

PRESS NOTICE

For immediate release

09.30 9th July 2009

School meals back on the menu for children in England - historic decline in school meals numbers halted

The first statistically robust national survey of school meal take up has shown that meal numbers have increased in both primary and secondary schools in 2008/9 when compared to identical local authority data for the period 2007/8.

Figures in primary schools increased from 43.8% to 43.9% and from 35.5% to 36.0% in secondary schools for those authorities that reported using the new standardised take up methodology in both 2007/8 and 2008/9.

With all local authorities who responded included, the overall national take up figures were 39.3% in primary schools and 35.1% in secondary schools. These figures cannot be directly compared with any previous data due to the range and method of collection (see notes below).

Prue Leith, Chair of the School Food Trust, said:

"We now have a genuine picture of take up across the country and we can see that real progress is being made the length and breadth of England. I am absolutely delighted that three million children are eating healthy, nutritionally balanced school food every day.

"I am heartened that take up has increased slightly in primary schools following the introduction of new nutrient-based standards and am convinced we are winning the battle for the hearts, minds and tastebuds of children and parents. It is particularly pleasing that secondary schools have turned the corner.

This has always been a long term project which relies on the support of cooks, caterers, LAs and headteachers. We must continue to get all schools to regard children's food as an integral part of their

overall education so our children will not only be healthier but, as our new research shows, will also be able to perform better” .

Neil Porter, Chairman of the Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA), said:

"LACA recognises that this year we are using a different way to calculate the data on the take up of school lunches. LACA is encouraged by the apparent marginal upward trend in meal take up in both primary and secondary schools.

"LACA is encouraged by the signs from the Survey that children's eating habits are beginning to turn around, thanks to the hard work of schools and caterers. However, we believe that we are on a longer journey when it comes to secondary school students. Increasing secondary meal take up will continue to be a challenge for all of us. We need to focus on improving partnerships with Head Teachers, encouraging whole school food policies and demonstrating to young people the benefits of choosing healthier food".

Ends

Notes to editors

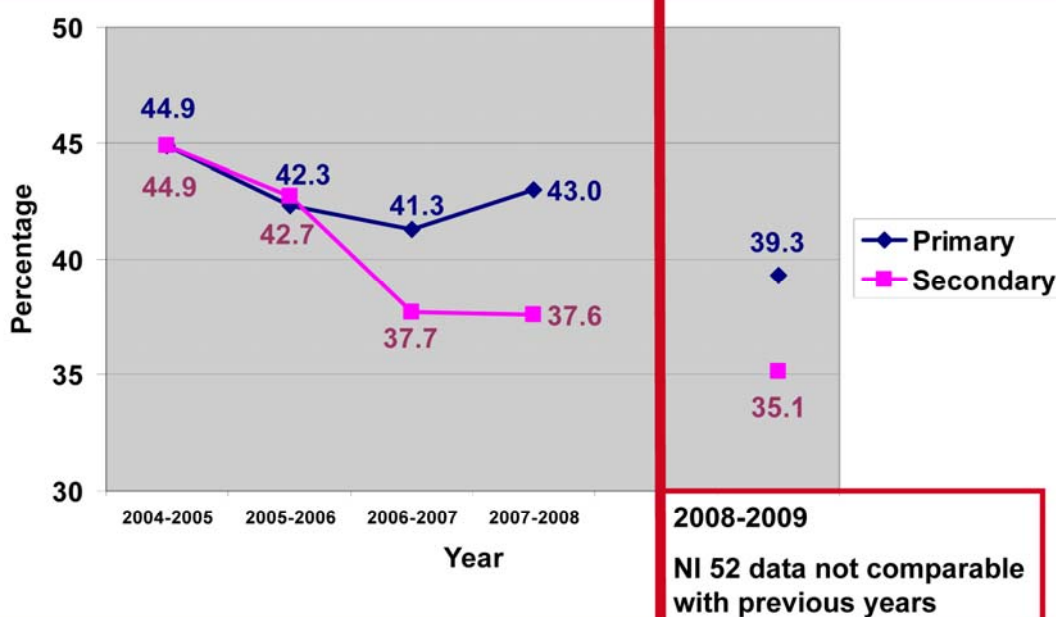
- Link to the statistical release and methodology;
www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/news/NI52statisticalrelease2008-2009.
- Interviews can be arranged by calling the Trust's press office, Louisa Stoddard, 020 7749 9195 or Emma Heesom on 0207 273 5205 or emma.heesom@sft.gsi.gov.uk
- Hazel Green, LACA Press Office on 07950 007169 or HaGreen7@aol.com
- The School Food Trust (SFT) is a non-departmental public body established by the DCSF in September 2005. Its remit is to transform school food and food skills, and promote the education and health of children and young people by improving the quality of food supplied and consumed in school.
- The Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA) is the professional body representing 1200 Members who provide services to all sectors of Local Authorities in England, Wales and Scotland. With 135 local authorities represented, 90% of the catering service is provided by LACA Members and with over 3 million lunches being served every day in more than 22,000 schools, the LACA network is the country's largest provider of school catering.
- NI52 data are collected via the School Food Trust (SFT) and Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA) joint annual survey of Local Authorities (LAs). All 150 LAs responded to the survey of which 145 provided usable NI52 data for primary schools and 139 for secondary schools.
- 2009 is the first year of NI52 data collection
- Take up figures for 2008-2009 should not be compared directly with published national take up figures for previous years for four reasons:
 - There are fundamental differences between the NI 52 methodology and the previous 'usual' method for calculating take up, especially in the secondary sector
 - The number of LAs for which data were reported in 2008-2009 was 145 (97% out of 150 LAs) for primary and 139 (93%) for secondary, compared with 97 (65%) and 78 (52%), respectively, in 2007-2008

- The NI 52 data includes both LA catered and contracted provision and non-LA provision. Previous reporting related mainly to LA catered or contracted provision
- The way in which take up is calculated for schools with Free School Meal-only provision.
- This week the School Food Trust released research Findings from the School Food Trust: 'School lunch and learning behaviour in secondary schools: an intervention study'. This shows clearly that secondary school pupils were more on-task (concentrating and engaged) and less off-task (disengaged) in the classroom after lunch following a lunchtime intervention to improve the dining environment and the nutritional quality of the food.
The Findings will also be available on the School Food Trust website:
[School lunch and learning behaviour in secondary schools: an intervention study](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/documents/slab2)
www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/documents/slab2

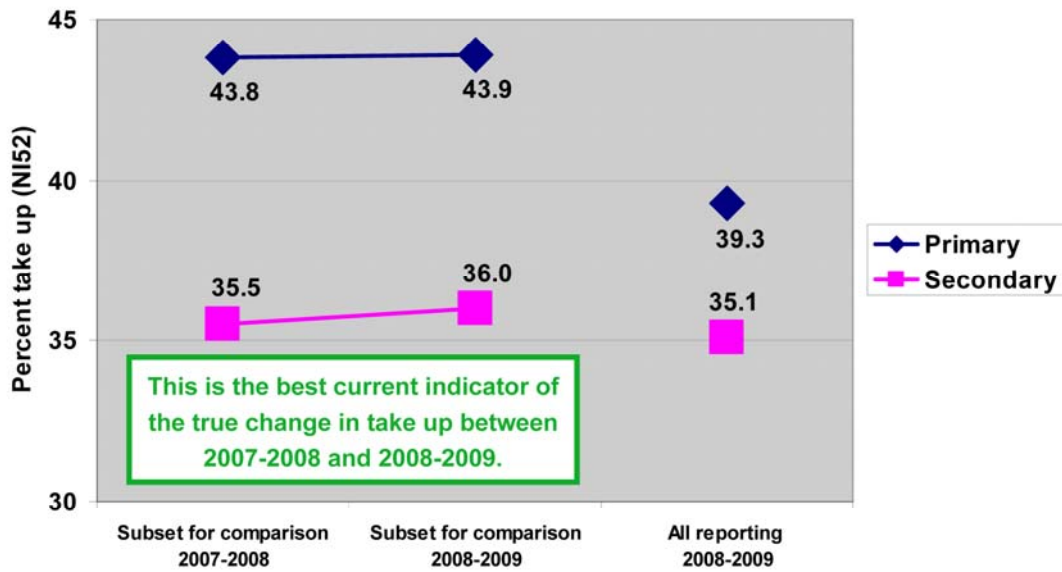
These Findings confirm similar previous evidence in primary schools.
[School lunch and learning behaviour in primary schools: an intervention study](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/documents/slab1)
www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/documents/slab1

These Findings describe school food consumption in secondary school pupils showing the improvements that have taken place since 2004.
[School lunch and learning behaviour in secondary schools: baseline dietary data](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/documents/slabbaseline)
www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/documents/slabbaseline
- School meal transformation timeline:
September 2006: New interim food-based lunch standards come into force - including banning junk food;
September 2007: Standards for vending machines, breakfast clubs and tuck shops come into force;
September 2008: Final food and nutrient-based lunch standards (replacing interim standards) came into force in primary schools;
September 2009: Final food and nutrient-based lunch standards come into force for secondary and special schools.
- The statistical release can also be found on the news section of the School Food Trust website www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk. The full statistical report will be out in early September.

Take up of school lunches 2008-2009



Change in take up of school lunches (NI 52), 2007-2008 to 2008-2009



Date July 09