



# A FOOD POLICY FOR GLASGOW SCHOOLS

## BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Education Services has responsibility for school meals in all educational establishments within Glasgow City Council. Cordia is contracted by Education Services to provide school meals for children and young people in nurseries, primary and secondary schools across the city.

Scottish Government published the report, *Hungry for Success* in 2003. This report emphasised the need for all school meals to conform to specific nutritional standards. *The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act (2007)* built on the work of *Hungry for Success* and the Health Promoting Schools initiative. The Act places health promotion at the heart of a school's activities.

Two important documents relating to food within schools were published more recently.

**Better Eating, Better Learning (March 2014)** sets out the renewed commitment to ensure that Scotland's children and young people enjoy a healthier, thriving, sustainable and resilient food future. It states what education authorities, catering services, parents and schools working in partnership should do to improve school food and children and young people's learning about food.

**Beyond the School Gate (June 2014)** is a report aimed at secondary schools. It asks local authorities, schools, caterers and retailers to consider what more they can do to encourage young people to stay on site and purchase school food and also how they can positively influence the food environment beyond the school gate.

A discussion document *Becoming a Good Food Nation* was also published in 2014. This contains a vision on how Scotland would look in 2025 in relation to food. It states that people from every walk of life, will take pride and pleasure in the food served day by day in Scotland. To deliver this vision it proposes taking action in priority areas including: food in the public sector; children's food; and local food.



## LEARNING ABOUT FOOD AND HEALTH

All primary and secondary schools should establish School Nutrition and Action Groups (SNAG); consisting of parents, students, staff, Cordia and community/business representatives. The purpose of the group will be to work with the school community to deliver the outcomes identified in this report.

Children and young people should be well informed about food and the relationship between food and healthy lifestyles so they can make healthy choices about food which will last throughout their lives. All schools and nurseries use the 'food and health' experiences and outcomes within the curriculum to ensure that children and young people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to make healthy food choices and establish lifelong healthy eating habits. Through the experiences and outcomes in the curriculum, children and young people develop knowledge, skills and attitudes related to food. They learn where it comes from; how it is produced; what influences food choices and preferences; and the impact that food has on health, wellbeing and the environment. Children and young people are taught about food and health in a variety of contexts: in classroom lessons; through interdisciplinary learning, by growing food in the school grounds or local area and by working in partnership with local supermarkets. Many schools are engaged in outstanding practice

in this area. Schools should continue to have the opportunity to share good practice through, for example, Open Doors events or on Glasgow Online.

Food and drink offered in schools should be a model of healthy eating. Education about food should support children and young people to make the right choices to drive changes in their diets. *The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act* restricts the amount of salt, sugar and fat content permitted in school meals and sets out foods that are able to be included in school meals or sold in school tuck shops and those which are not. All meals produced as part of Cordia's school meals service have been analysed to ensure they fully meet the *Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007*. Cordia regularly reviews the products available for school meals to ensure that they continue to comply with the Act.

Food eaten at lunchtime should be more explicitly linked with the health and wellbeing curriculum. To ensure that this happens, the engagement of children and young people in school meal choices and provision needs to be improved. SNAGs provide a helpful forum to engage children and young people. It should be encouraged, through SNAGs, that young people do not bring cooked, prepared food from outlets outside of school into school for consumption.

Opportunities to link the dining experience with classroom learning and food growing should be encouraged. Cordia staff and teachers should work together via the SNAG to identify opportunities for theme days which link to teachers' planning. Catering Managers should plan and deliver information sessions at all PI and SI transition events. Staff from Cordia should attend selected Parents' Evenings throughout the school year. Cordia works with Dumfries House, which is located near Cumnock, Ayrshire to develop an innovative food education programme for primary pupils. This programme explores food from the ground to the plate and includes sessions in a growing garden, classroom and working kitchen. Schools across the city should have opportunities to access this programme.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

All schools should establish a School Food and Nutrition Action Group (SNAG), the recommended membership of the group is: staff member, student council representatives, parent(s), Cordia and local business representative(s).

The SNAG in each school should work towards implementing the recommendations in this report.

All young people should continue to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes related to food through the curriculum and be encouraged to make healthy choices and establish lifelong healthy eating habits.

Cordia staff should attend Parents' Evenings over the course of the school year and deliver information sessions at key transition points.

Children and staff should continue to work on projects which involve food from the ground to the plate, including those at the Dumfries House project.



## FOOD AND DRINK PROVISION IN SCHOOL

Any food which is brought into schools as snacks or packed lunches should accord with the messages from the health and wellbeing curriculum and the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act. Advice and guidance is available for parents. A leaflet from Cordia provides guidance on packed lunches in primary schools. Headteachers use this leaflet as part of their communication strategy to encourage parents to provide their children with healthy packed lunches.

Cordia's Catering Manager working group 'Think Fresh' meets regularly to ensure that all food and drink served in the Fuel Zones is inviting and appealing to encourage children and young people to choose to eat a school meal. This group also ensures all items on the menu are developed in line with the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act (2007). Cordia members of SNAG should ensure that significant issues are forwarded to 'Think Fresh'. Similarly, significant issues raised by 'Think Fresh' should be communicated to SNAGs.

## THE DINING EXPERIENCE

“The dining experience is about more than just the food and drink served. It is about the atmosphere, the queuing times and conditions, the seating, the plates, the cutlery, the interaction with those serving, taking payment, supervising and supporting, the location of the serving hatches or tables and more. Children and young people can be experienced consumers with prior expectations, perhaps based on word of mouth, opinions of peers, parental perception and marketing, advertising and branding inside and outside of school. Every day these expectations will influence decisions around where to spend lunchtime.”

**(Better Eating, Better Learning, 2014).**

The dining experience should encourage positive social interaction. Children and young people should choose to use, enjoy and look forward to the dining experience. It is recognised that it could be time to change aspects of the dining experiences including the use of the 'Fuel Zone' branding. Primary schools currently use non-disposable plastic cutlery and meal trays to serve food in the Fuel Zones. Cordia undertook a successful pilot of a new range of tableware in one primary school. Children had involvement in selecting the range of items required and chose the colour to match their school colours. Cordia should carry out a review of schools' dining

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Cordia should revise packed lunch leaflet and distribute to schools.

Through SNAGs, young people should be discouraged from bringing cooked, prepared food from outlets outside of school into school for consumption.

SNAGs should encourage young people to remain in school and promote stay on site lunch experience.

Cordia should ensure that there is effective communication between the SNAGs and the 'Think Fresh' group.

furniture and tableware and present a proposal to Education Services for alternative dining room furniture and tableware. Cordia should consult with SNAGs for options to re-brand the Fuel Zones.

Dining rooms can be noisy and busy. Sometimes it can be a challenge to provide a fully pleasant eating environment when there are a large number of children requiring to be fed. Caledonia Primary School carried out a pilot to link the lunch experience more closely to the health and wellbeing curriculum. In this school the timing of the lunchtime service was adjusted with the agreement of Cordia, and each class took turns on a weekly basis to start lunch fifteen minutes earlier than usual. Teachers stayed with their class for lunch. Good manners, discussion about healthy food and opportunities for exercise were discussed across the lunch table. The school evaluated this experience positively and has now adopted this as the regular arrangement for school lunches. SNAGs should consider the Dining Experience within their nursery or school and recommend improvements if required.

Glasgow City Council has placed restrictions on street traders' licences to restrict their operation in the vicinity of schools with the aim that the areas around schools remain free from mobile fast food outlets. In September 2011, Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) carried out research in which it

explored the nutritional quality of foods purchased in the vicinity of schools. The research team found that many shops and cafes near schools had cheap lunchtime 'offers' which were specifically targeted to school pupils. When these were analysed for nutritional information they were found to have far more fat and salt than nutritional guidelines recommended. SNAGs should consider how to engage with local food outlets to encourage them to work towards the Healthy Living Awards. The toolkit in Beyond the School Gates would assist with this.

Schools have a key role in explaining the positive advantages of school food menus compared to some food which is available in local outlets. Cordia has reviewed food provision and dining experiences in all secondary schools to discourage young people from choosing unhealthy options from outside the school. A range of additional, non-traditional outlets have been opened in a number of secondary schools. These include cafes, external kiosks and internal counter points.

In August 2009, a pilot exercise The Big Eat In was put in place in a number of secondary schools in Glasgow. S1 pupils were encouraged to stay within the school grounds at lunchtime. The pilot ran throughout the

2009/10 academic year. As part of this initiative, a holistic approach was used to create an enjoyable, healthy, active lunchtime where a healthy lunch featured. The Big Eat In was reported as being a success by the majority of the pupils and staff members. The uptake of school lunches among secondary pupils increased in the pilot schools. Most primary schools encourage children to stay in school over lunchtime. SNAGs in secondary schools should encourage all S1 and S2 young people to remain on school premises at lunch time and enjoy the school dining experience.

Glasgow City Council's Food Action Plan has been produced as a result of the toolkit within Beyond The School Gate. The action plan shows evidence of collaboration between Glasgow City Council Services namely: LES - Environmental Health, Chief Executives Office (Licensing, Area Partnerships), Education Services, Cordia, DRS (Planning) as well as with external partners including The Scottish Government, The Food Standards Agency (Scotland), NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Glasgow City Community Health Planning) and NHS Scotland (Healthy Living Award).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools, through SNAGs, should review and improve the dining hall experience for young people.

Cordia should carry out a review of schools' dining furniture, tableware and the branding of the Fuel Zone and present a proposal to Education Services for alternative dining room furniture and tableware.

SNAGs should make contact with local businesses and

encourage them to work towards a Healthy Living Award.

SNAGs should encourage all primary school children to remain on site for lunch with agreement of their parents.

All S1 and S2 young people should be encouraged to stay on site unless they have the agreement of their parents to go home.



## SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH FOOD

“ Food is an excellent topic for schools to use to develop understanding about sustainability; lending itself well to a whole school approach across the curriculum. Working with the catering service, school food can be used to explore a range of issues around sustainability and empower children and young people to then share their learning with the wider community ”

**(Better Eating, Better Learning).**

Cordia's main drivers when procuring food and drink for schools are financial, along with availability and volume of the product. It is a challenge to balance these drivers with the desire to supply the school meal service with healthy, fresh, seasonal, and sustainably grown food.

Through the curriculum children and young people have the opportunity to learn about the impact of food choices on individual health and the environment, and to understand the role they play in the conservation of natural resources, food waste and recycling. Where appropriate, they also learn about preparing food that they have planted and grown.

Many schools support Fairtrade and are part of the Fairtrade Schools movement. They recognise that teaching children about ethical brands is a key aspect of understanding global sustainability.

Cordia provides young people with occasional tasting sessions and organises 'themed days' to encourage them to try new food items and different foods from around the world.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Cordia should ensure when procuring food and drink items for schools, that sustainability is a key consideration and include sustainable food that is fresh, local and in season on the school meal menus.

Schools should ensure they provide opportunities for children and young people to be actively involved in food they have prepared, food they have planted and grown.

All food waste in schools should be recycled.

Cordia should develop a programme that delivers a range of fresh produce, locally sourced wherever possible, for young people to sample, these will form part of schools' improved approaches to young people's dining experience.



## TRAINING AND SUPPORT

“ Commitment and performance appear to be higher in schools where the catering staff are well trained, where they have a good understanding of the reasons behind decisions made about the food service and where they understand how they play a part in the process. Likewise the quality of food education is likely to be better where all teachers are knowledgeable and confident around food and its impact on health and wellbeing and understand the wider context for food education, (Better Eating, Better Learning).”

**(Better Eating, Better Learning).**

Teaching and catering staff involved in school food provision and food education should have the opportunity to undertake professional training which enables them to maximise opportunities to teach children and young people about the relationship between food, health, and the environment.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Catering managers and headteachers should jointly participate in local awareness raising sessions to gain a better understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities regarding the requirements of the Act and “Better Eating, Better Learning”.

Cordia should arrange training for all front line catering staff.

## COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

“We must successfully promote and encourage support for school food provision and food education to all our stakeholders. Different people; children, parents carers and whole communities, have their own perceptions of school food and drink. Sometimes these perceptions are good, but sometimes they are not. These perceptions may be based on misunderstanding or misinformation. In some cases these important partners may have a little say in decision making about food in schools and may have no idea of the quality of food and drink or food education in their local school”. (Better Eating, Better Learning 2014”.

**(Better Eating, Better Learning 2014).**

Cordia has helpful websites about catering in primary and secondary schools. The primary website displays a pictorial menu including halal and vegetarian options.

The Secondary website focuses mainly on the points reward scheme which encourages the uptake of fruit and vegetables. In addition there is a parent and pupil zone that has some information regarding food education.

The SNAGs should play a key part in disseminating messages about food and health to children, young people and parents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Cordia should review the content of its websites with a focus on developing food education information for use by parents and young people.

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