



September 2008

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# Recipe for success!

**Taste it for Yourself...**



We are so proud of our fabulously tasty school meals that we are inviting all parents to come and taste what's on the menu.

And it's not just great tasting – it's also great value and good for performance, alertness and behaviour.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Time: \_\_\_\_\_



\*Did you know your child could qualify for Free School Meals? That means extra for you but delicious and healthy meals for your child. We've made it so easy to apply for your child's eligibility for more information about eligibility, for more information about the School Food Trust and www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk

Guidance and resources to help you are available in the pack plus more are available to download from the Parents Taster Resource pages of the Million Meals website.

*"Our tasting session was a great success. The turnout of parents was high and they were all very surprised of the meals. The number of children having a school meal has increased substantially as a result!"*

Lyndsey Jefford, Healthy Schools Co-ordinator  
Earlsfield Primary School

Keep a look out for your copy of the parents taster pack which is being posted out now! It's a simple guide to running a tasting session for parents to get them to try your tasty school meals and to show them how they can make a difference to their child's performance.

It has been specifically designed to help you and your caterer run school meal tasting sessions for parents and carers. The Parent Taster Resource includes posters along with guidance on how to run a successful tasting session, ideas on when to run it and how to evaluate it effectively. It has been designed to be really flexible and will help you work with your caterer to run really successful sessions whatever the shape or size of your school. Make sure whichever member of your staff is likely to work with your caterer to run the session, knows the username and password for the website so that they can access all the available resources.

**Why not try some of these out:**

- Sports days**  
Take advantage of your captive audience at school sports days. Parents are very likely to attend so, if your caterer is willing, set up a stall of tasty school food they can taste while they're cheering on their children.
- Themed lunches**  
There are lots of occasions throughout the year that you could tack a tasting session onto. How about rustling up a few dishes at Harvest Festival time or during British Food Fortnight or Healthy Eating Week? You could invite different year group's parents in each day.

**Campaign update: we currently have 3400 schools supporting Million Meals!**



# Take part in our Conference Calls!

Simply pre-register your  
free place for the next call  
through your e-mail invite  
in October!

From September to December we will be hosting 4 conference calls for Million Meals schools. The first conference call took place this week and proved to be very successful. Elizabeth Luke, Catering Services Manager for South Tyneside Council discussed the work they have done to successfully increase free school meal take up in the area.



South Tyneside Council Catering Services is the in-house catering provider to 70 schools, 3 children's centres and 2 staff restaurants. Our secondary schools have been a high priority for us in the last 18 months. We have been disappointed by our free meal uptake in past years but have significantly increased the free school meal uptake in 2007/8. Uptake of free meals rose from 59% in 06/07 to 68% in 07/08 giving a 16% increase. Overall uptake, that is uptake of both free and paid meals rose from 42% in 06/07 to 51% in 07/08. We are delighted with this outcome and we're hoping to further improve free school meal uptake this year.

We attribute our increase in free meal uptake to 3 key factors, namely schools' support, staff training, and a more sophisticated catering offer.

The key initiatives that have supported our increase in take up of free meals are:

- ◆ School gate policies or part gate policies
- ◆ Student Council feedback
- ◆ Lunch queue management
- ◆ School support
- ◆ School promotion to parents of registration of free meals
- ◆ Schools awareness of individuals' free meals uptake
- ◆ Cashless systems
- ◆ On-line payments systems
- ◆ Teaching staff using the catering service daily
- ◆ Staff training and support
- ◆ In-house coaching to strengthen morale
- ◆ Value your school cook
- ◆ Get sponsorship for marketing and healthy eating rewards
- ◆ Each school is individual and unique – no one size fits all
- ◆ Secondary school cooks team meetings
- ◆ An improved image, branding and merchandising
- ◆ Trendy food to mirror the high street

Here are some comments from participants:

*It was very useful, with lots of ideas to carry out in our own work*

*I think this is a good way of communicating good practice - thanks for arranging it!*

*It is always interesting to hear about what colleagues in other authorities are doing, sometimes there are new ideas or a confirmation that what you are doing already is endorsed by others*

## DATE FOR YOUR DIARY!

Next Conference Call!

**Date:** 16th October

**Time:** 3pm – 4pm

**Theme:** Make the food tasty and attractive  
**Look out for more details via email next month!**

**SCHOOL  
FOODTRUST**  
Eat Better Do Better

# School of the Month

**Do you want to win £5000 for your school?**

Million Meals gives schools the chance to win **£5000** worth of equipment for your kitchen or dining room each month. Our School of the Month initiative rewards the excellent work schools are doing to transform their meal service.

**This is a real opportunity to raise awareness of your efforts and to support changes that could increase your take up.**

## How do I nominate my school?

All you have to do is nominate your school for our 'School of the Month' award using the on-line nomination system. The on-line nomination form is only available on the Million Meals website to signed up schools.

You will be asked to provide as part of your nomination an amount of 'standard information' about your school. This will include details about roll, take up, the type of service (LA, contractor, in-house) and the type of school (inner city, rural etc). This information will not be used as part of the selection criteria but will provide the School Food Trust with a context for the improvements you have made.

You will also be asked for a small amount of information regarding healthy schools status and any healthy eating / food policies. This will form a small part of the evaluation.

In order to be considered for the School of the Month, you will need to demonstrate the innovative work by answering the following questions:

1. *Why did you decide to make the changes to your service?*
2. *What activities have you undertaken?*
3. *What impact have those activities had?*
4. *What difficulties did you experience and how did you overcome them?*
5. *What lessons have you learned by undertaking these activities?*



You will also be able to submit supporting evidence such as photographs, examples of surveys, timetables etc that they may have used to undertake activities and any work undertaken by pupils.

For purposes of validation, entries will not be accepted until you have ticked a box to agree to the terms and conditions of entry. This will include a statement confirming that the entry is a true account of the activities undertaken.

**For a full list of terms and conditions, please see the Million Meals website.**

## SCHOOL OF THE MONTH THEMES:

October

*Make the food tasty and attractive*

November

*Promote and market food effectively*

December

*Make lunchtime a good experience*

Thinking ahead will allow you to plan activities in advance to ensure that you are ready to apply for the competition.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**NOMINATIONS WILL ONLY BE CONSIDERED IF THEY RELATE TO THE CHOSEN THEME FOR THAT MONTH**

*Eat Better Do Better*

Next month's School of the Month theme:

## Make the food tasty and attractive

### Why is this important?

It is often said that we eat with our eyes – it's hard to imagine choosing to eat something which looks unappealing. Of course what appeals to adults and what appeals to children can be very different, but the human eye is always drawn to vibrant, colourful food since it is appealing and tends to signal freshness. In this respect children and adults are motivated by the same principle so having an exciting and colourful display, where food looks fresh and appealing will encourage children to give the food a try.

And, if nothing else, cooking the food well, making sure it is not over-cooked or left sitting around for long periods will reassure parents that their children are guaranteed good healthy food if they take school lunches.

### Some simple steps to try:

1. Develop imaginative menus
2. Try the food yourself
3. Ensure that staff have the right training and equipment
4. Make sure you have an attractive and colourful display
5. Encourage catering staff to cook food throughout the lunch period ready for each sitting
6. Ensure that children are able to see the food on display



### What else is available to help me achieve this?

- You can also view our movie about making school food tasty and attractive at this link: <http://millionmeals.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/ten-plates/tamovie>
- Healthier catering advice from Food Standards Agency [www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/healthycatering](http://www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/healthycatering)
- Plus case studies are available on the Million Meals website [www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/millionmeals](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/millionmeals)

***Could your school win our October School of the Month?***

***Why not consider what changes you can make to your meal service today?***

## Case Study: Broughton Junior School

### Make the food tasty and attractive

Broughton Junior School in North Lincolnshire believed for a number of years that providing its pupils with an appetising, well presented and all importantly healthy lunch is an integral part of the school day.

The Head teacher Mr Peter Hargrave has worked with the kitchen team to ensure that the meals provided are of the highest standard, with well over 70% of children eating a school meal on a regular basis.

For the school, ensuring the food 'looks good' on the plate is an essential part of encouraging children to eat a healthy meal and all the staff have worked closely together to ensure that the quality of preparation, counter display and presentation on the plate are of the highest standard.

### What were the motivating aims and objectives?

Mr Hargrave, says "We wanted to increase the number of children choosing to eat a school meal by providing them with a range of choices, prepared in our own kitchens which looked attractive and were served carefully and onto high quality attractive plates. We wanted to educate the children about healthy eating and encourage children to try different foods and see eating lunch at school as a fun activity shared with their friends in an attractive and pleasant environment. We wanted children eating 'pack ups' to be envious of the choice offered by school meals and place pressure on their parents to change to a school lunch."

### How they did it?

Mr Hargrave and senior staff are actively involved in the formulation of menus and work closely with the Cook to ensure that she and all her team feel valued members of the school community. Mr Hargrave and the catering team regularly eat in the dining hall

and discuss with the children what they think about the food. Regular consultations are also held with the School Council and healthy eating is an integral part of personal and social education within the school.

Mr Hargrave reports that they have undertaken a range of things to ensure their display looks tasty and attractive.

"We ensure that our cutlery, plates and dishes are in good condition and that our plates in particular are attractive and enhance the food placed upon them. We also ensure that a sample of the food is on the plates for children to see before they make their main course choice and that all the different salads or vegetables are clearly visible".

The catering team have been trained to encourage children to try different options and to let them 'taste' something when introducing a new menu. The catering team have tried out new ways of displaying food and one particularly successful idea has been cutting up pieces of fruit and laying it out in the shape of smiling faces.

### What was the Impact?

Mr Hargrave remarks, "We have a meal take-up, which is well above national average – well over 70% of pupils taking a meal every day. We have children who enjoy eating healthy meals, have or are actively taught to have good table manners and know how to use a fork and knife correctly."

### Unplanned value-added benefits

The attractively displayed fruit salads inspired the School Council to request that the school start selling fruit at break times, that they display the fruit in different ways and that they have the opportunity to try more exotic fruits.

Visit the website for other case studies to learn how other schools have increased take up and made improvements against the TENplates!

## Your questions answered



We're ready to help you! Register any question that requires an expert answer on the Ask an Advisor section of the website and we will get back to you with an answer within a few days.

Here is a recent question we received from a school, with our advisors answer:

### Question

We are organising a 'healthy eating' day to promote school meals. We have two farmers and a celebrity chef and intend to prepare healthy snacks with the children during the day to serve to parents at night. Can you recommend any literature to distribute on the evening. Maybe a food quiz?

### Answer

There are a number of resources available on the School Food Trust website that can be downloaded. These include information for parents about school lunches as well as packed lunch policies.

Other websites that you may find useful are:

[www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk](http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk)

[www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk)

[www.5aday.nhs.uk](http://www.5aday.nhs.uk)

[www.foodafactoflife.org.uk](http://www.foodafactoflife.org.uk)

Good luck with your healthy eating day!

**Have you got a question to ask our advisors?**

**Why not submit a question today?**

## Did you know?

### Support for the School Food Regulations

To help you further we have added a page on the Million Meals website providing details of all the tools, publications and support available to help implement the Food and Nutrient based Standards. It has links to the tools, information and downloads and can all be accessed from one place.

### Million Meals discussion board

Discuss your queries or gather advice from others on our discussion board. Recent topics discussed over the summer include Meal Deals, Keeping cooks motivated through any change process and the Cost of school meals. Please feel free to log-in and join in the debates!

**Why not check these out on the website now?**

[www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/millionmeals](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/millionmeals)

## School Visits

We regularly receive requests for practical examples of work that is being undertaken in other schools that are making positive changes to the service they offer and the take up of their school meals.

Head teachers are particularly interested in understanding the barriers that schools similar to theirs can face and welcome the opportunity to discuss with their peers practical solutions to similar issues. Sharing this good practice enables more schools to learn from each other to help further increase the take up of school meals.

### Would you like to host a school visit?

Therefore we would love to hear from schools that would like to host a visit so that other Head Teachers can see first hand your changes and learn how they could implement them in their own schools.

**Has your school achieved great things or made innovative changes to your school meal service? Are you proud of your school meal service? – perhaps you have a unique dining room or a clever improvement to your meal service that you will like to demonstrate to others?**

If you want to showcase all your hard work and changes to your meal service and feel this would benefit others then we would like to know if you could host a visit!

We are asking schools from anywhere in the country to host visits as part of the Million Meals campaign so that we can show what a difference you can make if you have a whole school commitment to making the change.



### What support will you receive from the School Food Trust?

You will receive a School Visit Pack which contains help and suggestions for your visit, including an example agenda you may wish to follow.

Shortly before your visit, the School Food Trust will send to you a full list of delegates who have booked for the visit as well as their school details.

You will also receive an adequate number of delegate packs. These packs will include information from the School Food Trust about the Million Meals campaign and should be issued to each delegate as they arrive for the visit.

By preparing delegate packs and providing materials for you we are hoping that any costs incurred as a result of the visits will be kept to a minimum. We do however acknowledge that there will inevitably be some costs to schools for cover staff, refreshments etc and have therefore arranged for a payment of £250 be made to all schools per visit undertaken.

**We love to hear from you, please contact us today, email:**

[carl.morgan@sft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:carl.morgan@sft.gsi.gov.uk)

### Feedback

We welcome your feedback. If you have any comments or suggestions for our newsletter, please let us know by emailing:

[million.meals@sft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:million.meals@sft.gsi.gov.uk)



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