

## Involving Midday Meal Supervisors (MMS) in a whole school approach to food



### Key Issues:

- Involvement depends on whether or not Head Teachers see healthy eating as their responsibility or not. Consequently every school is different
- Many MMS don't see healthy eating as their responsibility – they are there to deal with children's' behaviour, not what they eat
- They are employed by the schools and are part of the school community but are often neglected in terms of consultation.
- Many MMS feel isolated, undervalued and disempowered

*(They) don't really understand or see it as their role. They supervise children – healthy eating and food not their job.*

Head of catering services  
Hampshire

*MMS can be the most negative person in the school Dining Hall with the most influence over the children's attitude to the food on their plate. (They) are employed by the school. Encouragement should be the way forward.*

### School Food Ambassadors recommend:

**Get teachers involved** - Every teacher should sit at the table and eat with the children, teachers should be encouraged to display role model behaviour in the consumption of school meals – see Southampton Case Study below

- **Empower MMS** - Set up a forum for MMS to share experiences and ideas. Get them involved in healthy eating days and talks.
- **Work with the cooks** - Make sure the relationship between MMS and cooks is good.





## Existing Good Practice in the South East region:

**Brighton & Hove: Lesley Potter** - Schools Food Advisor & School Food Ambassador, Brighton & Hove Food Partnership – training programme for cooks and Midday Meal Supervisors run in East Sussex funded by the local Healthy Schools team

[lesley@bhfood.org.uk](mailto:lesley@bhfood.org.uk)

**East Sussex:** Paul Aagaard - Food in Schools Specialist & School Food Ambassador, Hastings & Rother PCT - offers training packages to MMS funded by their schools

[paul.aagaard@hastingsrotherpct.nhs.uk](mailto:paul.aagaard@hastingsrotherpct.nhs.uk)

**Southampton:** Stephen Price - General Manager City Catering & School Food Ambassador, Southampton City Council – Food in Schools workers offer training to MMS funded by their schools and teacher involvement with midday meals was regarded as part of their job.

[stephen.price@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.price@southampton.gov.uk)

Case study details on School Food Trust website:

<http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/casestudy-detail.asp?caseid=20>

## Existing National Good Practice

### Hull

In conjunction with Hull's Free Healthy School Meals programme, researchers from Hull University developed a training package for Midday Meal Supervisors (MMS)/Lunchtime Supervisors (LTS).

The programme has been run as a pilot and evaluated and is in the process of being licensed for wider distribution. Contact Professor Derek Colquhoun, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, email: [D.Colquhoun@hull.ac.uk](mailto:D.Colquhoun@hull.ac.uk) for more details.

In brief the pilot programme resulted in a 10-week course that was developed through interviews with LTS to incorporate their identified training needs, the course involves:

- Nutritional training
- Effective running of the dining room & behaviour management
- Work around children's perspective of eating as a social experience and consulting children about changes to the dining room.





## North East region:

### School Dining Room review undertaken with School Dining Staff

Work coordinated by Paul Flynn, Food For Life Partnership, North East Coordinator

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The following notes are taken from a School Nutrition Action Group meeting followed by a review by the school dining staff.

Think about the food and the service - What is working well in your dining service?

What could be made even better?

#### What is working well?

- The menu is now on display.
- The dining hall is part of a new build, bright and spacious. There is good décor including the children's artwork on a food theme and there are photographs of the menu items to show the children what is being offered.
- There has been a good response to meal promotions and the introduction of soup.
- The food is attractive, fresh and served at a good temperature. The menu is healthy and fresh fruit and vegetables are popular thanks to several years of encouraging the children to take these.
- Taster sessions are offered to new students and parents.
- The staff are viewed as helpful and informative: "The cooks are brilliant, they tell what there is and everything."

#### What could be made even better?

- Waiting and queuing for food could be reduced and improved. At present children wait at the tables before being invited to queue. The children grow restless whilst waiting and are competitive in the queue.
- Lunchtime supervisors struggle to contain the situation and often shout to try to control the children.
- Teachers noted that some children are given inappropriate combinations of food types - e.g. potatoes with pasta.
- Whilst every effort is made to assist children in their choices, food service is slow.





Following the school nutrition action group (SNAG) meeting all the lunchtime staff were invited to share in a similar session, including the area Catering Manager.

### **A number of changes were implemented as a result:**

- The menu was simplified to two meal options; this removed some of the choice but eliminated inappropriate combinations of food types and reducing the service time.
- The best behaving table was invited to come for food, returning any that behave unacceptably.
- Children taking option "A" were invited first, then "B." Next table sent B then A. This delivers a rationalised queue to the dining hatch, removing the need to question each child.
- Long rows of tables were changed for a herringbone pattern of separate tables, creating a family style service.
- No "second helpings" are being served; serving staff received training on appropriate portion sizes for each age group.
- Fruit and veg appetisers may be placed on the tables prior to service to encourage the children to eat these whilst waiting. E.g. Carrot batons, celery sticks etc.

### **Additional benefits:**

The lunchtime food service is now completed in around 45 minutes in a pleasant atmosphere with rushing or competitive behaviour. This is a reduction of around half an hour from one hour and fifteen minutes. The children are returning to play, physical activity, for up to half an hour extra at lunch times.

The lunchtime supervisors are no longer shouting or having to raise their voice.

The eating environment is much more pleasant. It is hoped this will lead to an increase in the uptake of school meals, as queuing time and noise were both reasons given for not taking a school meal.

Teachers may also be more inclined to take a school meal with the children; this may further contribute to the eating environment.

The time saving will allow the school to remove flight trays and serve the pudding separately, reducing waste and improving the quality of food eaten.

### **Drawbacks:**

The simplified school meal choice may reduce the uptake of vegetables; children can no longer choose which vegetables to have with their main course. However, the catering manager insists that this will only be a temporary problem and that children will be encouraged to try new options rather than maintain their prejudice.





**Key Links:**

**The School FEAST network**

<http://www.schoolfeast.co.uk/Home>

**School Food Trust Case Studies**

<http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/casestudy-home.asp>

