



The LACA/ParentPay  
Market Research Report  
on School Meals and  
Daily Life Issues 2012



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## 2.0 Introduction

This is the second time that the LACA/ParentPay Market Research Report on School Meals and Daily Lifestyles has been published. LACA (formerly the Local Authority Caterers Association) is the leading professional body representing school caterers, food service contractors and suppliers. ParentPay provides online payment solutions for schools including payment systems for school meals. Both parties are interested in finding out more about the feeding and daily lifestyle issues of young people. For more information about LACA please go to [www.laca.co.uk](http://www.laca.co.uk) and for ParentPay [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com)

The first research report was published on 7th November 2011 at the start of National School Meals Week (NSMW). This event has been running since 1993 and is the largest promotion of healthy eating and school meals in the UK. The week in 2011 was certainly the biggest in terms of number of schools taking part and it also won a major marketing award in the Hotel and Catering Industry so it was probably the best.

This research is published on Monday 5th November 2012. Again this is at the start of NSMW and more about the week can be found at [www.iloveschoolmeals.co.uk](http://www.iloveschoolmeals.co.uk)



### 3.0 Methodology

The starting point was last year's questionnaire. We looked at questions that we wanted to track over several years to identify trends and so kept those questions in. We then discussed with the LACA Board, its members and many others in the industry about other areas of interest or concern. For example how popular a range of new ideas for school meals were with parents and what should be in the National Curriculum about food. A draft questionnaire was created and sent to LACA stakeholders for further comment until agreement on the questionnaire was reached.

The final questionnaire was then placed on the ParentPay website with directions to parents on how to fill in. An incentive was provided to parents to complete the questionnaire. The raw, anonymous data was then sent to AVF Marketing who analysed all the data, made comparisons with the 2011 research data and compiled this report.

Some figures will not add up to exactly 100% because figures will have been rounded up and down.

Over a similar period of time Birds Eye conducted a series of focus groups about school meals. This was part of its ongoing "Kids menu research programme". The aim was to gain a qualitative insight into how children viewed the food offered to them and their understanding of nutritional guidelines and good practice in eating. The key questions posed were: what do children like or dislike; what favourite meals feature on their radar; what makes them a popular dish; how would children improve their school meals; how do school meals compare with other food experiences.

## 4.0 Sample Size

A total of 12,021 people responded to the 2012 survey compared to 10,808 in 2011. The regional breakdown of the sample size in percentage terms, by TV regions, is shown in the table below:

TV Region	2011	2012
Anglia	10.5	10.7
Border	0.5	0.6
Central	12.1	15.0
Channel	-	0.4
Granada	7.9	11.0
London	27.6	27.8
Meridian	6.9	7.1
STV Central	1.9	0.6
STV North	0.8	0.3
Tyne Tees	6.1	4.5
UTV	0.5	0.3
Wales	2.8	1.5
West	6.1	4.3
West Country	5.8	3.8
Yorkshire	10.4	12

52% of respondents were male and 48% were female in 2012 compared to 53.3% and 46.7% respectively in 2011.

In the next table we show the sample size by the age group of respondents' children.

Age Groups	% of respondents 2011	% of respondents 2012
Five to six	10.5	15.6
Seven to nine	14.0	12.2
Ten to eleven and in Primary School	5.2	12.3
Eleven to twelve and in Secondary School	38.0	29.2
Thirteen to fifteen	28.1	22.3
Sixteen to seventeen	3.7	5.5
Over seventeen	0.6	2.9

7.7% of respondents were entitled to a free meal compared to 3.7% in 2011. This equates to 923 families in the research results and so is a significant number for research purposes.

The next table shows the number of meals respondents had during the week.

Number of school meals eaten each week	% respondents 2012
Once a week	7.8
Twice a week	8.0
Three times a week	9.4
Four times a week	4.7
Five times a week	61.7
Never	8.4

In the 2011 survey 61.0% had a meal five days a week and 8.0% never had one so the figures are similar. The average frequency of having a school meal in 2012 is 3.8 times a week.

Using ParentPay schools can collect other income from parents apart from school meals, such as for clubs, educational visits and music lessons. This is why there is a figure of 8.4% that said they never had a school meal.

This table shows how much those having a school meal paid for them on a daily basis.

Amount spent	% of respondents
Less than £1.70	2.7
£1.70 to £1.80	2.9
£1.80 to £1.90	11.5
£1.90 to £2.00	13.7
£2.00 to £2.10	39.9
Over £2.10	29.2

The average amount that respondents paid for a school meal in 2012 was £2.00.

The table below shows the split of respondents between the different types of schools in the UK. This is the first time we have identified specific results for Academies

Type of school	% of respondents
State maintained	55.6
Academy	27.3
Free school	10.2
Other	6.9

## 5.0 Executive Summary

This is the second time that LACA and ParentPay have published this research, the first was in 2011. There were responses from just over 12,000 parents and the data was collected in September 2012. The questions relate to issues around school meals and the lifestyles of young people. It is the largest piece of research that is currently undertaken on this subject matter and is published at the start of National School Meals Week.

The first issue was that 4.9% of those entitled to a free meal did not take up their entitlement and a further 13.3% did not have a free meal five days a week. Overall 37.6% of parents said they did not get enough information about school meals and the main information they wanted was: the menu this week; how healthy eating is promoted; and the nutritional content of the meal. In Academies 43.4% said they were not getting enough information compared to 36.4% in state maintained. Overall 81% of respondents want to receive this information via a website and 80.6% wanted an electronic newsletter. Only 45.7% wanted a paper newsletter from school. The full results are shown in this table.

How parents want to receive information	%State	% Academies	% Overall
From a website	80.7	81.9	81.0
Electronic newsletter	81.2	81.8	80.6
Emails from school	76.0	77.7	77.0
Posters around school	61.1	61	61.4
A regular paper newsletter from school	44.3	40.1	45.7
A phone app	36.4	35.6	37.5
Daily news updates via twitter and other social media	19.7	22.6	22.2

The popularity of the Internet can further be seen as 81.7% of parents want to pay for a school meal online with 74.7% saying it is more convenient. 62.3% highlighted the benefit that the money has to be spent on a school meal and 43.2% saying there is less risk to their child such as bullying. It is interesting that more parents of Academy pupils (55.1%) were concerned about the safety of their child (e.g. bullying) compared to 39.7% of state maintained.

Parents continue to be very happy or happy (90.7%) with the school meal provided at their child's school which is very encouraging and recognises all the hard work and effort that school caterers have put in over the last few years. 87.4% of parents said the value for money was either good or OK which is at the same level as last year. The rating of the quality of the meal is also very similar year on year. The top criteria for buying a school meal are: the overall impression; availability of familiar dishes; and how it looks.

This year Birds Eye undertook some additional research at a similar time. This showed that a disappointing school meal can set a negative tone for afternoon lessons. Also that an enjoyable meal





was one that is easy to eat with no poorly disguised ingredients such as extra vegetables and gives energy for play time and afternoon lessons. The report explains other factors like: the food being similar to home; having to be popular with the majority of pupils; enabling children to self select their meal. The full report identifies other issues from this research.

98% of parents want their child to learn to cook at school and this should include where food comes from and when food is in season. 93.4% wanted children to have the opportunity to grow food in a school garden. 74.1% of respondents were aware of Change4Life and of those 54.1% had visited their website.

6.2% of children left for school without breakfast. This will mean that nationally many thousands of children are struggling to concentrate in early morning lessons. 66.4% of parents said either they or a member of their family cooked with their child two or three times a week. Weekly chip consumption was up very slightly from 1.34 times per week in 2011 to 1.41 times per week in 2012. Portions of fruit and vegetables eaten were 3.3 per day and only up from 3.25 the previous year. Drinking water had improved slightly with the number of glasses drunk rising from just under three to 3.2. The amount of time spent exercising was the same year on year at 66 minutes. These figures suggest that some of the key messages about a good diet have not yet got through. This is reinforced by the figures that showed 11.6% were concerned about the weight of their child and of those 82.3% described their child as overweight and 17.7% as underweight.

When deciding what to cook for a child at home, the top three considerations were: what they like; time to prepare and cook; whether it contributed to their five-a-day. The other healthy eating issues, such as being low in fat and high in fibre, were at the bottom of this list. 97.2% of parents said they



had enough information about the link between food and good health. However, 27.9% said they found this information confusing and 46.0% said that if the information was better then it would help their family. The source of this healthy eating information is from the Internet and the media rather than traditional sources such as doctors and hospitals. This may be a factor in the confusion.

61.1% of parents said children should be able to blog about school meals but fewer (46.6%) agreed that cameras should be used to take photographs of their meals.

41.1% of parents said their child's school was meeting the Government's Nutritional Standards and a concerning 57.2% did not know and so could not answer this question fully. All state maintained schools have a legal requirement to comply with the Nutritional Standards. It is interesting to see that only 37.7% of respondents from Academies knew that their school meals complied while 60.3% did not know. 92.3% of parents wanted schools to abide by the standards and 92.1% thought there should be an independent body to monitor them.

In recent years Jamie Oliver has been at the forefront of driving change within school meals. The survey asked parents a number of questions about his current school lunch manifesto. 95.5% of parents agreed with him that Secondary Schools should have staggered lunch times to reduce queuing and 73.4% confirmed they would be happy for teenage students, excluding sixth formers, to be kept safe and secure in school at lunch time. 83.1% of parents also agreed with giving schools in areas of deprivation more money for their catering service.

The full report shows the variances between Academies and state maintained schools, the differences between gender and Primary/Secondary Schools, and the variances between TV regions.

The author of the report highlighted a number of issues and concerns. They were:

- 1. Children arriving at school hungry.** Although the figures for not having breakfast are low it still means many thousands of children nationally are not able to maximise their attention span in early morning lessons. The author has seen this happen first hand when undertaking research and children were actually falling asleep and when asked had had nothing to eat that day. The situation is slightly worse in Academies because 7.5% of children go without breakfast compared to 5.6% in state maintained.
- 2. Nutritional Standards in all schools and the need for monitoring.** Parents want nutritional standards and they want them monitored by an independent body. They apply in state maintained schools but for some reason Academies are entrusted to comply with them voluntarily. The author is concerned about this duplicity in standards but perhaps the bigger issue is the high number of parents that didn't know if the standards were applied at their child's school especially when 87.9% of parents said the nutritional information was important to them.
- 3. The importance of new media for school caterers.** School caterers must understand and use new media because it will help them increase sales and also gain the support of Headteachers and office staff. Online payment is the way forward for all schools. Every school in the country should adopt this approach because of the business case and the results of this research. It saves so much office time in managing school meals' money and will also increase revenue for school catering. This approach is far more likely to provide a long term future for school catering. The other lesson to learn is that parents want information via websites and emails from schools. In the authors opinion websites for school caterers should be clearly promoted on all marketing materials and areas like social media will play a more important part in years to come. Local authorities should either have a clearly defined area on the authority's website or a standalone one. By adopting new media school caterers will have much greater engagement with parents and young customers.
- 4. Parents' high satisfaction levels of a school meal.** It is very gratifying to see the high satisfaction of parents with the school meals service at their school. This is the second time the research has identified this. It clearly recognises all the hard work and investment that has been





made in school catering over recent years. The concern the author has is that this work is not eroded in the future. If this were to happen then the country will lose one of its best opportunities to educate children about food and a balanced diet. In this way we are far more likely to reverse the obesity epidemic that is currently gripping this country.

- 5. Parents want pupils kept safe and secure at lunch time.** This means them not having the ability to buy meals and snacks that are usually seen as unhealthy, from local restaurants that often have special prices and promotions at lunch times. If they have the opportunity to enjoy a healthy school meal on a regular basis then as the Birds Eye research has identified they will have more energy and enthusiasm for the second part of the school day.
- 6. Staggered lunch times to reduce queuing.** It is well known that the biggest issue in Secondary Schools is the queuing for a school lunch. Students hate it and this is often cited as the main reason for not having a school meal. It is hoped that this research finding will promote the message of introducing staggered lunch times much higher up in the agendas of Secondary School Headteachers.
- 7. Issues about cooking at school and home.** Parents say they are cooking with their children at home but still want them to learn to cook at school and know where food comes from and when it is in season.
- 8. Discrepancy of responses around the links between food and good health.** There are mixed messages from parents. 97.2% said they had enough information about the link between food and good health while 46% said that better information would help their family and 27.9% were confused about the subject. This may be less of a surprise when a lot of the information is coming from the Internet and the media. It is encouraging to see the awareness of Change4life (74.1%) and that 54.1% of these had visited their website.

The author hopes that this research will provide further debate about the issues it identifies and make a positive contribution to the review of school catering that is currently underway by John Vincent and Henry Dimbleby from the Leon restaurant chain.

## 6.0 Overall Results from 2012 with comparisons to 2011

This year we split the survey into different sections and put relevant questions together. This means that this part of the report has been split into the following:

1. Accessing information and payment.
2. About the current school meals service.
3. Educating children about food.
4. About the food provision at home.
5. About the link between food and good health.
6. About Government and school policy.
7. Other issues identified by Birds Eye.

### 6.1 Accessing information and payment

923 respondents said they were entitled to claim a free school meal for their child. 4.9% said they never took up their entitlement. A further 13.3% did not have a school meal every day of the week as they were entitled to do so.

37.6% of parents and guardians said they did not get enough information about school meals. The next table shows the information that they require in priority order:

Position	The information required	% of respondents
1	The menu this week	92.3
2	How healthy eating is promoted to children	91.1
3	The nutritional content of the meals	87.9
4	How caterers work with teachers to educate children about food	84.6
5	Details of the menu today	84.5
6	How healthy eating is made fun	82.4
7	Details of the ingredients used	80.2
8	Information about theme days	60.2



Here is how respondents want to receive information about school meals; 81.0% a website giving lots of information; 80.6% wanted an electronic newsletter; 77% emails from school; 61.4% posters around school; 45.7% a regular paper newsletter from school; 37.5% a phone app; 22.2% daily news updates via twitter and other social media.

The next question showed that 63% of respondents wouldn't use social media for gaining information about school meals. Of those that would use social media; 33% would use Facebook; 9.9% twitter; 4.1% Google plus; 3.1% YouTube; 0.9% Instagram; 0.3% flickr and Pinterest; 0.1% Foursquare.

Continuing on the social media theme the research also showed that 40% of respondent's children had a social media presence and of these:

- 95.1% of respondents' children had a facebook account.
- 34.0% of respondents' children had a YouTube account.
- 31.1% had twitter and 7.7% Instagram.

When respondents were asked what was the best way to pay for a school meal 81.7% said paying online; 8.5% using a PayPoint facility; 4.0% using direct debit; 3.8% sending in cash to school; 1.2% sending in a cheque and 0.8% text message.

The reasons respondents said that they wanted to pay online were: it is more convenient for me 74.7%; I know the money is spent on a school meal rather than other things such as confectionery 62.3%; less risk to my child e.g. no bullying 43.2%; I am reminded when I need to top up my child's account 42.9%.

## 6.2 About the current school meals service

90.7% of parents said they were very happy or happy with the level of school meal provision for their child. This is an outstanding level of satisfaction for this type of research.

One of the key elements of the research is what parents think about the current level of catering service they are receiving. In 2012 we not only asked them to rate the current service but also asked parents what were the most important considerations when choosing to buy a school meal. The answers have been shown in the following table. In the first column we have shown the results for this year and the figures in brackets are 2011. In the last column we have shown the gap between current service delivery and parent expectations.

<b>Standard of service</b>	<b>% of respondents that said the current service was good or OK (The figures in brackets are from the 2011 survey)</b>	<b>% of respondents saying this standard was an important buying criteria for a school meal</b>	<b>Gap between first two columns that show current service rating against buying criteria</b>
Value for money	87.4 (87.4)	57.9	29.5
Quality of the food	87.9 (87.8)	72.0	15.9
Choice each day	82.8 (82)	40.8	42.0
How it looks	79.9 (79.1)	8.5	71.4
Taste of the food	83.8 (84.1)	39.2	44.6
Day to day variety	81.0 (79.8)	26.0	55.0
Help from the kitchen staff	72.7 (72)	8.8	63.9
Help from midday supervisors	70.5 (67.8)	7.5	63.0
Availability of familiar dishes	83.2 (82.6)	10.1	73.1
Availability of healthy options	81.9 (83.1)	43.1	38.8
Availability of ethnic dishes	57.9 (57.6)	3.3	54.6
Availability of vegetarian dishes	62.7 (61.5)	5.1	57.6
Availability of dishes for medical diets	41.7 (38.8)	2.0	39.7
Size of portion	71.9 (73.9)	17.5	54.4
Ease of payment	93.3 (93.9)	35.1	58.2
Daily menu information	74.7 (70.8)	13.6	61.1
Availability of water	77.8 (76)	18.4	59.4
Overall impression	89.1 (89.4)	11.2	77.9

There are a number of issues that come out of the table above, they are:

- The overall figures are generally similar to the last survey and the overall rating by parents about school meals is excellent at 89.4% saying good and OK.
- In all areas the service delivery is exceeding the considerations that parents make when choosing a school meal. This accounts for the high level of parental satisfaction with the school meal shown in this survey.
- There is a very high number of parents saying their overall impression of school meals was very good or good. This confirms the finding from last year that parents have seen the standards of school meals rise over recent years.
- When promoting the benefits of school meals caterers should concentrate on: ease of payment and value for money; quality and taste of the meals served; choice and day to day variety on the menu; availability of familiar dishes for children and the availability of healthy eating. This approach will help match the benefits that parents want with the benefits delivered by the school catering service.
- One concern might be that only 41.7% of respondents were happy about the availability of dishes for medical diets.
- The other lower score related to the availability of ethnic dishes as only 57.9% of respondents were happy or very happy with this. The provision of ethnic dishes does vary across the country and so this issue will vary from one local authority to another and even one school to a nearby school.

The Birds Eye research with children showed the relevance and importance of a school meal in the whole school day, for example:

1. A disappointing meal can set the tone for a less productive afternoon. This could be because of hunger pangs, feelings of frustration, disappointment and having an emotional low.
2. A successful meal is one which is enjoyable and easy to eat, gives energy so that they enjoy their play time and are focused on learning in the afternoon.







Birds Eye identified five key measures for achieving school meal success, they are;

1. No hidden “nasties” and if added vegetables and other healthy ingredients are added then they must be undetectable.
2. They must be popular with the majority of pupils. This can be a challenge as young female children have a smaller appetite and are nervous about getting their choice wrong while males are slow eaters and portion size can daunt them. Older females may have some fussy eaters or those who are trying vegetarian food or looking more at the healthy options. The older males are genuinely hungry, concerned about portion size, meat lovers with some fans of spicy food.
3. They need to be similar to the food they have at home.
4. They should be a pleasure and easy to eat. The way the food looks, having the right colour such as all white meat in fish fingers, texture and blandness are all significant. As Julie Davey, from Birds Eye, said, “Food that passes this forensic inspection first time is ordered with significantly higher confidence and anticipation levels on subsequent sittings.”
5. We must empower children to self-select from the full choice so it is more exciting and inviting. A system like ParentPay enables children to achieve this by enabling parents and their children to view menus and select desired meal choices in advance. Authorities and schools use different methods, they are: a pick and mix approach where pupils decide when they want to eat; a termly or half termly commitment which is more common in the North and can deliver a better nutritional content over several weeks; choosing the sandwich option instead of the hot meal offered.

43.3% of respondents did not want any extra catering provision at school while 33.6% wanted a mid morning break provided, 25.0% asked for a breakfast service, 15.3% agreed with hot afternoon snacks at an after school club, and 8.5% wanted a lunch as part of a summer school.

## 6.3 Educating children about food

Parents were asked a series of statements that they could agree or disagree with and then say whether their opinion was strongly or slightly held. In the table below we have shown the statements and the percentage of respondents that said they agreed slightly or strongly.

Statement	% saying they agreed
All schoolchildren should learn to cook as part of the National Curriculum	98.0
All schoolchildren should learn where food comes from as part of the National Curriculum	98.2
All schoolchildren should learn about food in season as part of the National Curriculum	95.2
All schoolchildren should have the opportunity to grow food in a school garden	93.4
Teachers will need extra support and training if the above is included in the National Curriculum	93.9

74.1% of parents were aware of the Government's Change4life programme and 54.1% of these had visited their website.

## 6.4 About the food provision at home

6.2% of children leave home without breakfast. This may be a low figure but it still represents many thousands of children who will not be able to learn as much as they could in morning lessons because their blood sugar will be low and so they will struggle to maintain attention.

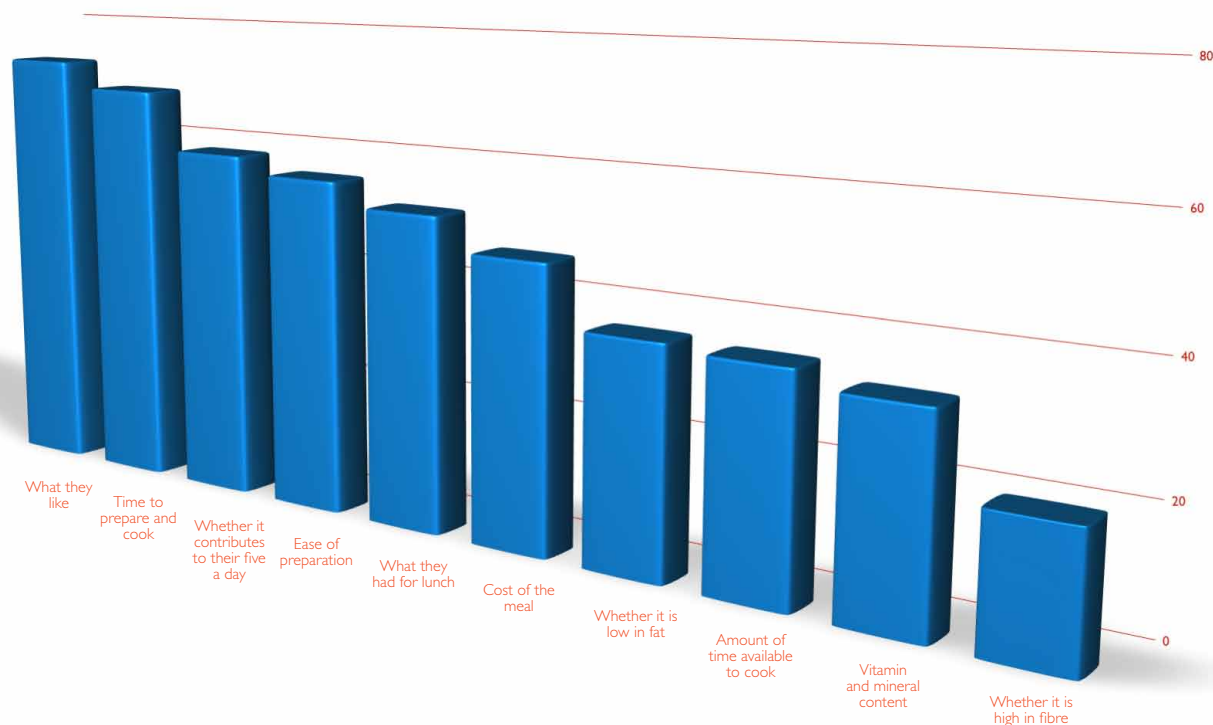
66.4% of respondents said they cooked with their child on a regular basis that is two to three times a week. On average parents were saying they or a family member cooked 4.7 times a week with their children. This was using fresh or raw ingredients.

There are several ways that the diet of a young person might be measured. These could be chip consumption, the portions of fruit and vegetables eaten each day, the amount of water drunk or the length of exercise taken.

- In 2012 the weekly average for the consumption of chips was 1.41 compared to 1.34 times in 2011.
- This research shows that the average consumption of fruit and vegetables was 3.3 per day. This compares to the recommendation of five per day and 3.25 portions in 2011.
- In 2011 the number of glasses of water drunk by respondents' children was just under three glasses. In 2012 the figure is 3.2 and has risen slightly but is well below the recommendation of six per day.
- In 2011 the length of time children spent exercising, including playing outside with friends, cycling, taking part in sport and walking to and from school was one hour six minutes. In 2012 this was exactly the same.

11.6% of respondents said they were concerned about their child's weight compared to 14.2% in 2011. Out of these 82.3% said their child was overweight and 17.7% underweight.

These are the factors that respondents considered, in priority order, when they were deciding to plan a meal at home.



Factors involved with the decision	% respondents
What they like	72.7
Time to prepare and cook	68.3
Whether it contributes to their five a day	58.5
Ease of preparation	55.8
What they had for lunch	52.0
Cost of the meal	46.7
Whether it is low in fat	37.0
Amount of time available to cook	36.1
Vitamin and mineral content	33.6
Whether it is high in fibre	21.0

It is interesting to note there is only one of the healthy eating influencers about what to eat at home in the top three respondents' choices. This is five-a-day. The other three are in the bottom four. The main factors in choosing what to eat at home are what they like, the time available, ease of preparation, what they had for lunch and the cost.

## 6.5 About the link between food and good health

The first question in this section asked respondents to say whether they agreed or disagreed with three statements about the link between food and good health and if their opinion was slightly or strongly held. The table below shows those that said they agreed slightly or strongly.

Statements	% of respondents agreeing
I have enough information about the link between food and good health	97.2
The information I receive is confusing	27.9
If I had better information about the link then it would help my family	46.0

It is interesting and confusing to see that although 97.2% say they have enough information about the link between food and good health, 46.0% said if the information was better it would help their family and 27.9% who said the information was confusing.

This table shows, in priority order, where parents would access information about the link between food and good health.

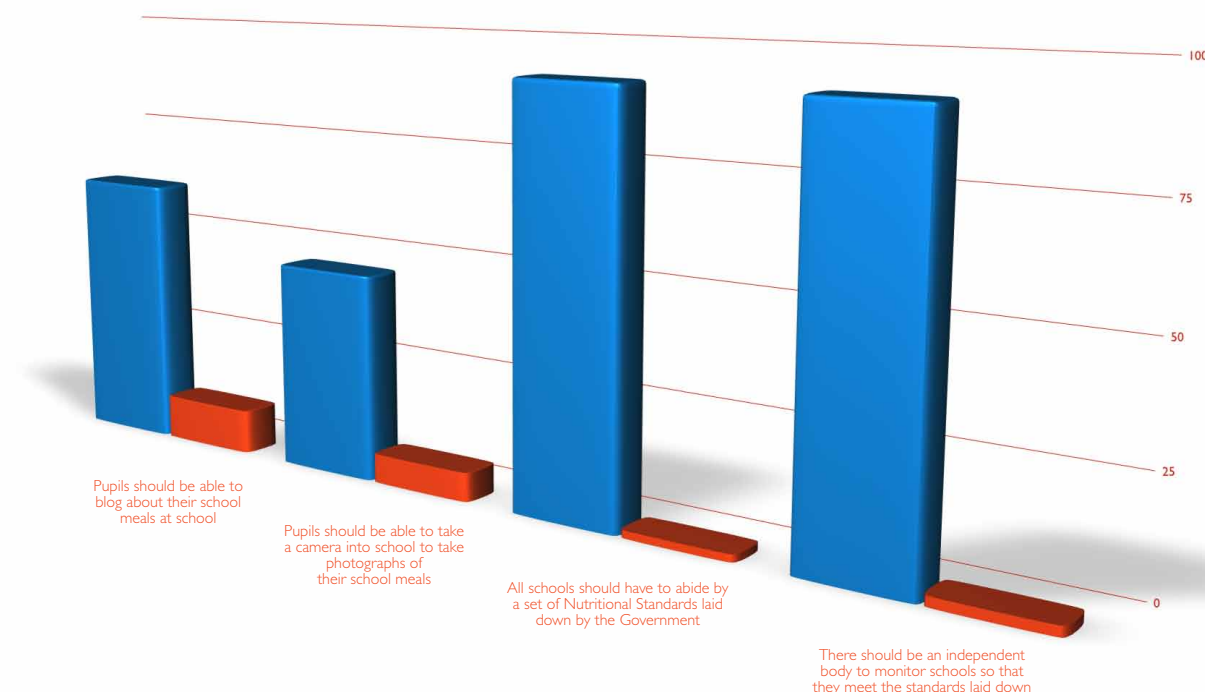
Locations	% of respondents
Via search engine	67.4
Change4life website	43.4
The media	28.6
My child's school	26.2
Doctor's surgery	25.5
Local hospital	5.0
I would not know where to look	4.3

It is interesting and perhaps concerning to note that the number one choice is the Internet followed by Change4life and the media is in third. The concern is that traditional sources such as the doctor and hospital are well down the list.



## 6.6 About Government and school policy

In this section we started by asking respondents a series of statements. This table shows the percentage of respondents that said they agreed slightly or strongly with them. The figure in brackets shows the percentage that said they did not know.



Statements	% agreeing
Pupils should be able to blog about their school meals at school	<b>61.1 (10.0)</b>
Pupils should be able to take a camera into school to take photographs of their school meals	<b>46.6 (6.5)</b>
All schools should have to abide by a set of Nutritional Standards laid down by the Government	<b>92.3 (1.7)</b>
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so that they meet the standards laid down	<b>92.1 (2.2)</b>

The figures in brackets or shown in red in the graph are those that said they did not know. There is strong support from respondents about all schools having to abide by Nutritional Standards and having them monitored independently. There is a lower level of support in favour of children blogging and only 46.6% agree about children having a camera to take photographs of their school meals. This is interesting after the recent example of the “Never Seconds” blog that generated interest around the world and raised many thousands of pounds for charity.

Only 41.1% of respondents said their child’s school was meeting the Nutritional Standards while 57.2% did not know. State schools have a legal obligation to comply while it is discretionary at Academies. 37.7% of respondents from Academies said that they did comply with the legislation while 60.3% did not know. It is not known how many Academies are currently complying with the standards and LACA has already raised its concern about this issue.

54.1% of respondents thought it was a good idea to give all Primary Pupils a free meal. This has been trialled in some areas of the country but there are no plans to make it possible across the country. This is due to the costs involved.

In recent years a number of ideas have been put forward on how to improve school meals still further. At the forefront has been Jamie Oliver and in this table we have shown what parents think about the various ideas he has recently put forward in his School Meals Manifesto.

Statements	% agreeing
Schools should be financially rewarded if more pupils have a school meal	63.0
Schools monetary reward should increase according to the % increase in the uptake of school meals	65.9
There should be extra money for catering where the school is in an area of deprivation	83.1
Secondary Schools should have a staggered lunch time so that queuing is reduced	95.5
No teenage students, except 6th formers, should be allowed out at lunch time	73.4
6th formers should not be allowed out at lunch time	35.5

The most popular solutions that come out of this question are:

1. Giving more money to schools for catering if uptake is increased.
2. More money should be available for schools in deprived areas.
3. Secondary Schools should have a staggered lunch time to reduce the major issue of queuing.
4. Years 7 to 11 should not be allowed out at lunch time but the privilege should be available for 6th formers.

## 6.7 Other issues identified by Birds Eye

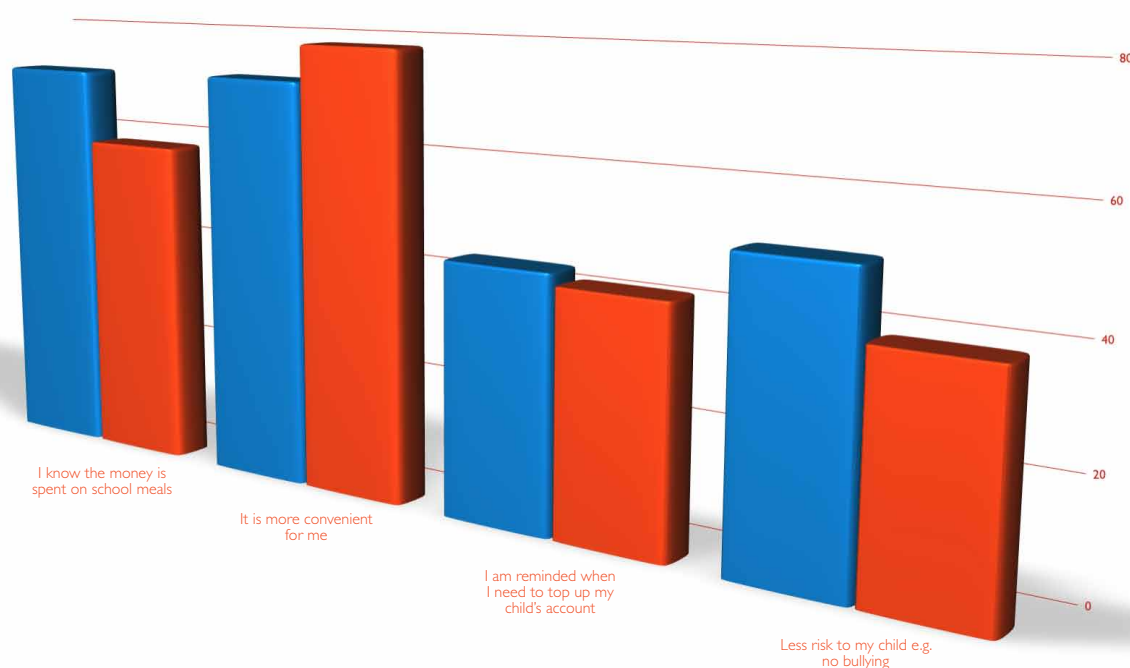
There were three other issues that came out of the Birds Eye research, they were:

1. The way menus were presented has a significant bearing on appetite and anticipated pleasure. For example pictures of the meal work on taste buds, simple language is important for younger pupils, the menu should speed up choice as time is of the essence and there is the potential for two menus. One to send home to parents and the other for use in school.
2. While children understand health, their choices are guided by taste. We mustn't force healthy food as the pupils will rebel and will be counter-productive. By giving a sense of choice children are more likely to accept vegetables and fruit on their plates.
3. Brands can build a bridge between home and school. A brand can drive the perceived quality of the food and they neutralise any potential risks of inferior cooking in the school kitchen.

## 7.0 Comparison between Academies and State Maintained Schools 2012

This is the first time the LACA/ParentPay research has been able to filter the results to show the differences between Academies and State Maintained Schools. In this section we have identified the variances between the two sectors. However, it should be highlighted at the start that the results were generally very similar; they are:

- 9.5% of respondents had a free meal in Academies as against 5.6% in State Maintained.
- The average spend in both sectors was £2.00.
- 43.4% of Academy respondents did not get enough information about school meals compared to 36.4% in State Maintained.
- The information required is similar in both sectors with the top three being: menu information this week; how healthy eating is promoted to children; nutritional content of the meal.
- The number one way of receiving that information in State Maintained is via a regular electronic newsletter while in Academies it is a website.
- Both sectors want to pay online for school meals.
- There is a difference in the reasons for paying online as shown in this table.



Importance of paying online	% Academies	% State
I know the money is spent on school meals	71.5	58.3
It is more convenient for me	72.0	78.5
I am reminded when I need to top up my child's account	44.1	42.1
Less risk to my child e.g. no bullying	51.1	39.7

- The table shows that Academy respondents were much more concerned about knowing their money was spent on a school meal and that there was less risk to their child.
- 62.3% of Academy respondents would not use social media to find out about school meals compared to 65.4% in State Maintained.
- Many more children in Academies have a social media account (55.7%) compared to 34.0% in State Maintained. The usage of social media sites was very similar.
- The next table shows the top four service ratings were the same for both sectors.

Top four standards for service ratings	% Academies	% State
Ease of payment	93.0	93.7
Overall impression	88.5	89.6
Value for money	86.2	89.1
Quality of the food	88.3	87.7

- The satisfaction level of school meals was very similar with 91.1% of State Maintained saying they were happy or very happy compared to 89.4% in Academies.
- The top three buying considerations are the same: quality of the food; value for money; availability of healthy options.
- More respondents in Academies wanted a breakfast service at 27.7% compared to 22.9% in State Maintained.
- When asked about having the opportunity to grow food in a school garden, 94.1% in State Maintained said they agreed compared to 91.8% in Academies.
- Slightly more of Academy respondents (53.7%) had visited the Change4Life website compared to state maintained (50.2%).
- 7.5% of children in Academies go to school without breakfast compared to 5.6% in State Maintained.
- Although the figures are very similar the next table compares some of the healthy living issues for Academies and State Maintained.



Questions	Academies	State
Do you/family cook with your child?	<b>66.5% said yes</b>	<b>65.4% said yes</b>
How many times a week do you prepare a meal from fresh ingredients?	<b>4.73 times</b>	<b>4.72</b>
How often does your child have chips each week?	<b>1.4 times</b>	<b>1.3 times</b>
How many portions of fresh fruit/vegetables did your child have yesterday?	<b>3.2 portions</b>	<b>3.4 portions</b>
How many glasses of water did your child have yesterday?	<b>3.2 glasses</b>	<b>3.2 glasses</b>
How much exercise did your child have yesterday?	<b>67 minutes</b>	<b>65 minutes</b>
Are you currently concerned about the weight of your child?	<b>12.3% said yes</b>	<b>9.7% said yes</b>

- 12.9% of State Maintained respondents said they were concerned about their child being underweight and 87.1% said overweight. This compares to 13.7% and 86.3% respectively in Academies.
- When deciding about what to eat at home the top three factors in both sectors are the same: what they like; time to prepare and cook; whether it contributes to their five-a-day. Considering the last point it may be surprising to see that the average number of portions of fruit and vegetables was well below the recommended average in both sectors.
- 43.4% of state maintained respondents said if they had better information about the link between food and good health it would help their family. This compares to 46.8% with Academy respondents.
- Both groups would gain their information about the link between food and good health from: the Internet; Change4life website; and the media.
- There has been a lot of concern raised by many people, including LACA, about Academies not having to abide by the Government's Nutritional Standards. It is very interesting to see that 60.3% of respondents in Academies did not know if Nutritional Standards applied to their child's school compared to 55.9% in State Maintained.
- The respondents from both sectors had very similar results to the overall situation regarding the issues raised by Jamie Oliver:

## 8.0 Comparisons between Primary and Secondary Schools age groups 2011-2012

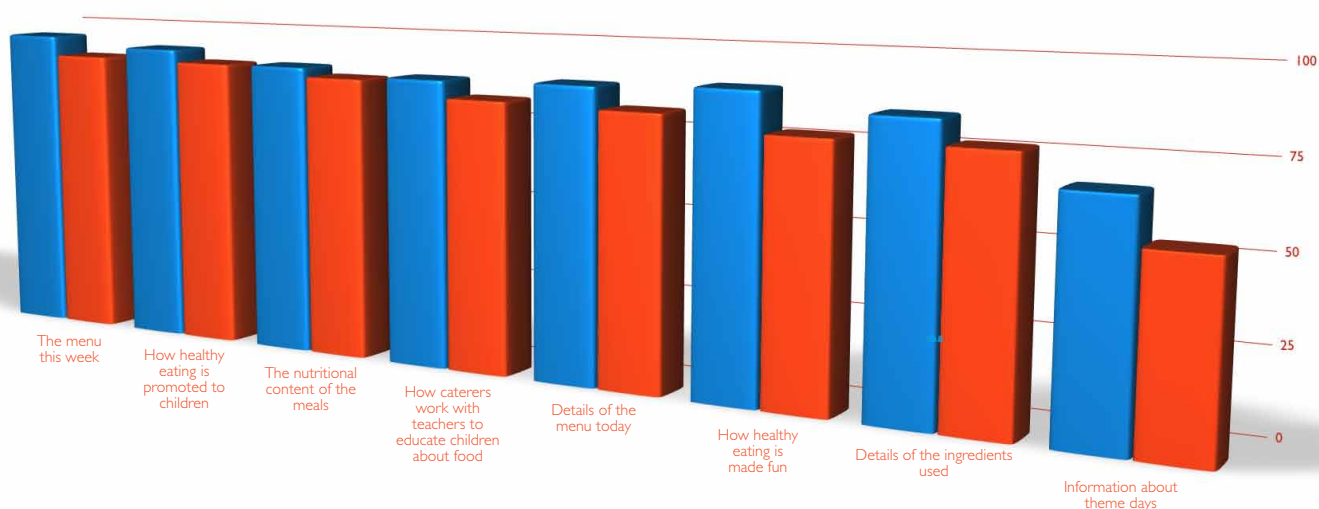
In this section we have compared the results by age and the results show the variances between Primary and Secondary Schools. Where appropriate and possible we have provided the figures from last year in brackets.

3.9% (2.4%) of Primary respondents were entitled to a free meal compared to 10.2% (4.3%) from Secondary respondents.

On average a Primary child had a meal 3.7 (3.5) times per week compared to Secondary who had a meal 3.8 (3.9) times.

28.6% (33.0%) of Primary respondents said they did not get enough information about school meals compared to 43.6% (47.0) in Secondary. This suggests the information to parents is improving.

The table below shows the information that parents want, split between Primary and Secondary Schools and the overall result for this question.



Position Overall	The information required	% of Primary Respondents	% of Secondary Respondents
1	The menu this week	96.0	89.8
2	How healthy eating is promoted to children	93.3	89.4
3	The nutritional content of the meals	89.6	86.8
4	How caterers work with teachers to educate children about food	87.8	82.5
5	Details of the menu today	88.4	81.7
6	How healthy eating is made fun	89.6	77.5
7	Details of the ingredients used	84.6	77.3
8	Information about theme days	68.2	54.7

This table clearly shows that the way school meals are promoted varies between these two market segments and the promotional benefits need to have a different emphasis.

The next table identifies how the two market segments want to receive the information. The figures in brackets are from last year:

How respondents want to receive information	% Primary	% Secondary
A website giving lots of information	79.8 (37.8)	81.7 (42.2)
A regular electronic newsletter from school	80.5	80.6
Emails from school	77.8 (66.6)	76.5 (67.0)
Posters around the school	58.1	63.6
A regular paper newsletter from school	51.5 (39.0)	41.7 (23.2)
A phone application	39.8 (7.4)	36.1 (7.3)
Daily news updates via social media	21.0 (4.0)	23.0 (3.8)

These figures clearly show that school caterers need to be providing more information via new media. For example the growth in requests for information via social media has risen from 3.8% to 21.0% in Primary and from 3.8% to 23.0% in Secondary in one year. For a website the importance has risen from 37.8% in 2011 to 79.8% in Primary respondents this year. This is repeated in Secondary respondents where the figure has risen from 42.2% to 81.7% in 2012.

An overwhelming number of respondents still want to pay online as can be seen in the following table.

How respondents want to pay	% Primary	% Secondary
Paying online	82.5 (80.5)	81.2 (81.5)
Using PayPoint	6.5 (6.6)	9.9 (8.5)
Sending in cash to the school	3.5 (4.0)	4.0 (0.9)
Direct Debit	5.0 (3.7)	3.2 (1.9)
Text message	0.7 (0.2)	0.9 (0.3)
Sending a cheque to the school	1.7 (3.2)	0.8 (0.9)

The reasons for wanting to pay online are shown in the next table.

Why is it important to pay online?	% Primary	% Secondary
It is more convenient for me	81.5 (88.5)	70.2 (77.7)
I know the money is spent on a school meal and not on other things like confectionery	44.0 (32.2)	74.5 (68.8)
I am reminded when to top up	41.5 (35.3)	43.9 (32.8)
Less risk to my child e.g. bullying	28.1 (24.0)	53.3 (50.2)

It is interesting to see the difference between the two market segments, primary respondents use online payment for its convenience and for making sure money goes on the school meal. Secondary respondents put those in reverse order and are much more concerned about the possibility of risk to their child such as bullying.

64.7% of Primary respondents would not use social media to find out about school meals and in the Secondary respondents this figure was 61.8%. However, this suggests that a large proportion would be happy to gain information in this way and this has been confirmed by other figures. The top sites in both sectors are facebook and twitter. With the children of respondents there is a considerable number using YouTube. It is 21.7% in Primary and 34.7% in Secondary.

The next table shows the rating of the service, those saying it was either good or OK, and compares the results between Primary and Secondary Schools.

<b>Standard of service</b>	<b>% Primary</b>	<b>% Secondary</b>
Value for money	<b>89.4 (90.5)</b>	<b>86.1 (86.2)</b>
Quality of the food	<b>87.6 (87.2)</b>	<b>88.1 (88.1)</b>
Choice each day	<b>85.9 (83.8)</b>	<b>80.7 (81.2)</b>
How it looks	<b>75.2 (72.8)</b>	<b>82.9 (81.7)</b>
Taste of the food	<b>80.4 (78.4)</b>	<b>86.1 (86.4)</b>
Day to day variety	<b>86.1 (86.2)</b>	<b>77.5 (77.1)</b>
Help from the kitchen staff	<b>72.2 (70.6)</b>	<b>73.1 (72.7)</b>
Help from midday supervisors	<b>74.0 (71.5)</b>	<b>68.1 (66.2)</b>
Availability of familiar dishes	<b>85.4 (85.0)</b>	<b>81.7 (81.7)</b>
Availability of healthy options	<b>86.6 (87.6)</b>	<b>78.8 (81.2)</b>
Availability of ethnic dishes	<b>60.8 (59.8)</b>	<b>55.9 (56.6)</b>
Availability of vegetarian dishes	<b>69.4 (69.3)</b>	<b>58.1 (58.3)</b>
Availability of dishes for medical diets	<b>41.4 (38.7)</b>	<b>42.0 (38.7)</b>
Size of portion	<b>66.5 (66.4)</b>	<b>75.6 (77.0)</b>
Ease of payment	<b>93.8 (95.0)</b>	<b>93.0 (93.3)</b>
Daily menu information	<b>79.5 (76.4)</b>	<b>71.4 (68.5)</b>
Availability of water	<b>81.1 (81.4)</b>	<b>75.5 (73.8)</b>
Overall impression	<b>90.6 (91.1)</b>	<b>88.1 (88.7)</b>

In general terms the ratings by respondents are either very similar to last year or have seen a small increase. Considering the high satisfaction levels, identified by the research, this is very encouraging for school caterers. It clearly shows that parents really understand and appreciate the many changes and improvements that have been made by school caterers in the last few years.

92.8% of Primary respondents said they were happy or very happy with the provision of school meals at their school compared to 89.2% in Secondary respondents.

The next question looked at the most important considerations when the decision for a child to have a school meal is made. In the following table we compare the buying criteria between Primary and Secondary respondents.

<b>Standard of service</b>	<b>% Primary</b>	<b>% Secondary</b>
Value for money	<b>49.8</b>	<b>63.4</b>
Quality of the food	<b>72.2</b>	<b>71.9</b>
Choice each day	<b>44.6</b>	<b>38.3</b>
How it looks	<b>8.6</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Taste of the food	<b>40.6</b>	<b>38.3</b>
Day to day variety	<b>29.8</b>	<b>23.4</b>
Help from the kitchen staff	<b>10.3</b>	<b>7.8</b>
Help from midday supervisors	<b>10.9</b>	<b>5.2</b>
Availability of familiar dishes	<b>10.8</b>	<b>9.7</b>
Availability of healthy options	<b>44.7</b>	<b>42.0</b>
Availability of ethnic dishes	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.3</b>
Availability of vegetarian dishes	<b>4.7</b>	<b>5.4</b>
Availability of dishes for medical diets	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Size of portion	<b>16.1</b>	<b>18.4</b>
Ease of payment	<b>28.0</b>	<b>39.9</b>
Daily menu information	<b>15.8</b>	<b>12.1</b>
Availability of water	<b>16.3</b>	<b>19.8</b>
Overall impression	<b>12.1</b>	<b>10.6</b>

It is interesting to see that value for money and ease of payment are much more important to Secondary respondents when compared to Primary. With the Primary respondents choice and variety are more important than to Secondary respondents.

Parents were asked what catering services they would like their child's school to provide. The answers are shown in the following table.

Possible catering services	% Primary	% Secondary
Breakfast	18.4	29.6
Mid-morning break	32.2	34.5
Cooked snacks at an after school club	16.8	14.2
Lunch as part of a summer school	8.1	8.1
None of these	41.8	41.8

It would appear that there is a bigger need for breakfast in Secondary Schools. The issue here is that many students are bussed in and they don't usually have time for breakfast before their first lesson starts.

Statement	% Primary	% Secondary
All schoolchildren should learn to cook as part of the National Curriculum	97.7	98.3
All schoolchildren should learn where food comes from as part of the National Curriculum	98.8	97.8
All schoolchildren should learn about food in season as part of the National Curriculum	96.7	94.5
All schoolchildren should have the opportunity to grow food in a school garden	96.6	91.3
Teachers will need extra support and training if the above is included in the National Curriculum	94.5	93.5

The results are similar but growing food at school was more important to Primary Respondents.

75.1% of Primary respondents were aware of Change4Life compared to 73.5% of Secondary respondents. 53.6% of Secondary respondents have visited the Change4Life website compared to 48.2% of Primary respondents. These are very encouraging and show that the majority of respondents are receiving the healthy eating messages.

2.8% (3.9%) of Primary children went to school without breakfast and it rose to 8.5% (15.0%) in Secondary.

66.1% of Primary respondents said they or their family regularly cook with their children compared to 66.6% of Secondary respondents. The frequency of cooking with their children is 4.7 times per week in both sectors.

The research shows that the frequency of eating chips is 1.37 (1.3) times per week in Primary respondents and in Secondary it is 1.43 (1.35).

This table highlights a number of healthy eating issues that have been tracked from last year as you can see in the bracketed figures.

Statement	Primary	Secondary
Number of portions of fresh fruit the child had the day before	<b>3.5 (3.45)</b>	<b>3.0 (3.1)</b>
How many glasses of water the child had the day before	<b>3.3 (3.0)</b>	<b>3.1 (2.9)</b>
The amount of exercise in minutes the child had the day before	<b>70.3 (70.8)</b>	<b>64.2 (66.1)</b>
% of parents that are concerned about the weight of their child	<b>9.1% (10.3%)</b>	<b>13.3% (15.9%)</b>
% of parents that thought their child was underweight	<b>24.4% (4.7%)</b>	<b>14.7% (5.2%)</b>
% of parents that thought their child was overweight	<b>75.6% (4.9)</b>	<b>85.3% (10.6%)</b>

Please note that some of the questions were asked differently this year and so the results in the table above are not directly comparable.

The following table shows the issues that parents take into consideration when planning a meal.

Meal planning consideration	Primary	Secondary
What they like	<b>73.8</b>	<b>71.9</b>
Time to prepare/cook	<b>69.7</b>	<b>67.3</b>
Whether it contributes to their five-a-day	<b>63.0</b>	<b>55.5</b>
What they had for lunch	<b>60.2</b>	<b>46.4</b>
Ease of preparation	<b>56.9</b>	<b>55.2</b>
Cost of the meal	<b>42.2</b>	<b>49.7</b>
Amount of time I have available to cook and shop	<b>36.8</b>	<b>35.7</b>
Vitamin and mineral content	<b>35.8</b>	<b>32.1</b>
Whether it is low in fat	<b>33.8</b>	<b>39.2</b>
Whether it is high in fibre	<b>20.9</b>	<b>21.2</b>

It is interesting to see that what the child had for lunch is more important to Primary parents than Secondary.

25.3% of Primary parents said the information they received about the link between food and good health was confusing compared to 29.8% with Secondary parents. However, where they access this information is very similar i.e. via search engine, Change4Life website and the media.

The last table in this section shows the ideas put forward by Jamie Oliver and the difference between the two sectors. The results showed those that agreed slightly and strongly.

Statements	% Primary	% Secondary
Schools should be financially rewarded if more pupils have a school meal	63.6	62.7
Schools monetary reward should increase according to the % uptake of pupils	65.7	65.9
There should be extra money for catering where schools are in a deprived area	82.2	83.8
Secondary schools should have a staggered lunch time so that queuing is reduced	94.8	96.1
No teenage students, excluding 6th formers, should be allowed out at lunch time	60.9	75.1
6th form students should not be allowed out at lunch time	36.5	34.8

The main difference is whether teenage students, which are not in the 6th form, should be allowed out at lunch time.

## 9.0 Gender differences

In this section we have looked at any significant variances between respondents that had male or female children. Where no comment has been made the results were too similar to make any point.

- 31.9% of males would spend over £2.10 compared to 26.2% of females. However, overall males spend 1p more than females. Both have a meal 3.7 times a week.
- 63.1% of females said they had enough information about school meals compared to 61.8% of males.
- A regular paper newsletter from school was more popular with females (47.0%) compared to males (44.6%).
- 63.6% of male respondents said paying online was important because respondents knew the money was spent on a school meal rather than confectionery compared to females (60.9%). This compares to 60.1% and 55.7% respectively in 2011.



- Females were more likely to use twitter (36.9%) than males (25.9%). Females are also using Instagram (8.4%) against 2.7% by males.
- The overall rating of the school meals service by males is 89.5% compared to 88.8% by females.
- 6.2% of females are influenced by the vegetarian choices compared to 4.2% of males. 18.8% of males are influenced by portion size compared to 15.9% of females.
- 5.6% of males do not have breakfast against 7.0% of females. This compares to 10.7% for males and 13.0% for females in 2011.
- 63.3% of males cook with their families on a regular basis (two or three times a week) compared to 69.3% of females.
- Males have chips 1.45 times a week where females have them 1.37 times. In 2011 the figures were 1.39 times and 1.3 times respectively.
- Females ate 3.37 portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday compared to 3.23 portions by males.
- Males take approximately 68 and a half minutes of exercise compared to nearly 65 minutes by females.
- 12.1% of respondents who had a female child were concerned about the weight of their child compared to 11.2% of males.
- 15.2% of females were concerned about their child being underweight compared to 19.9% of males. 84.8% were concerned about their female child being overweight compared to 80.1% of males.
- In 2011, 3.9% of females thought their child was underweight compared to 6.1% of males. 8.7% of females were concerned about being overweight compared to 5.9% of males.
- 47.1% of females thought pupils should be able to take in a camera to school to take photographs of their school meals compared to 36.2% males.
- 64.4% of male respondents thought schools should be financially rewarded if more pupils have a school meal compared to 61.5% of females

## 10.0 Regional Variations

Over the next few pages you can see how each television region compared with the overall results in the key data from the research. The information is provided in a set of tables and underneath there are further interesting facts that have been identified in the analysis. Please note only the regions where the number of responses was over 1% have been included. Most of the figures are percentages.

### Anglia

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	54.0	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£1.90	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	38.0	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	81.5	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	82.4	80.6
Want to pay online	83.1	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	34.0	33.3
Would like information via Twitter	9.1	9.9
Child has a social media account	54.3	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	90.1	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	90.4	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	25.2	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	98.7	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	77.0	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	52.7	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	6.0	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	66.7	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	4.8	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.34	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.3	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	3.3	3.2
Average exercise each day	One hour 4 minutes	One hour 6 minutes
Concerned about the weight of child	11.2	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	89.9	92.3

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	59.6	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	92.7	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	51.5	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	71.9	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	95.5	95.5

- The average cost of a school meal was lowest in Anglia.
- The regions which had the highest number of children with a social media account were Wales and Anglia.
- Pupils in Anglia and London are taking the least exercise daily but this is still over the recommended amount.

## Central

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	55.1	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£2.03	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	34.5	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	81.4	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	81.3	80.6
Want to pay online	81.0	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	32.9	33.3
Would like information via Twitter	10.1	9.9
Child has a social media account	31.4	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	90.7	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	91.4	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	25.1	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	98.2	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	74.0	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	52.7	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	5.2	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	65.1	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	4.5	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.35	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.9	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	3.1	3.2
Average exercise each day	<b>One hour 8 minutes</b>	<b>One hour 6 minutes</b>
Concerned about the weight of child	10.6	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	92.7	92.3
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	54.8	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	92.2	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	49.1	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	73.0	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	95.6	95.5

- The regions which had the lowest number of children with a social media account were West and Central.
- The highest average number of portions of fruit and vegetables eaten daily was in the Central region.

## Granada

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	71.6	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£2.04	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	44.1	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	83.6	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	81.3	80.6
Want to pay online	80.6	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	36.2	33.3
Would like information via Twitter	12.3	9.9
Child has a social media account	51.2	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	88.3	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	88.7	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	27.3	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	98.6	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	76.7	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	51.3	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	8.0	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	64.4	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	4.4	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.54	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.1	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	2.9	3.2
Average exercise each day	<b>One hour 7 minutes</b>	<b>One hour 6 minutes</b>
Concerned about the weight of child	11.5	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	91.4	92.3
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	58.3	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	92.5	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	54.7	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	74.3	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	96.8	95.5

- It was in the regions of Tyne Tees and Granada that the most pupils had a school lunch five days a week.
- Facebook as a school meals communication tool was most popular in Wales and Granada.
- Twitter as a school meals communication tool was most popular in Wales and Granada.
- The regions with the lowest overall impression of school meals were London and Granada.
- It was in the regions of Granada and London that parents most wanted their child's school to provide Breakfast Clubs.
- The regions where the highest percentage of pupils went to school without breakfast was Granada and London.
- The highest average weekly chip consumption was in Wales and Granada.
- The lowest average number of portions of fruit and vegetables eaten daily was in Granada.
- The lowest average number of glasses of water drunk each day was in Granada.

## London

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	65.1	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£2.06	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	40.0	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	80.3	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	79.6	80.6
Want to pay online	81.8	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	32.8	33.3
Would like information via Twitter	10.2	9.9
Child has a social media account	37.4	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	86.6	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	89.2	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	27.3	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	97.7	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	67.8	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	50.0	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	7.8	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	67.7	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	4.9	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.42	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.19	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	3.5	3.2
Average exercise each day	<b>One hour 4 minutes</b>	<b>One hour 6 minutes</b>
Concerned about the weight of child	14.2	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	92.2	92.3
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	56.8	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	92.5	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	60.9	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	76.0	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	95.1	95.5



- The regions with the lowest overall impression of school meals were London and Granada.
- It was in the regions of Granada and London that parents most wanted their child's school to provide Breakfast Clubs.
- The regions where the highest percentage of pupils went to school without breakfast was Granada and London.
- London had the highest number of times a week that a parent prepares a meal from fresh ingredients.
- The highest average number of glasses of water drunk each day was in London.
- Pupils in Anglia and London are taking the least exercise daily but this is still over the recommended amount.
- Parents in London were the most concerned about the weight of their child.
- The region where the highest percentage of parents said that all pupils should be given a free meal was London.
- Parents in London felt the strongest that teenage students, excluding sixth formers, should not be allowed out at lunch time.

## Meridian

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	48.8	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£2.06	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	35.7	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	80.7	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	80.0	80.6
Want to pay online	81.4	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	34.3	33.3
Would like information Twitter	8.6	9.9
Child has a social media account	44.8	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	92.2	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	92.2	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	22.1	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	98.8	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	76.2	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	51.5	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	5.0	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	63.6	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	3.7	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.28	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.5	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	3.4	3.2
Average exercise each day	<b>One hour 8 minutes</b>	<b>One hour 6 minutes</b>
Concerned about the weight of child	11.1	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	95.2	92.3
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	59.0	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	92.1	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	48.7	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	74.2	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	95.8	95.5

- The regions with the highest overall impression of school meals were Wales and Meridian.
- The lowest average weekly chip consumption was in Meridian.
- The view that schools should have to abide by a set of Nutritional Standards laid down by the Government was strongest in the Meridian region.

## Tyne Tees

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	76.4	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£2.06	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	33.5	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	82.5	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	80.8	80.6
Want to pay online	82.5	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	29.2	33.3
Would like information via Twitter	9.9	9.9
Child has a social media account	37.4	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	90.5	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	93.2	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	21.9	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	99.3	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	81.0	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	81.0	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	4.3	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	67.1	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	4.7	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.44	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.42	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	3.2	3.2
Average exercise each day	<b>One hour 10 minutes</b>	<b>One hour 6 minutes</b>
Concerned about the weight of child	9.9	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	93.4	92.3
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	57.3	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	91.9	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	56.8	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	73.9	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	97.8	95.5

- It was in the regions of Tyne Tees and Granada that the most pupils had a school lunch five days a week.
- In Tyne Tees the highest percentage of parents agreed their child should learn to cook at school.
- In Tyne Tees the highest percentage of parents agreed that all children should have the opportunity to grow food in a school garden.
- Awareness of Change4life was highest in the West Country, Tyne Tees and Yorkshire.
- Pupils in Tyne Tees are taking the most exercise daily.
- Parents in Tyne Tees felt the strongest that Secondary Schools should have a staggered lunch time so that queuing is reduced.

## Wales

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	71.0	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£2.07	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	46.4	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	87.2	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	78.7	80.6
Want to pay online	82.6	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	41.0	33.3
Would like information via Twitter	13.9	9.9
Child has a social media account	58.7	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	92.6	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	91.4	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	26.3	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	95.3	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	64.2	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	52.2	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	5.2	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	68.8	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	4.4	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.64	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.2	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	2.9	3.2
Average exercise each day	One hour 7 minutes	One hour 6 minutes
Concerned about the weight of child	13.6	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	91.2	92.3
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	67.2	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	91.3	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	46.2	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	72.9	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	93.7	95.5

- The average cost of a school meal was highest in Wales.
- The region that was least happy that they received enough information about school meals was Wales.
- The region that most wanted to receive information via a website was Wales.
- Yorkshire was the region that had the highest number saying 'online' was the best way to pay for a school meal followed by Wales.
- Facebook as a school meals communication tool was most popular in Wales and Granada.
- Twitter as a school meals communication tool was most popular in Wales and Granada.
- The regions which had the highest number of children with a social media account were Wales and Anglia.
- The regions with the highest overall impression of school meals were Wales and Meridian.
- It was in the West Country followed by Wales where the most parents or other family members cooked with their child on a regular basis.
- The highest average weekly chip consumption was in Wales and Granada.

## West

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	45.5	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£2.05	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	31.0	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	78.5	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	81.8	80.6
Want to pay online	81.3	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	30.3	33.3
Would like information via Twitter	8.1	9.9
Child has a social media account	25.5	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	88.7	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	93.6	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	21.3	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	98.1	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	78.6	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	49.8	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	4.9	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	66.4	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	4.7	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.36	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.5	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	3.2	3.2
Average exercise each day	One hour 9 minutes	One hour 6 minutes
Concerned about the weight of child	9.9	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	91.9	92.3
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	51.0	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	90.7	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	48.2	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	70.5	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	93.7	95.5



- It was in the region of the West that the least pupils had a school lunch five days a week.
- The region that was most happy that they received enough information about school meals was the West.
- The region that least wanted to receive information via a website was the West.
- The regions which had the lowest number of children with a social media account were West and Central.
- It was in the West where the highest percentage of parents said their school was abiding by the Government's Nutritional Standards.

## West Country

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	49.3	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£2.05	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	36.6	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	79.5	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	79.3	80.6
Want to pay online	79.5	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	33.6	33.3
Would like information via Twitter	7.2	9.9
Child has a social media account	34.7	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	91.1	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	93.5	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	22.5	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	96.9	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	81.5	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	48.8	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	3.3	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	68.9	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	4.7	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.34	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.5	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	3.2	3.2
Average exercise each day	One hour 9 minutes	One hour 6 minutes
Concerned about the weight of child	7.9	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	90.9	92.3
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	56.2	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	91.1	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	49.3	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	72.1	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	95.6	95.5

- Awareness of Change4life was highest in the West Country, Tyne Tees and Yorkshire.
- It was in the West Country followed by Wales where the most parents or other family members cooked with their child on a regular basis.
- Parents in the West Country were the least concerned about the weight of their child.

## Yorkshire

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Having a meal five times a week	69.2	61.7
Average cost of a school meal	£2.02	£2.00
Not receiving enough information	34.5	37.6
Want to receive information via a website	79.2	81.0
Want to receive a regular electronic newsletter	81.2	80.6
Want to pay online	84.3	81.7
Would like information via Facebook	31.8	33.3
Would like information via Twitter	9.3	9.9
Child has a social media account	36.1	40.0
Percentage of parents rating overall impression of school meals as good or OK	90.0	89.1
Happy with the provision of school meals	92.5	90.7
Would like school to provide breakfast	22.8	25.0
Agree school children should learn to cook as part of National Curriculum	97.4	98.0
Is aware of Change4life	80.9	74.1
Has visited the Change4life website	53.1	51.4
Child does not have breakfast every day	4.6	6.2
Cooks with child on a regular basis	65.7	66.4
Prepared meal from fresh ingredients	4.6	4.7
Average number of times had chips	1.49	1.41
Average portions of fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.4	3.3
Average glasses of water yesterday	3.1	3.2
Average exercise each day	One hour 9 minutes	One hour 6 minutes
Concerned about the weight of child	9.7	11.6
Schools should have to abide by a set of nutritional standards	91.0	92.3
Percentage that don't know if schools abide by Government's Nutritional Standards	56.8	57.2
There should be an independent body to monitor schools so they meet the standards laid down	90.8	92.1
Percentage that think all Primary pupils should be entitled to free meal	53.2	54.1
All Secondary students except 6th form should not be allowed out at lunch time.	72.1	73.4
There should be a staggered lunch time so queuing is reduced	95.6	95.5

- Yorkshire was the region that had the highest number saying 'online' was the best way to pay for a school meal followed by Wales.
- Awareness of Change4life was highest in the West Country, Tyne Tees and Yorkshire.

# 11.0 Conclusions by the Author

There are a number of areas that the author has identified as important and coming out of the research, they are:

**1. Children arriving at school hungry.** 6.2% of children are arriving at school without breakfast and this rises to 7.5% in Academies and falls to 5.6% in state maintained. This means many thousands of children nationally are not able to maximise their attention span in early morning lessons. The author has seen this happen first hand when undertaking research. Children were falling asleep and it was those pupils who had not had any breakfast. The situation is slightly worse in Academies because 7.5% of children go without breakfast compared to 5.6% in state maintained. Only 2.8% of respondents with Primary aged children said they went to school without breakfast while this rises to 8.5% with Secondary aged children. The issue in Secondary Schools is that the buses may be delayed or are on a tight schedule and there is insufficient time for them to get something to eat before lessons. Others may be bussed in from long distances and don't have time for breakfast at home before they have to catch their bus.

25.0% of parents would like schools to offer a breakfast service. This falls to 18.4% with respondents from Primary aged children and rises to 29.6% in Secondary. The issue for Secondary Schools is that low numbers using a breakfast service, for the reasons above, will often require a subsidy and so put pressure on the overall catering budget. In the current economic climate this would be unacceptable to schools. 33.6% of respondents wanted a mid-morning break and this becomes more important when you consider that this is the first time those that did not have breakfast have a chance to eat something. This issue can't be good for either their health or their education.

**2. Nutritional Standards in all schools and the need for monitoring.** 87.9% of parents want nutritional information about school meals. 92.3% of parents want nutritional standards and they want them monitored by an independent body (92.1%). The Government's Nutritional Standards currently apply in state maintained schools but for some reason Academies are entrusted to comply with them voluntarily. The author is concerned about this duplicity in standards. However, there is also the issue, identified in this research, of a high number of parents that didn't know if the standards were applied at their child's school.

Nutritional information was the third most popular information request after the menu and how healthy eating is promoted. In state maintained schools 55.9% said they didn't know if the standards applied and in Academies it rises to 60.3%. 2.0% of Academy respondents said the standards did not apply at their school. There are about 2,000 Academies and this would mean about 40 schools are non-compliant. Overall 41.1% said the standards did apply at





their child's school but this rose to 42.8% in state maintained and fell in Academies to 37.7%. Surely having a set of standards should apply to all schools and as it is a legal requirement it makes good sense to have them monitored. Otherwise what is the point, as the result is confusion and non compliance and it seems to the author that is precisely what is happening now.

**3. The importance of new media for school caterers.** School caterers must understand and use new media because it will help them increase sales and also gain the support of Headteachers and office staff. Online payment is the way forward for schools. Every school in the country should adopt this approach because of the business case and the results of this research. It saves so much office time in managing school meals' money and will also increase revenue for school catering. This approach is far more likely to provide a long term financial future for school caterers than other payment methods.

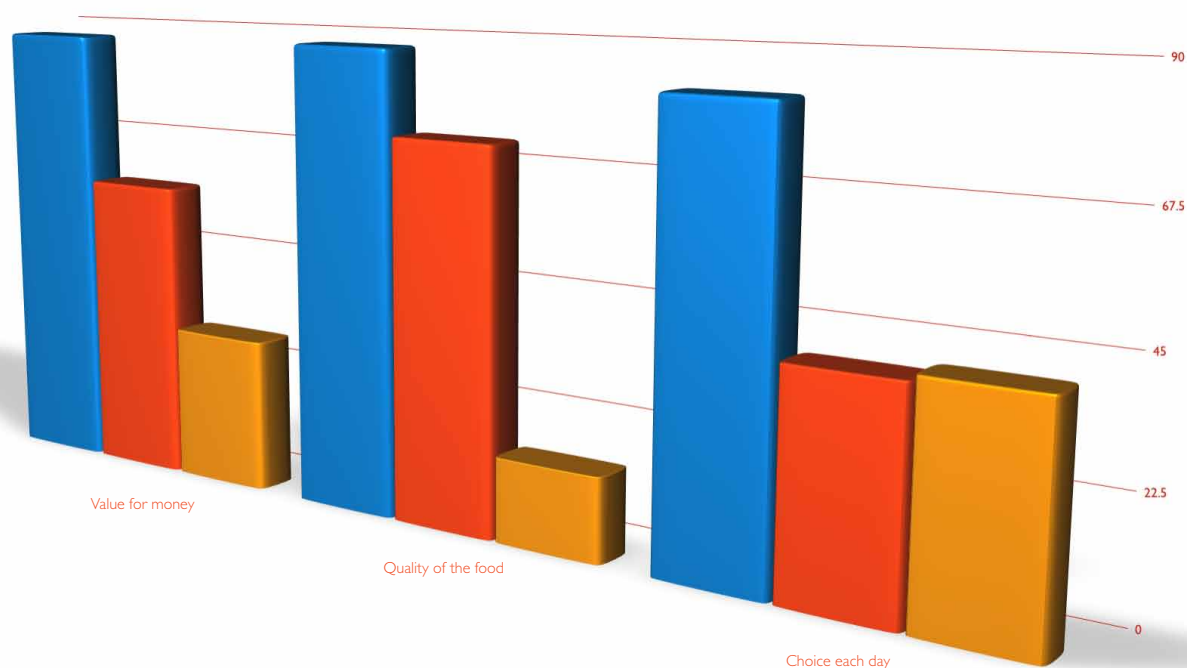
Another lesson to learn from the research is that parents want information via websites and emails from schools. In the authors opinion websites for school caterers should be clearly promoted on all marketing materials and areas like social media will play a more important part in years to come. Local authorities should either have a clearly defined area on the authority's website or a standalone one. By adopting new media school caterers will have much greater engagement with parents and young customers. This means communications departments within local authorities giving school caterers the freedom to use and the ability to access all aspects of the Internet.

As with all marketing strategies it is a question of identifying the needs of the different market segments. Paper still has its place as a marketing tool. For example 63.6% of parents with Secondary children wanted posters around school compared to 58.1% in Primary schools.

The growth of social media is interesting. This year 22.2% of parents said they wanted information about school meals via twitter on a daily basis. This is an increase of about 5 times over last year and fits in with figures that have identified the growth of social media in a similar time period. Most school caterers do not fully appreciate the benefits of social media in its marketing strategy or are not allowed to use it in their own work time for business purposes. Both of these have to change.

**4. Parents' high satisfaction levels of a school meal.** It is very gratifying to see the high satisfaction of parents with the school meals service at their school. 90.7% said they were either happy or very happy with the school catering service at their child's school. This is the second time the research has identified such a high level of satisfaction from parents. It clearly recognises all the hard work and investment that that has been made in school catering over recent years. The concern the author has is that this work is not eroded in the future. If this were to happen then the country will lose one of its best opportunities to educate children about food and a balanced diet. The future role of school meals is vital. We are far more likely to reverse the obesity epidemic that is currently gripping this country and save billions of pounds in NHS running costs by putting school meals at the heart of the plan.

Another interesting set of figures that bodes well for the future of school catering is the high rating for standards against the criteria for buying a school meal. The top three buying criteria are compared in the table below.



Standard of service	% of respondents that said the current service was good or OK (The figures in brackets are from the 2011 survey)	% of respondents saying this standard was an important buying criteria for a school meal	Gap between first two columns that show current service rating against buying criteria
Value for money	87.4 (87.4)	57.9	29.5
Quality of the food	87.9 (87.8)	72.0	15.9
Choice each day	82.8 (82.0)	40.8	42.0

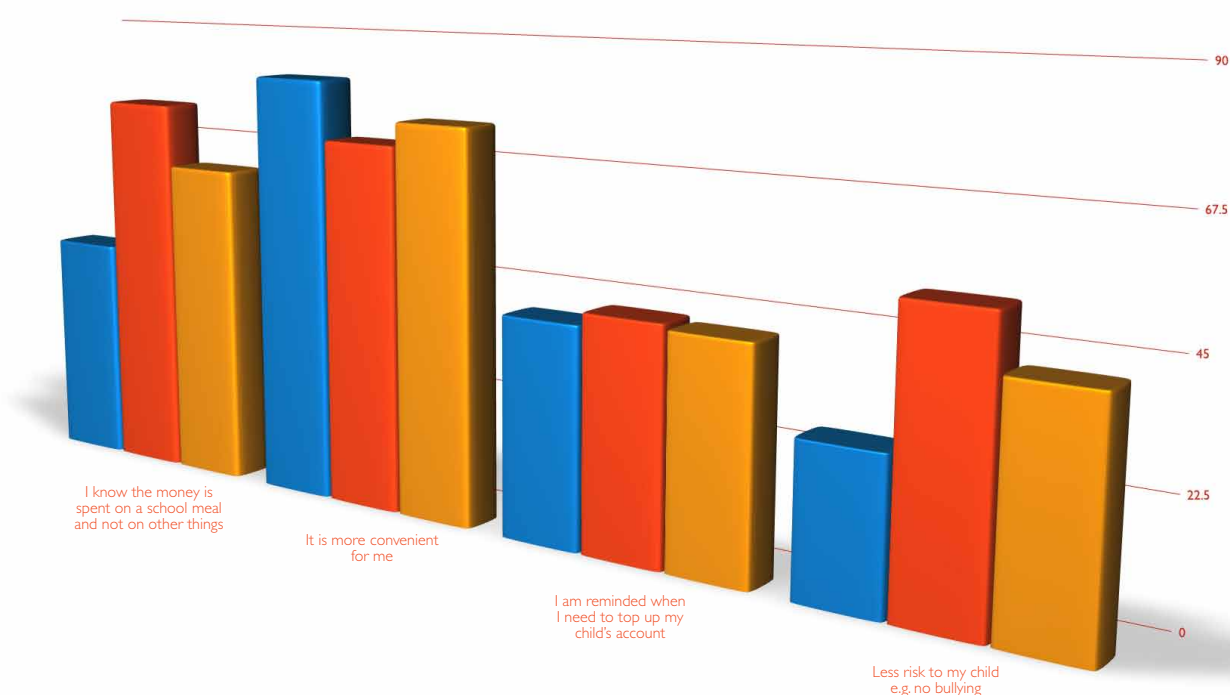


School caterers are doing an excellent job in meeting the expectations of parents and this will go a long way to identify the reasons parents are so happy with the service provided.

**5. Parents want pupils kept safe and secure at lunch time.** If young people have the opportunity to enjoy a healthy school meal on a regular basis then as the Birds Eye research has identified they will have more energy and enthusiasm for the second part of the school day.

73.4% of parents want students, except 6th formers, to be kept at lunch time. This is not only helpful to school caterers but will also enable more students to have a healthy lunch. If the numbers rise in Secondary Schools then staggered lunch times, as highlighted below, will become even more important.

Other issues on this theme of being safe and secure are highlighted in the next table and relate to the reasons given by parents for buying online.



Reasons why online payment is important	% Primary	% Secondary	% Overall
I know the money is spent on a school meal and not on other things	44.0	74.5	62.3
It is more convenient for me	81.5	70.2	74.7
I am reminded when I need to top up my child's account	41.5	43.9	42.9
Less risk to my child e.g. no bullying	28.1	53.3	43.2

The author is keen to highlight two issues. It is not about paying online as the convenience of this is very clear from parents. The first point is that parents are using online payment because it reduces the risk to the child such as bullying. This may be a good reason but this suggests that bullying for school dinner money is an issue that concerns parents and that it is happening in schools today at a substantial level. The second point is that 74.5% are using online payment to ensure the money goes on a school meal rather than other things. This is excellent because it stops children spending money on confectionery to and from school as well as less healthy snacks from local shops at lunch time.

**6. Staggered lunch times to reduce queuing.** It is well known that the biggest issue in the uptake of school meals in Secondary Schools is the queuing for a school lunch. Teenagers hate it and this has often been cited as one of the main reasons for not having a school meal. If Secondary Schools are serious about doing the best for their students then surely they must want to promote an enjoyable and relaxing atmosphere at lunch time. It is simply not possible to get 1000 students through any catering service, including the best fast food restaurant, in 25 minutes in such a way as they want to come back again.

A staggered lunch time may take extra planning time and in the early stages I am sure there would be some issues. However, schools that have introduced this idea have got over these teething issues and taken advantage of the benefits. These include a more social and well behaved set of young customers, who enjoy their healthy school meal together and are in a far better state of mind for afternoon lessons.

Issues about cooking at school and home. 98.0% of parents said they want their child to learn to cook at school. The research also showed a similar number of parents: wanted their child to grow food at school; know where food came from; and when it was in season. All these are vital points that will give young people skills for life and help them eat a well balanced diet and adopt healthy lifestyles. It is hoped that food, cooking and gardening will soon be part of the National Curriculum but at present the author sees little evidence of this happening. Surely this is a lost opportunity.





66.4% of parents said they are cooking with their children at home two or three times a week. This is encouraging as the question asked them about cooking with fresh and raw ingredients. Parents have a major influence both positively and negatively on the diets of their children. For example the author can see how healthy his grandchildren's diets are as a result of parental influence. They love vegetables, eat whole stalks of broccoli, have raisins instead of sweets and drink lots of water. It is a question of not only educating children but the whole family.

So it is a bit disappointing to see the low priorities of healthy eating factors when parents are preparing a meal. The top two criteria were what they like (72.7%) and time to prepare and cook (68.6%) which are not surprising in today's hectic lifestyle. The lowest were whether it is high in fibre (22.1%) and vitamin and mineral content (33.6%).

### **7. Discrepancy of responses around the links between food and good health.**

97.2% of respondents said they had enough information about the link between food and good health. However, 46% went on to add that better information would help their family and 27.9% were confused about the subject. This may be less of a surprise when it is shown that a lot of the information is coming from the Internet and the media with traditional sources like the doctor further down the list. It is encouraging to see the awareness of Change4life (74.1%) and that 54.1% of these respondents had visited their website.

The concern about healthy eating is that the research shows little improvement about certain healthy living criteria year on year. For example the number of portions of chips eaten is up slightly and eating portions of five-a-day is still well below the recommendation at 3.3 portions per day.

The author hopes that this research will provide further debate about the issues it identifies and make a positive contribution to the review of school catering that is currently underway by John Vincent and Henry Dimpleby from the Leon restaurant chain.



## 12.0 About LACA

### The Voice of the School Food Industry

LACA (formerly the Local Authority Caterers Association) is the leading professional body representing 750 Catering Managers in local authorities, private contractors and individual schools who are providers of school meal service within primary and secondary schools throughout England, Wales and Scotland. There are also 350 Associate Members who are leading suppliers of food, drink, equipment and services to the school catering sector.

With 135 Local Authorities represented in the membership, 80% of the catering service is provided by LACA Members and with around 3 million lunches being served every day in 22,000 schools, the LACA network is the country's largest provider of school catering.

LACA Mission Statement:

**Together, We Achieve Excellence in School Food**

For more information please go to [www.laca.co.uk](http://www.laca.co.uk)





## 13.0 About ParentPay

**ParentPay provides a school online payment and meal administration system.**

ParentPay Limited is a privately owned software company offering a complete solution for income management for schools in the UK. Their unique web application ParentPay® allows parents to make secure online payments by credit and debit card or to pay cash at local stores through the PayPoint network.

The business was founded in 2002 by a working parent and ex-teacher trying to help a local school and make life easier for other parents. ParentPay created the market for cashless payments in schools. They are now firmly established as the UK market leader for online payments, meal administration and income management for schools.

Offering advice to the Department for Education and government agencies, ParentPay is recognised as the leading expert in this rapidly growing sector. They now provide services to nearly 3,000 schools across 170 local authorities. This year ParentPay will help schools collect and manage over £250 million from parents.

ParentPay makes taking cashless payments from parents easy and is proven to save schools thousands of pounds in administration time. Schools can manage any parental income online and can send messages and information to parents using email and text.

Many Local Authorities have introduced ParentPay to reduce the meal administration burden and increase the take up of paid and free school meals.

Within 12 months of the introduction of ParentPay in Croydon meal revenue increased by £1.6m, while in Gloucestershire meal uptake increased by 26%.

The system delivers real-time data to parents including meal choice information, menus and nutritional data as well as text and email alerts to remind parents to top-up dinner money or pay for school trips.

By integrating with 23,000 PayPoint retailers, ParentPay provides a socially inclusive service available to all parents. Many schools using ParentPay have now become completely cashless, making them safer places for staff and pupils.

For more information please go to [www.parentpay.com](http://www.parentpay.com)



**ParentPay**®



## 14.0 About Birds Eye

Birds Eye is part of Iglo Group, the largest frozen food manufacturer in Europe. In the UK Birds Eye is best known for its iconic products fish fingers and peas. The brand has been a family favourite for over 60 years providing healthy natural food for generations. It is trusted and recognised by 9 out of 10 households.

In the Education sector Birds Eye works closely with LACA and 40+ local authorities and contract caterers to provide its MSC certified and sustainable fish fingers and other products for kids school meals. Along with its products it also organises theme days and offers learning materials to these schools. Birds Eye has also been running a continuous research programme for the last 3 years to understand the needs of parents and children.



## 15.0 About the Author

**Arnold Fewell is Managing Director of AVF Marketing Ltd. Arnold started his career as a hotelier and in 1995 joined North Yorkshire County Council as manager of the Education Catering Service. He introduced a range of innovative marketing techniques that led to national recognition including the Daily Telegraph Award for Marketing Innovation in 1989 and the Chartered Institute of Marketing Award in the same year.**



He set up his business in 1990 after five years of operational and marketing experience in school catering. Arnold was once described by a colleague as “a radiator, not a sponge” because of his ability to see outside the box and develop his own effective and often innovative solutions that he would sell-in to others. He has extensive experience in all aspects of marketing and PR and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

Arnold has authored national surveys on many occasions and has considerable experience in providing school meals and encouraging children to select the healthier options. He currently organises National School Meals Week for LACA.

In 2003, he created a new website at [www.myschoollunch.co.uk](http://www.myschoollunch.co.uk). This provides local authorities an opportunity to give more information to parents and promote healthy eating to pupils. The site was recommended in the Government’s blueprint for healthy schools and has won a number of awards including the 2004 International Management Advisory Award from the Foodservice Consultants Society International and 2008 Website of the Year in the Caterersearch.com Awards.

Arnold has won many other awards and most recently was given: The 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award by EDUcatering magazine and in 2012 the Special Award at the Cateys, organised by Caterer and Hotelkeeper Magazine.

These are often referred to as the Oscars of the Hotel and Catering Industry.

For more information please go to [www.avfmarketing.co.uk](http://www.avfmarketing.co.uk)



