

Parent / Guardian Information Sheet

What is the survey about?

The School Food Trust (SFT)^a in collaboration with TNS-BMRB have recently completed a survey in a nationally representative sample of primary schools in England; evaluating the impact of the standards for school meals on school food provision and pupils' food selection and consumption at lunchtime. We now need to carry out a similar survey in secondary schools after completing a successful pilot survey in 9 schools in February 2010.

The aim is to assess the impact of the new standards on the types of food and drink actually selected and consumed by secondary school pupils at mid-morning break and lunchtime. We will also compare school food with packed lunches and other food brought into school from outside. Equally important, it will assess the extent to which food provision in schools meets the Government's standards for school food. Findings will be compared to those from the 'School Meals in Secondary Schools in England' report, published in 2004.

Why is the survey important?

Good nutrition is vital in young people for growth and development. Eating habits developed at an early age are often carried into adulthood and there are increasing concerns about the rise in obesity in children as well as adults. How well we eat can have an impact on our future health so it is important to know what young people are eating and the influences on their food choices in order help them develop healthier eating habits.

Who is conducting the survey?

This survey is being conducted by the SFT, in collaboration with our survey partner TNS-BMRB. The SFT is an independent body with the unique remit of transforming school food and food skills. It was set up as Non Departmental Public Body in 2005 to promote the education and health of children and young people by improving the quality of food supplied and consumed in schools.

The research team has extensive experience working with schools and caterers. The survey is being funded by the School Food Trust. All researchers and interviewers from the SFT and TNS-BMRB have current Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) approval.

Why was my school selected?

TNS-BMRB has selected a random sample of 160 secondary schools in England of which 80 will be recruited to take part in the survey. These 80 schools will provide a good cross-section of the types of secondary school catering services in England.

When will the study take place?

The fieldwork will be conducted between October 2010 and March 2011 and will be conducted over mid-morning breaks and lunch periods on 5 consecutive days (in agreement with the Head teacher and Catering manager).

^a School Food Trust www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk



What does the survey involve?

Researchers will contact the Catering manager/Head cook and ask them to provide information about food and drink provision at mid-morning break and lunch time. Each school will then be visited by interviewers who will:

- Record details of all foods and drinks available each mid-morning break and lunch time
- Randomly select up to 15 pupils each day at mid-morning break and 15 pupils each day taking a school lunch. They will also randomly select up to 5 pupils each day bringing a packed lunch and other food from outside school.

The interviewers will explain what the study is about, and ask if they would be willing to take part. If the pupil agrees, interviewers will record what they have chosen at school or brought in for lunch, ask questions about age, form, and usual eating habits at lunchtime, and after the meal record any leftovers. The interview will only take about 5 minutes. **Each pupil will be seen only once. Participation is entirely voluntary; your child can decide to opt-out from the study at any time. There will be no adverse consequences if they do so.**

What will it involve for the teaching staff?

The survey will require minimum input from teaching staff and will cause minimal disruption to the school and pupils since all data collection involving the pupils will take place during mid-morning break and lunch time (i.e., outside lesson time).

What will happen to the data collected?

Results from this national survey will improve our understanding of the impact of the school food standards on school food provision and consumption in secondary schools.

All data that we collect will be held securely and strictly confidential by the SFT. **No school or pupil** will be identified individually in any report of our findings. All data collected will be held (securely archived) for 7 years after completion of the survey in accordance with legal requirements. Findings are due to be reported towards the end of 2011.

For further information, please contact:

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