



The LACA/ParentPay Market Research Report on School Meals and Daily Life Issues 2011



Contents

Introduction	4
Methodology	4
Sample size	5
Executive Summary	6
Overall results	9
Comparison between Primary and Secondary Schools	14
Male v Female	18
Regional variations	19
Conclusions by the author	29
About LACA	32
About ParentPay	33
About the Author	34





Introduction

This research has been undertaken by LACA (the Local Authority Caterers Association) and ParentPay. LACA is the leading professional body representing the interests of over 1200 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 lifestyles of young people. For more information about LACA please go to www.laca.co.uk and for ParentPay to www.parentpay.com.

The research is published on Monday 7th November at the start of National School Meals Week. This event has been running since 1993 and three years ago became an online digital marketing campaign to promote healthy eating at school lunch times. The week is run via a website at www.iloveschoolmeals.co.uk.

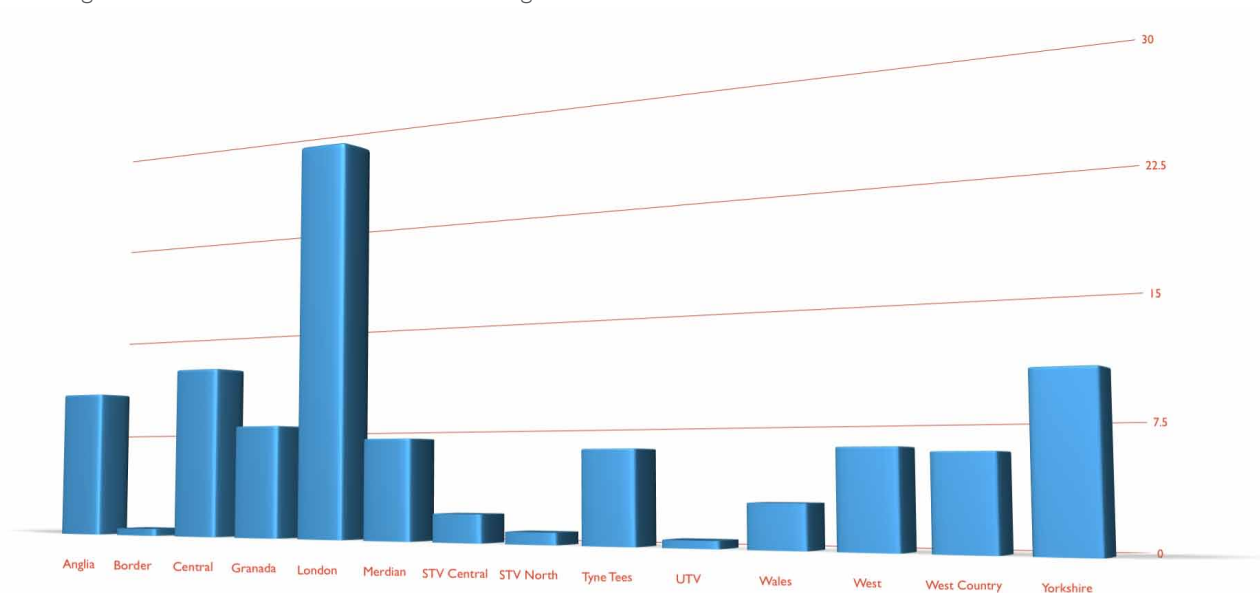
Methodology

A number of interviews were undertaken with parents, school caterers, ParentPay, and LACA members to identify key issues for the research. A draft questionnaire was created and sent to interested parties for comments. The revised questionnaire was finalised and a link placed on the ParentPay website with directions for parents to fill in. An incentive for completion was included. The raw, unidentified data was then sent to the independent research company, AVF Marketing, who analysed the data and produced this report.

Some figures will not add up to 100% as they have been rounded up and also not all parents answered every question.

Sample Size

A total of 10,808 questionnaires were completed around the country covering England, Scotland and Wales. The regional breakdown is shown in the following table.



TV Region	% of Respondents
Anglia	10.5
Border	0.5
Central	12.1
Granada	7.9
London	27.6
Meridian	6.9
STV Central	1.9
STV North	0.8
Tyne Tees	6.1
UTV	0.5
Wales	2.8
West	6.1
West Country	5.8
Yorkshire	10.4

53.3% of respondents' children were male and 46.7 were female.

The table below shows the age variations of the respondents' children.

Age Groups	% of Respondents
Five to six	10.5
Seven to nine	14.0
Ten to eleven in a Primary School	5.2
Eleven to twelve in a Secondary School	38.0
Thirteen to fifteen	28.1
Sixteen to seventeen	3.7
Over seventeen	0.6

3.7% of respondents were entitled to a free school meal.



Executive Summary

This research had responses from over 10,000 parents in both Primary and Secondary Schools and they completed the survey in September 2011. This makes the research one of the largest into school catering ever.

The first issue was the uptake of free school meals as 14.8% of parents do not take up their entitlement. The top three reasons for this are families having an evening meal, children wanting to eat with friends and the stigma of having a free meal. This is a serious issue for two reasons. Firstly some children could be going hungry and secondly school budgets are reduced because of the shortfall in free meal uptake. There is real benefit for schools and caterers to work together especially as unemployment is rising. More parents of male children were not collecting their entitlement at 16.8% compared to 12.9% of females. There is a greater stigma perceived by respondents for males and they are more likely to have a meal in the evening, have sandwiches and want to eat with friends.

The average spend on school meals is £2.12 overall and there is only a 1p difference between Primary and Secondary. More male children spend over £2.20 (34.9%) compared to females (27.8%).

An important issue for school caterers is how they get their promotional and healthy eating messages across. The LACA/ParentPay results show that all parents are increasingly looking for information via email and websites; however the traditional brochure is more popular in the Primary sector. This is a challenge for school caterers as they need to use the tools of digital marketing and new technology to engage with non users of the service. The information that most parents requested were the menu, nutritional content and how healthy eating is promoted.

It is accepted that the method of collecting the data was online. However, parents clearly wanted to continue paying online rather than using the traditional methods of cash and cheque. Online is seen as having extra benefits such as being more convenient in Primary School, and in Secondary it is making sure the money is spent on a school meal rather than confectionery and canned drinks on the way to and from school. More parents of male children agreed with this comment (60.1%) than females (55.7%). The other benefit that parents highlighted was reducing the risk of bullying and this was 5.5% higher with parents of male children at 45.0%. This must encourage all school caterers that are individual schools as well as those in a group contract, to consider online payment as a priority especially when paying online is seen as easy by 93.9% of respondents. Another opportunity for school caterers is to invite parents in for lunch as 42.5% would like to try a meal and this rises to 53.1% in Primary Schools.

A great deal has happened in school meals in recent years. There has been a move to healthier menus with the introduction of nutrient based standards by the Government in both Primary and Secondary Schools. So it is very encouraging to see that parents recognise the work that has gone on. 89.4% of parents said their overall impression of a school meal was either good or OK and 74% saying they agreed with the statement – I am very happy with the quality of the meals served at my child's school.

There is an ever increasing pressure on time for a school meal. The research showed that on average pupils have just 32 minutes to queue, select, pay for and eat their food. In Primary Schools they average about 28 minutes and 33 minutes in Secondary.

Parents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements. The results showed that parents; want their child to learn to cook at school; children not to be allowed out of school at lunch; children should not to be able to spend money on the way to school; and parents want more information about what their child has eaten for lunch. This can be provided using the latest technology linking tills with online payment systems or more common in Primary Schools using pre-ordering or advanced booking. 63.9% said they did not want their child to have Internet access in their bedroom.

The LACA/ParentPay research also highlighted a number of lifestyle issues. Primary pupils tend to either walk or go in a family car to school while secondary students walk, use a school bus and public transport as well as a family car. Males are more likely to travel to school by bike when compared to females. The research shows that less than 2.0% of respondents were sharing the journey to school with a friend and this must have a considerable impact on traffic around schools. Secondary students travel 2.8 miles against Primary pupils travelling 1.83 mile.

There are many health issues raised by the research. The first is the number of children going to school without breakfast. Overall this is 11.7% but rises to 15% in Secondary, 13.0% of females go without breakfast compared to 10.7% of males. If children are going without breakfast they will struggle to learn during morning lessons. In Primary Schools the figure drops to 3.9%.

The research showed that respondents only had chips 1.34 times a week, males 1.39 and females 1.3, and parents were cooking for their children 4.9 times a week from fresh ingredients. However, young people only had 3.25 portions of fruit and vegetables the day before and it is quite likely that at least two of these portions would have come from a school meal. In Primary schools the pupils have 3.45 portions of fruit and vegetables against 3.1 in Secondary. This suggests that very small amounts of fruit and vegetables are eaten at home.



Hydration is important for all young people and if they get dehydrated they will struggle to learn. There has been a great deal of discussion about the recommended amount of water per day but the research shows that overall respondents were having less than three and this may be seen on the low side. This lack of heeding good nutritional advice must be of great concern to anyone involved in educating the school population about adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Exercise is less of an issue as Primary pupils are getting 71 minutes of exercise per day while Secondary students have 66 minutes. Despite these figures 14.2% of parents are concerned about the weight of their children. The figure rises to 15.9% in Secondary Schools with 5% saying they were concerned their child was underweight and 8.9% overweight.

Despite the current economic climate 61% of parents gave their child pocket money and the average was £5.40. The average in Primary Schools was £3.31 and £5.93 in Secondary. 81% of respondents save up their money to buy something they want while 23.3% use the money to spend on something they want to eat or drink during the week. In Secondary Schools 20.8% of respondents said they used the money to buy music CDs and download music. In Primary Schools they preferred to buy comics and magazines (26.9%). Females like to buy comics and magazines with their pocket money while males spend it on extra food and drink items.

The final questions concerned social media accounts. Of those whose children have an account 96.7% of respondents said they had a Facebook account with YouTube (27.4%) and Twitter (15.0%). This is despite there being age restrictions on some of these sites. Females are more likely to have a twitter account and males YouTube.

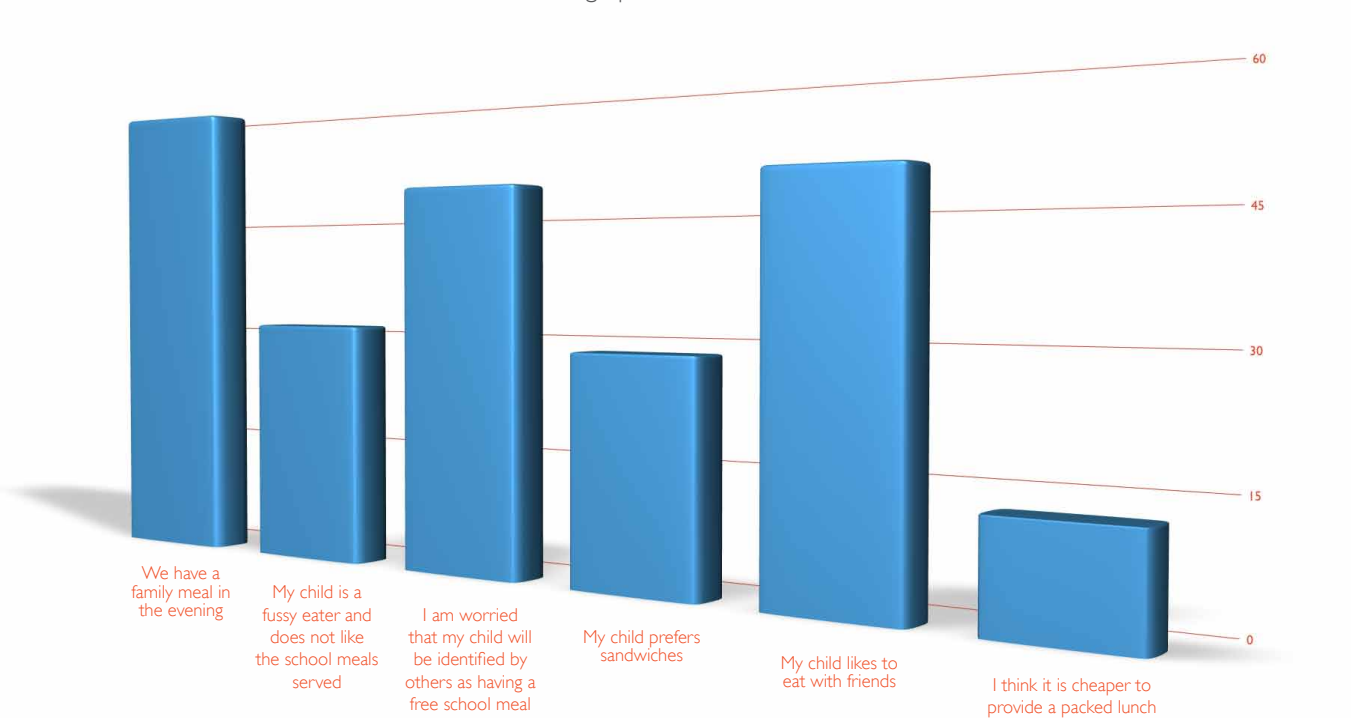
The author of the report, Arnold Fewell, voiced a number of concerns. They related to: free school meals; the use of new technology; parental attitudes; food and the curriculum; travelling to school and the need to do more on healthy eating.

- The LACA/ParentPay research shows that 15.0% of teenagers are not having breakfast before they go to school and this must be detrimental to the way they learn during the morning.
- Parents want more information about what their children are eating and this means using technology like online payment. This will also help reduce the amount of money spent on the high street to and from school and help reduce bullying. However, school caterers will also need to benefit from technology and so must be allowed full access to the Internet.
- It is good to see the high ratings from parents about school meals and this is a reward for all the work that has gone on in schools to achieve the nutrient standards set by the Government.
- More must be done to promote an interest in food as it can help create healthy lifestyles. This will be helped by extending cookery clubs and schemes like the Academy of Culinary Arts Adopt-a-school programme.
- Parents with children travelling to school in a car must be encouraged to share the car with friends' children to help reduce the congestion at school opening and closing times and the damage to the environment.
- A great deal of healthy eating promotion has taken place but still more is required. Events like National School Meals Week help to promote healthy eating and it is good to see that participation levels are increasing year on year. However, the fact that most children are eating less than four portions of fruit and vegetables per day means events like this should be continued. Change4Life has done a lot of excellent work and not least of all the quizzes that have been a very popular download with teachers at www.iloveschoolmeals.co.uk.

Everyone has a role to play in solving these issues including teachers and parents. School meals also have an important part to play but they need proper funding. This must be seen as a good investment as the savings on the future of the NHS will be considerable in the years ahead.

Overall Results

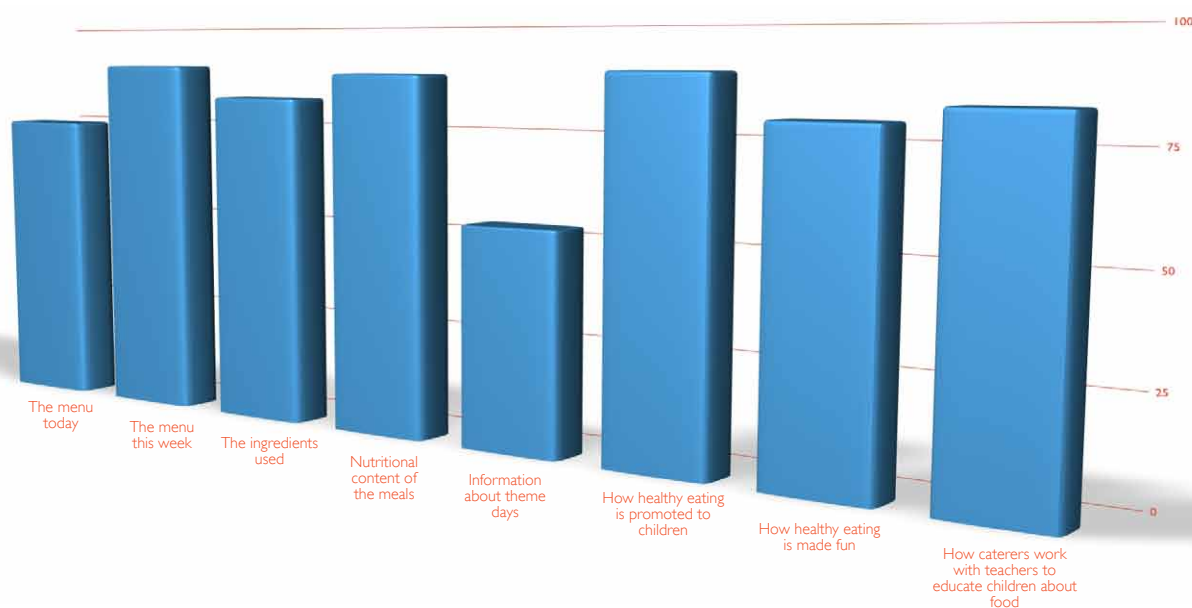
3.7% of respondents said they were entitled to a free meal and of those 14.8% said they did not take up their entitlement. The reasons for this are shown in the graph and table.



Reasons	% respondents
We have a family meal in the evening	60.0
My child is a fussy eater and does not like the school meals served	31.1
I am worried that my child will be identified by others as having a free school meal	49.0
My child prefers sandwiches	28.6
My child likes to eat with friends	50.0
I think it is cheaper to provide a packed lunch	13.0

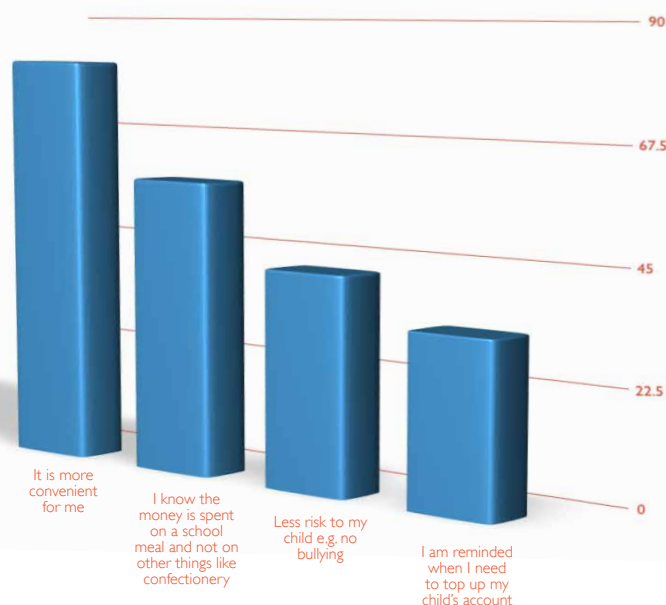
61% of respondents have a meal five days a week with 8% never having one. The average spend on a school lunch including the results from both Primary and Secondary Schools is £2.12.

42.9% of respondents said they did not receive enough information about school catering. The table below shows the further information that parents want and the percentage that said it was important and very important. The figures in brackets show the priority order:



Area of information required	% of respondents
The menu today	74.5 (7)
The menu this week	90.1 (1)
The ingredients used	82.2 (5)
Nutritional content of the meals	88.6 (3)
Information about theme days	53.6 (8)
How healthy eating is promoted to children	89.9 (2)
How healthy eating is made fun	79.8 (6)
How caterers work with teachers to educate children about food	83.3 (4)

It is accepted that the respondents were using technology to fill in the questionnaire but it is still interesting to see that parents would like to receive information via: email 66.9%; website 40.9%; traditional paper 27.9%; presentation at school 8.1%; via mobile phone 5.7%; and social media 3.9%. 81.2% of parents said the best way to pay for a school meal was online, while 8% said PayPoint, 4.3% via cash to school, 2.4% direct debit, 1.6% by sending a cheque to school, 0.3% via text message and the rest were on free meals.



The reasons that were put forward as being important for paying online are shown in the next table in priority order:

Reason	% of respondents
It is more convenient for me	80.8
I know the money is spent on a school meal and not on other things like confectionery	58.1
Less risk to my child e.g. no bullying	42.5
I am reminded when I need to top up my child's account	33.6

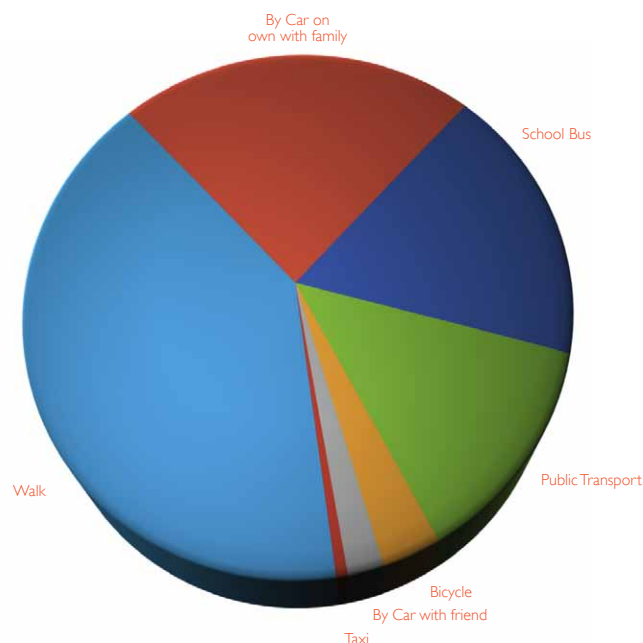
Respondents were asked to rate a range of service standards for school meals, in discussion with their children, and the results are shown in the table below with the highest scoring shown first in terms of those saying good and OK.

No	Standard	% of respondents
1	Ease of payment	93.9
2	Overall impression of school meals	89.4
3	Quality of the food	87.8
4	Value for money	87.4
5	Taste of the food	84.1
6	Availability of healthy options	83.1
7	Availability of familiar dishes	82.6
8	Choice each day	82.0
9	Day to day variety	79.8
10	How it looks	79.1
11	Availability of water	76.0
12	Size of portion	73.9
13	Help from kitchen staff	72.0
14	Daily menu information	70.8
15	Help from midday supervisors	67.8
16	Availability of vegetarian options	61.5
17	Availability of ethnic diets	57.6
18	Availability of dishes for medical diets	38.8

The average amount of time that children have for their school meal is 32.2 minutes. This will be to queue, select, pay and eat their meal. 11.7% of children leave home for school without breakfast.

The next table shows how respondents said their children travelled to school.

Way to school	% overall
Walk	40.4
By car on own with family	23.5
School bus	17.6
Public transport	12.9
Bicycle	3.1
By car with friend	1.9
Taxi	0.5



On average pupils travel 2.51 miles to school.

Parents were given a series of statements they could agree and disagree with.

This table shows the statements and the percentage of respondents that agreed with the statement.

Statement	% agreement
My child should learn to cook at school	95.9
Children should not be allowed out of school at lunch time	83.4
I want more information about what my child has for lunch	79.8
I am very happy about the quality of the meals served at my child's school	74.0
I don't want my child spending money on confectionary and canned drinks on the way to school	93.9
Teachers should have a school meal with the children	64.1
I enjoy cooking with my child at home	95.0
I am concerned about the diet of my child	55.5
I am worried that my child spends too much time watching TV and playing computer games	44.6
Children should not have access to the Internet in their bedroom	63.9

The next questions asked parents how often they cooked a meal for their child from raw ingredients during the last week. 33.7% said every day and 0.8% said never; the other replies were: once 2.1%; twice 6.6%; three times 15%; four times 16.1%; five times 18.0%; six times 7.7%. The average is 4.94 times per week.

The number of times that children are eating chips is now 1.34 times a week.

According to parents their child had 3.25 portions of fruit the day before and a fraction under three glasses of water.

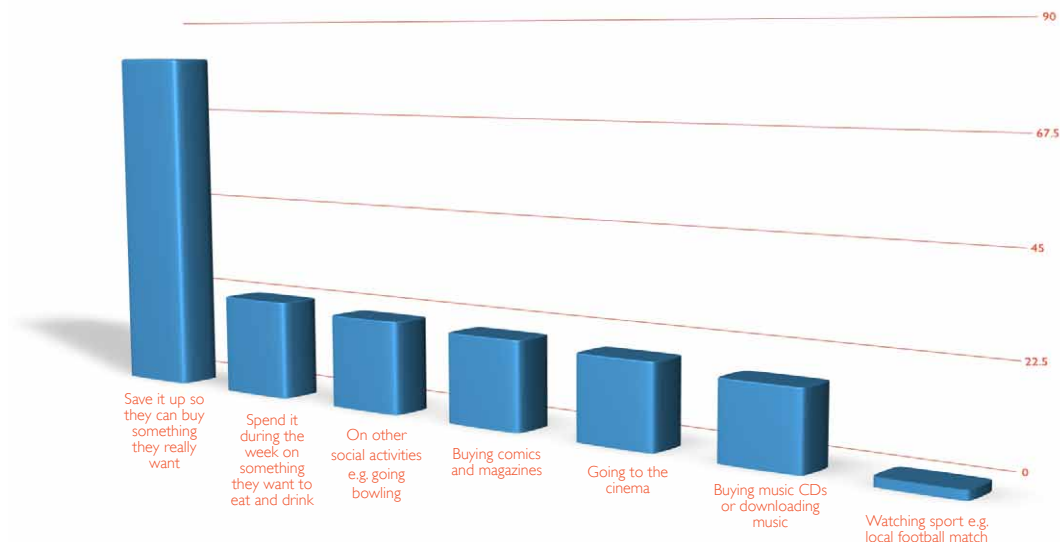
Children are spending one hour six minutes exercising a day; this includes playing outside with friends, cycling, taking part in a sport and walking to and from school.

14.2% of parents were concerned about the weight of their child, 5.0% of parents said their child was under weight and 8.9% said over weight.

42.5% of parents would like to go into school to try a meal.

61% of parents said they gave their child pocket money; the average amount given was £5.40.

The table shows in priority order what children do with their pocket money.



How pocket money is used	% respondents
Save it up so they can buy something they really want	81.0
Spend it during the week on something they want to eat and drink	23.3
On other social activities e.g. going bowling	21.7
Buying comics and magazines	20.7
Going to the cinema	19.5
Buying music CDs or downloading music	17.8
Watching sport e.g. local football match	2.1

51% of children have a social media account and the following table shows what parents thought they had accounts for.

Social media account	% respondents
Facebook	96.7
YouTube	27.4
Twitter	15.0
Google+	11.8
Windows Live Spaces	4.9
Bebo	4.1
My Space	2.6
Tumblr	2.3
Flickr	1.0
Friends Reunited	0.4
Foursquare	0.2
Ning	0.1

Comparison between Primary and Secondary Schools

2.4% of Primary respondents were entitled to a free school meal but 24.7% did not take up their entitlement. In Secondary Schools the figures were 4.3% and 12.4% respectively.

The reasons for not having a free school meal are shown in the table below.

Reasons	Primary	Secondary
We have a family meal in the evening	52.9	64.3
My child is a fussy eater and does not like the school meals served	35.3	28.6
I am worried that my child will be identified by others as having a free school meal	23.5	61.8
My child prefers sandwiches	29.4	28.1
My child likes to eat with friends	41.2	54.8
I think it is cheaper to provide a packed lunch	5.6	17.9

On average a Primary child has a meal 3.5 times a week and a Secondary one has a meal 3.9 times per week.

Primary parents are paying £2.11 a day for a school meal and Secondary parents £2.12.

33.0% of respondents in Primary Schools said they did not get enough information about school meals against 47% in Secondary. The information that parents want is shown in the following table.

Area of information required	% Primary	% Secondary
The menu today	42.7	70.9
The menu this week	55.1	88.1
The ingredients used	36.6	80.2
Nutritional content of the meals	41.4	88.2
Information about theme days	20.5	48.8
How healthy eating is promoted to children	46.9	88.7
How healthy eating is made fun	44.0	76.0
How caterers work with teachers to educate children about food	37.5	81.9

66.6% of Primary respondents wanted to receive information by email, 39.0% traditional paper, 37.8% from a website, 10.2% using a presentation at school, 7.4% by mobile phone and 4.0% via social media. In Secondary Schools the figures are: email 67%; website 42.2%; paper 23.2%; presentation at school 7.3%; mobile phone 5.0%; social media 3.8%.

Primary parents said the best way to pay for a school meal was 80.5% online, 6.6% said PayPoint, 4% supported sending in cash, 3.2% using a cheque, 3.7% wanted direct debit and 0.2% with a text message. 1.7% were having a free meal. In Secondary schools parents said the best way to pay for a school meal was online 81.5%, 8.5% said PayPoint, 0.9% supported sending in cash, 1.9% wanted direct debit, 0.9% wanted to use a cheque and 0.3% with a text message. 2.4% were having a free meal.

If the parent said they preferred online the reasons for this being important are shown in the table below.

Reason	% Primary	% Secondary
It is more convenient for me	88.5	77.7
I know the money is spent on a school meal and not on other things like confectionery	32.2	68.8
Less risk to my child e.g. no bullying	24.0	50.2
I am reminded when I need to top up my child's account	35.3	32.8

The table below shows the rating that Primary parents gave to school meals. It shows the percentage that said the standard was good or OK. The overall number shows the priority order and will be based on parents' discussions with children.

Overall Order	Standard	% Primary	% Secondary
1	Ease of payment	95.0	93.3
2	Overall impression of school meals	91.1	88.7
3	Quality of the food	87.2	88.1
4	Value for money	90.5	86.2
5	Taste of the food	78.4	86.4
6	Availability of healthy options	87.6	81.2
7	Availability of familiar dishes	85.0	81.7
8	Choice each day	83.8	81.2
9	Day to day variety	86.2	77.1
10	How it looks	72.8	81.7
11	Availability of water	81.4	73.8
12	Size of portion	66.4	77.0
13	Help from kitchen staff	70.6	72.7
14	Daily menu information	76.4	68.5
15	Help from midday supervisors	71.5	66.2
16	Availability of vegetarian options	69.3	58.3
17	Availability of ethnic diets	59.8	56.6
18	Availability of dishes for medical diets	38.7	38.7

In Primary Schools the average amount of time for a school meal is 27.7 minutes and in Secondary Schools it is 33 minutes.

3.9% of children in Primary Schools do not have a breakfast before school and in Secondary Schools the figure was 15.0%.

The next table shows how children went to school in Primary and Secondary Schools.

Way to school	% Primary	% Secondary
Walk	50.7	36.1
By car on own with family	39.4	16.9
School bus	3.7	23.5
Public transport	2.4	17.3
Bicycle	2.2	3.5
By car with friend	1.4	2.2
Taxi	0.3	0.6

Primary pupils are travelling an average of 1.83 miles. In Secondary Schools the distance is 2.8 miles.

This table shows a series of statements that respondents were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with. The figures in brackets show the percentage that either disagreed slightly or strongly. The figures without brackets show the percentage that agreed slightly or strongly.

Statement	% Primary	% Secondary
My child should learn to cook at school	94.5 (4.9)	96.6 (3.0)
Children should not be allowed out of school at lunch time	83.7 (14.4)	83.2 (16.2)
I want more information about what my child has for lunch	76.7 (17.5)	80.3 (16.9)
I am very happy about the quality of the meals served at my child's school	75.7 (13.5)	73.2 (13.8)
I don't want my child spending money on confectionary and canned drinks on the way to school	95.2 (3.7)	93.2 (6.1)
Teachers should have a school meal with the children	68.8 (24.5)	62.2 (29.9)
I enjoy cooking with my child at home	96.6 (3.1)	94.2 (4.8)
I am concerned about the diet of my child	50.7 (48.0)	57.6 (41.6)
I am worried that my child spends too much time watching TV and playing computer games	37.1 (62.3)	47.8 (51.6)
Children should not have access to the Internet in their bedroom	76.3 (21.2)	59.1 (39.7)

Primary parents said they prepare a meal using fresh ingredients 4.9 times a week and that their children had chips 1.3 times per week. In Secondary Schools the figures are 4.9 times a week, and 1.35 times for chips.

Primary children had 3.45 portions of fruit and vegetables the previous day, had 3 glasses of water and 70.8 minutes of exercise. Secondary students had 3.1 portions of fruit and vegetables, 2.9 glasses of water and 66.1 minutes of exercise.

10.3% of Primary parents were concerned about the weight of their child, 4.7% thought their child was under weight and 4.9% said they were concerned their child was over weight. 15.9% of Secondary parents were worried about the weight of their child with 5.2% saying under weight and 10.6% over weight.

School caterers should invite parents in for lunch as 42.5% would like to try a meal and this rises to 53.1% in Primary Schools.

43.6% of respondents in Primary Schools said they gave their child pocket money and in Secondary Schools it was 68.4%. Primary School parents give their children £3.31 and Secondary parents give £5.93.

The next table shows what the children do with their pocket money.

Spent on	% Primary	% Secondary
Save it so they can buy something they really want	85.9	79.7
Spend it during the week on extra things they want to eat and drink	14.6	25.6
Buying comics and magazines	26.9	18.3
Buying music CDs or downloading music	6.3	20.8
Going to the cinema	2.7	24.1
On other social activities e.g. going bowling	4.6	26.2
Watching sport e.g. a local football match	0.7	2.6

8.9% of Primary respondents' children had a social media account and in Secondary it was 68.9%.

The table below shows the split between Primary and Secondary.

Social media account	% Primary	% Secondary
Facebook	90.6	97.0
YouTube	13.5	28.2
Twitter	6.4	15.5
Google+	10.5	11.9
Windows Live Spaces	4.5	4.9
Bebo	2.3	4.2
My Space	0.8	2.7
Tumblr	0.0	2.4
Flickr	0.0	1.0
Friends Reunited	1.1	0.4
Foursquare	0.0	0.3
Ning	0.0	0.1



Male v Female

In this section the research looks at any significant variations between respondents that were completing the survey on behalf of either a male or female child. Where no comments have been made there was no significance in the research findings. For ease of comparison the results have been put into a bullet point style.

- Only 12.9% of female children were not claiming their entitlement to a free meal compared to 16.8% males.
- There were significant variations in the reasons for not claiming their entitlement as the table below shows. There is a greater stigma perceived by respondents for males and they are more likely to have a meal in the evening, have sandwiches and want to eat with friends.

Reasons	Male %	Female %
We have a family meal in the evening	73.9	45.0
My child is a fussy eater and does not like the school meals served	36.4	26.1
I am worried that my child will be identified by others as having a free school meal	60.7	34.8
My child prefers sandwiches	40.7	13.6
My child likes to eat with friends	64.0	34.8
I think it is cheaper to provide a packed lunch	16.7	9.1

- 34.9% of parents for males will pay more than £2.20 for a school lunch compared to 27.8% of females.
- 60.1% of respondents for males said they preferred online payment as the money would not be spent on confectionery compared to 55.7% of females.
- 45.0% of parents with male children said online payment reduced the risk of bullying compared to 39.5% of parents with female children.
- 10.7% of male children did not have breakfast before they left for school compared with 13.0% of females.
- Males are more likely to go to school by bike (4.9%) compared to females (1.0%).
- Parents of male children (49.5%) are more worried about them having Internet access in their bedroom as against female children (39.0%).
- Male children have chips 1.39 times a week compared to females at 1.3.
- Parents of female children thought 3.9% (6.1%) were under weight compared to 8.7% (5.9%) over weight. The figures in brackets show the male comparison.
- Male children are more likely to spend their pocket money on buying extra food and items during the week while females will more likely buy comics and magazines, going to the cinema and other social activities.
- Females (19.7%) are more likely to have a twitter account against boys (10.9%). 30.1% of males had a YouTube account compared to 24.4% females.

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.

Anglia

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	12.8%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	54.6%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.11	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	45.0%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	68.5%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	23.7%	27.9%
Want to pay online	82.3%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	65.2%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as very good or OK	89.0%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	11.6%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	37.3%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	97.2%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	79.3%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.26 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.85 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	2.99 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	67 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	15.5%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	40.6%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£5.47	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	82.1%	81.0%
Have a social media account	63.7%	51.0%

- 98% of parents did not want their child spending money on canned drinks and confectionary on the way to school.
- Parents were most concerned about the diet of their child with 61.9% of parents agreeing with that statement.
- They were also the most worried (53% agreed) that their child spends too much time watching TV and playing computer games.
- Pupils are eating the most fruit and vegetable portions with the average being 3.85.

Central

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	15.8%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	55.0%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.12	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	41.0%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	66.9%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	30.7%	27.9%
Want to pay online	80.6%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	54.8%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as very good or OK	88.9%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	10.6%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	40.9%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	96.5%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	80.3%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.28 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.3 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	2.96 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	68 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	14.5%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	43.4%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£4.93	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	82.2%	81.0%
Have a social media account	46.3%	51.0%

- Pupils in the central region had very similar quantities of exercise, water, vegetables and chips to the overall average figures.
- The percentage of pupils not claiming their free meal entitlement was higher than the overall figure at 15.8%
- The percentage of pupils with a social media account was one of the lowest with 46.3%.

Granada including Isle of Man

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	9.8%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	70.0%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.10	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	45.3%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	67.3%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	27.6%	27.9%
Want to pay online	78.9%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	62.5%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as very good or OK	89.3%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	15.5%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	39.5%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	97.2%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	78.9%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.59 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.06 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	2.62 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	68 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	13.0%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	38.7%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£6.05	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	79.4%	81.0%
Have a social media account	59.9%	51.0%

- Had the highest percentage entitled to a free school meal.
- Second highest percentage of pupils eating a school lunch five days at 70.0%.
- 40.7% of parents in this area will prepare a meal from fresh ingredients every day and an average of 5.3 times a week.
- It was in the Granada region where chips were eaten most frequently.
- Pupils in this region are eating the lowest number of fruit and vegetable portions per day with the average being 3.06.
- Has the lowest average for number of glasses drunk in a day at 2.62.

London

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	20.0%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	65.9%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.12	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	43.9%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	70.0%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	26.2%	27.9%
Want to pay online	80.6%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	56.1%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as very good or OK	88.8%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	12.7%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	41.0%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	94.0%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	83.1%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.33 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.1 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	3.09 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	65 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	16.9%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	47.6%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£5.48	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	79.4%	81.0%
Have a social media account	47.4%	51.0%

- Had the second lowest take up of free school meal entitlement.
- 70% of parents wanted to receive school meals information via email.
- 83.1% of parents in London want more information about what they child has eaten for lunch today.
- The highest average number of glasses of water consumed is in London with 3.09 glasses.
- Pupils in London exercised for an average of 65 minutes.
- Parents were the most concerned about the weight of their child (16.9%).
- Parents were the most keen to try a school meal (47.6%).

Meridian

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	26.9%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	51.6%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.13	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	44.5%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	65.4%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	27.9%	27.9%
Want to pay online	84.0%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	58.9%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as very good or OK	89.1%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	11.1%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	39.3%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	96.4%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	79.2%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.28 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.32 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	2.97 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	68 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	13.9%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	42.4%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£5.31	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	81.5%	81.0%
Have a social media account	53.2%	51.0%

- Has the lowest take up of free school meal entitlement.
- The highest average cost of a school meal was in Meridian at £2.13.
- Parents were the most keen to use technology to pay for school meals with 84% wanting to pay online.

Tyne Tees

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	6.3%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	75.2%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.12	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	44.4%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	64.0%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	28.8%	27.9%
Want to pay online	83.9%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	57.6%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as very good or OK	89.1%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	8.3%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	39.4%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	97.4%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	80.7%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.5 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.23 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	2.71 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	69 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	13.7%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	36.4%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£5.14	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	86.0%	81.0%
Have a social media account	48.2%	51.0%

- Has the highest percentage of pupils eating a school lunch five days a week at 75.2%.
- The highest percentage of parents that described their child as overweight was in Tyne Tees at 11.2%.
- Pupils in the Tyne Tees area appear to be the biggest money savers with 86% of parents saying their child saves their pocket money to buy something they really want.

Wales

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	9.1%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	64.0%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.07	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	53.8%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	64.1%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	25.7%	27.9%
Want to pay online	79.9%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	69.3%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as good and OK	92.2%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	17.3%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	38.3%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	97.3%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	81.7%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.42 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.07 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	2.86 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	69 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	13.6%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	37.5%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£6.12	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	75.5%	81.0%
Have a social media account	68.5%	51.0%

- The lowest average cost of a school meal was in Wales at £2.07.
- Parents are the least informed about school meals with 53.8% of parents saying they don't receive enough information.
- The overall impression of the school meal service was rated second highest at 92.2% saying it was good or OK.
- 17.3% of parents said their child did not have breakfast before school.
- Parents gave the most pocket money with an average of £6.12.
- Pupils are the most likely (29.6%) to spend pocket money during the week on extra food and drink.
- 68.5% of pupils have a social media account which is the highest region.

West

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	14.3%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	42.5%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.11	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	36.7%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	64.0%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	33.4%	27.9%
Want to pay online	82.3%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	49.3%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as very good or good	92.2%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	7.1%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	44.3%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	96.7%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	74.2%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.27 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.35 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	3.04 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	69 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	9.3%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	42.0%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£4.55	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	82.8%	81.0%
Have a social media account	36.5%	51.0%

- Had the second highest percentage of pupils who never had a school lunch with 11.2%.
- Pupils had the least time to spend eating a meal with parents saying they had just 27.2 minutes.
- Traditional paper was most popular for receiving information about school meals with 33.4% of parents.
- Parents gave the least pocket money with an average of £4.55 a week.
- Social networking is least popular with 36.5% having an account.
- Parents are the least concerned about the weight of their child in the West (9.3%).

West Country

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	9.1%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	50.4%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.12	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	39.4%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	62.7%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	30.5%	27.9%
Want to pay online	76.1%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	60.9%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as good or OK	92.3%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	12.1%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	46.3%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	97.8%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	73.2%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.42 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.47 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	2.94 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	68 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	9.6%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	41.1%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£4.95	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	83.6%	81.0%
Have a social media account	53.9%	51.0%

- Had the highest percentage of pupils who never had a school lunch with 11.4%.
- The overall impression of the school meal service was rated highest with 92.3% of parents saying it was good or OK.
- Is the best at keeping parents informed about school meals with 63.3% of parents saying they receive enough information about school meals.
- 7.4% of parents in the West Country preferred to send in cash to school which was the highest area.
- Parents are the most likely to prepare a meal from fresh ingredients with 40.7% doing so every day and an average of 5.3 times a week.

Yorkshire

Point of Interest	Regional Figure	Overall Figure
Not claiming their free school meal entitlement	5.7%	14.8%
Having a meal five times a week	73.1%	61.2%
Average cost of a school meal	£2.11	£2.12
Not receiving enough information	39.5%	42.9%
Wanting to receive information about school meals by email	67.8%	66.9%
Wanting to receive information by paper e.g. brochure	31.1%	27.9%
Want to pay online	83.0%	81.2%
Know money is spent on a school meal when paying online	58.7%	58.1%
Number of parents rating overall school meals as very good or OK	90.3%	89.4%
Not having breakfast	11.1%	11.7%
Number of people walking to school	46.3%	40.4%
Wanting child to learn to cook at school	96.3%	95.9%
Wanting more information about what child had for lunch	79.9%	79.8%
Average of having chips a week	1.43 times	1.34 times
Portions of fresh fruit and vegetables yesterday	3.2 portions	3.25 portions
Number of glasses of water per day	2.86 glasses	2.93 glasses
Average time spent exercising	70 minutes	67.5 minutes
Parents concerned about the weight of their child	13.7%	14.2%
Wanting to go into school to try a school meal	39.0%	42.5%
Average sum given to child for pocket money	£5.33	£5.40
Number of children that save their pocket money	81.5%	81.0%
Have a social media account	50.4%	51.0%

- Has the second highest take up of free school meal entitlement.
- The overall impression of the school meal service was rated third highest with 90.3% saying it was very good or OK.
- Had the highest rating for quality of food with 89.9% rating it as good or OK.
- Has the highest percentage of pupils walking to school at 46.3%.
- 78.3% of parents agreed they were happy with the quality of school meals served.
- Pupils are exercising for the longest time each day at an average of 70 minutes.



Conclusions by the Author

As author of the report I wish to raise a number of points, they are:

1. The current situation with Free School Meals and the number of parents not claiming their entitlement.
2. The need for more schools and school caterers to use new technology such as online payment and the new tools of digital marketing to help them engage with parents.
3. The acknowledgement of parents about all the changes that have happened in the school meals industry in recent years.
4. The role that food must have on the school curriculum.
5. The low number of parents sharing transport to school with friends and family.
6. The large amount of work that is still required to ensure the next generation adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Free School Meals

Free school meals are vital for the well being of many thousands of young people. The number claiming their entitlement is vital for two reasons. Firstly the percentage uptake of free school meals is used in setting the budget of all schools. Secondly any young people not taking up their free meal might be going hungry and therefore are more likely to struggle with afternoon lessons. The current economic situation and rise of unemployment will increase those entitled to claim free meals. However, this benefit should not be part of any universal credit system where the money is given to parents rather than to schools/caterers to pay for a school meal. This change, if it were allowed to happen, would have a major impact on the viability of school meals and thus reduce the ability to use the school catering service to promote healthy eating. Also it would result in more children going hungry with the potential of being disruptive in afternoon classes. Free school meals are a valuable social benefit and must be extended to all those entitled to receive them and online payment will be a great help in this.

New Technology

Local authorities and individual schools must let all their school caterers have access to the Internet so that they can engage parents online. Firstly is online payment which can save a considerable amount of school staff administration time and secondly are the new digital marketing tools that will enable caterers to have greater engagement with their existing and potential customers. Once you have online payment you can reduce the amount of unhealthy items that are bought on the way to and from school as well as reducing bullying, especially with Secondary School males. Also parents will be able to see what their child is having for lunch and if they are concerned about the weight of the child will be in a better position to help.

Parents want to receive information about school meals via email and websites and in Primary Schools to a much lesser extent by paper. School caterers will need to move away from traditional paper brochures in the very near future and re-invest those savings into digital marketing techniques and this must include social media. This means local authority caterers having full access to the Internet and allowed to write blogs, be involved with twitter and using Facebook. They could engage with parents by having online votes to decide which dishes to put on the menu, encourage feedback and set up an online forum for parents to discuss issues relating to the school meals service.

Parental Attitudes

It will be very gratifying to school caterers to see the high rating of parents towards the school catering service. A lot of work has been undertaken to introduce nutrient based standards in recent years and many hurdles have been overcome. The promotion of healthy menus to young people must be continued in all schools, including those that have attained Academy status. However, how will this be monitored? There is no clear answer at present and this needs action.

Food and the Curriculum

The earlier young people learn about food the better it will be for them. They need to have a love of food and enjoy cooking so they can explore different flavours and tastes. The vast majority of parents want their children to learn to cook at school. It is vital that School Cookery Clubs and the Chef's Adopt-a-school programme from the Academy of Culinary Arts are encouraged and extended. Many local authorities and foodservice contractors also have schemes of this nature.

Some schools will need to re-invest in domestic science facilities and this must be seen by schools as a priority. The hotel and catering Industry should play its part by achieving ever closer links with schools such as chefs talking in class about where food comes from, how far it has travelled and what it tastes like.

Travelling to school

Anecdotal evidence tells us that when schools are on holiday the pressure on roads is greatly reduced. That is why it is so disappointing to see in the LACA/ParentPay research that less than 2% of respondents were sharing their car with friends or family when taking children to school. This figure shows the potential to increase car sharing and reduce the congestion on our roads at the start and end of the school day.

More work required on healthy eating

The results show that young people are having a reasonable amount of exercise but there will be concerns about the amount of students that are not eating their five-a-day and are on the low side of water intake. However, I am very concerned about the number of children not having breakfast before school and especially in Secondary Schools where the numbers are higher at 15%. Students going without breakfast cannot be at their best for learning during

morning lessons and so be less attentive and a disruption in class. Schools can find it difficult to provide a service to the whole school as many school busses get delayed and children have no time left for a breakfast. This means parents have a vital role to play in ensuring their children, especially teenagers, have the best start to the day.

LACA has taken the lead for many years regarding the promotion of healthy eating at lunch time. A school meal will usually account for at least two portions of fruit and vegetables and sometimes three. With children saying they had less than four portions of fruit and vegetables the previous day it shows children are not getting enough at home.

It is vital that Change4Life continues its work in this area and it is interesting to see that their quizzes for National School Meals Week (NSMW) are one of the most frequent downloads by teachers. NSMW run by LACA is one of the biggest promotions of healthy eating in schools that takes place. This year it has achieved its highest level of participation with local authorities, foodservice contractors and individual schools. This is very encouraging. For anyone wanting further information they should go to www.iloveschoolmeals.co.uk. There are a large number of downloads that schools can use during the academic year and they don't have to be used just during NSMW from 7th to 11th November 2011.





About LACA

Since inception in 1990, LACA has set out to inform, develop, represent and support its members through a range of initiatives and services. The Association became a Company Limited by Guarantee in 2009.

The Association represents the School Food Industry and membership is open to all parties who make a contribution to this market sector - providers (public and private sector), client officers, consultants, suppliers and manufacturers. Academies and individual schools may become members of the Association.

There are twelve regions; the English regions are based upon the government regional geographic structures and additionally there is a region in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland region is currently dormant. Some regions join together to run as one; these are currently London & South East Region and Scotland & North East Region.

The organisation draws on the strengths of its membership nationally, and is managed through its members on a voluntary basis. Each region elects a representative to sit on the LACA Board and become a Director of LACA Ltd. The Directors of LACA Ltd have overall responsibility for decisions made by the Association.

There is a continuing need for all involved in the industry to work together to maintain high standards in the school catering service, and thus make a major contribution to the health of future generations.

Additionally - by attracting as many customers as possible and providing an additional learning opportunity within schools - an important public service should be maintained resulting in assured employment for the many thousands of staff, a vibrant supply industry in both food and equipment streams as well as the main aim of improving the public health target.

LACA Mission Statement:

Together, We Achieve Excellence in School Food

For more information please go to www.laca.co.uk





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.

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 over 2,500 schools across 165 local authorities. This year ParentPay will help schools collect and manage over £120 million from parents.

In 2002 the business was founded by a working parent and ex-teacher trying to help a local school and make life easier for other parents. Every feature developed by ParentPay has been driven by its users. ParentPay puts schools' and parents' needs at the centre of everything it does.

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

Caterers can reduce the meal administration burden, increase school meal uptake and engage all parents including non-service users.

The system delivers real-time data to parents including meal choice information, menus and nutritional data.

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

For more information please go to www.parentpay.com



About the Author

Arnold Fewell is Managing Director of AVF Marketing Ltd. Arnold started his career as a hotelier and in 1985 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 organises National School Meals Week for LACA.

In 2003, he created a new website at 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

For more information please go to www.avfmarketing.co.uk

