect a lot but they don't want to give help. At the moment we only have five mothers who really help our school assistant. That's a big problem.
<b>How are healthy options ensured?</b>	The most positive fact is that students can have fresh salad with their meals. Every day there is a buffet for it. We aren't able to say how many of the ingredients are really fresh if you think about the price. If a student wants to have the freshest and healthiest menu, he / she must choose the vegetarian one.
<b>Lunchtime organisation within school</b>	Our school assistant and some parents hand the food out at 12.50. Students as well as teachers sit together in our new cafeteria. So it's not necessary to have additional supervisions there. Eating lunch together with their class-mates has a positive influence for the younger students' behaviour. They talk about their leisure-time, make dates and have a closer contact to others. As soon as lunch is finished some students clean the tables and help to wash up the dishes. These students are regularly chosen by the student council. They decided that every week two students from each class have to help, so each student has to do this "job". Depending on the day there are 6 to 8 students who help.
<b>Do you think the school meals system impacts upon behaviour of the children?</b>	As written above school meals influence the students' behaviour. While the younger students sit for about 25 minutes, the older ones finish their lunch in a very short time. But there is much bigger problem. Not all parents are able to pay for their children's food and some of them aren't able to give them enough food which they could eat during the lunch break. We started our lunch programme a few months ago, so we can't exactly tell how many of the students don't have anything to eat during that break. We try to find it out at the moment to talk about it with these parents and to find a solution.
<b>Key issues</b>	The biggest problem in Germany is the missing support. Families who are on social welfare don't get any additional money to buy school lunch.
<b>Key strengths of current system</b>	If poor families got money for lunch, their children could have a warm meal at school. We are sure that many of these children never or seldom get a warm meal at home because of the missing money.
<b>What ideas will you take away from the project meeting with regard to school meals?</b>	The free and simple system of Finnish school meals has many advantages. They have only one distributor and an effective quality control. Lower Saxony should copy the system of free meals for students. This could be a possibility to make the food healthier. Nowadays we think the most important fact for the private companies who cook lunch is the cost of the meal and not the quality.

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<b>Areas</b>	<b>Alexander-von-Humboldt-Gymnasium, Hamburg, Germany</b>
<b>Interest and takeup of school meals</b>	<p>There is no general instruction for school meals in Hamburg, as not each school has lessons in the afternoon. Primary schools, for example, are only compelled to accommodate their pupils until 13:00. Each school is responsible for the organisation of the timetable.</p> <p>At Alexander-von-Humboldt School (AvH) a choice between two meals is provided on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, as those are the days on which pupils from year 7 on have lessons until 15:45.</p> <p>As in UK take-up depends on the menu.</p>
<b>Cost of school meals</b>	€3,20, no subsidies
<b>Interference from local and national organisations</b>	Hygiene is checked by the local health authorities, but there are as yet no official checks on nutritional value.
<b>How are meals produced and distributed?</b>	<p>After several unsuccessful trials of having meals cooked on other premises and delivered to the school in containers, one dedicated mother took over the production of meals.</p> <p>We now have a school kitchen so she and her team of other committed mothers prepare and present meals on the premises, so no further distribution, except into the mouths and stomachs of our pupils and teachers, is necessary.</p>
<b>How are special diets catered for?</b>	One of the two meals offered is always a vegetarian alternative, which at the same time respects religious needs (e.g. Moslems). It is possible to agree on special dietary needs (allergies etc) with the kitchen.
<b>Support and views of the parents</b>	Parents support and approve of the meals on offer, but unfortunately their children do not always agree with them (spoiled children?!)
<b>How are healthy options ensured?</b>	<p>Each day during one of the morning breaks (9:20-9:40) <u>free</u> organic milk and low-cost, low-sugar juices and other drinks are on offer. (This has been part of school life for over twenty years and is still carried out by dedicated parents) In addition, open sandwiches are also now on sale at a cost of €0,30 to pupils and €0,60 to teachers.</p> <p>Fruit in season - €0,10 and pieces of carrot, cucumber, tomato etc – free.</p> <p>From 11:30 snacks from the school kitchen ranging in price are available in the cafeteria.</p> <p>School lunches are by and large balanced menus, usually catering for pupils' tastes in general, but with as many fresh and seasonal ingredients as possible.</p>
<b>Lunchtime organisation within school</b>	<p>There are two separate lunchtime shifts – 12:15- 13:00 and 13:10 – 14:00 – pupils are timetabled accordingly.</p> <p>One teacher supervises in the cafeteria – he/she is expected <u>not</u> to eat with the students, but really to supervise.</p> <p>One class per day is responsible for delegating pupils to carry out clearing up duties at the end of the lunch break (i.e. 14:00) but these pupils do not have to help with the washing-up.</p>
<b>Do you think the school meals system impacts upon behaviour of the children?</b>	It is necessary for pupils and teachers alike to recharge their batteries before embarking on lessons in the afternoon. Having school meals together (but not necessarily the meal itself) and the opportunity to have a longer break than between morning lessons enable the pupils to further social contacts.
<b>Key issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quality of food</li> <li>- Pupils' interest in school meals on offer and in general</li> <li>- costs</li> </ul>
<b>Key strengths of current system</b>	Without the interest, dedication and commitment of our present kitchen staff there would be very little interest in school meals at AvH.
<b>What ideas will you take away from the project meeting with regard to school meals?</b>	<p>It should be a goal to provide as nutritious and balanced a diet for our pupils as is possible.</p> <p>The idea of providing free meals for all pupils is laudable and worth working towards, but it will be very difficult in our present taxation system.</p>