

# FIVE FOODIE DAYS

## INTRODUCING Case Study

Maximising uptake and engaging pupils in promoting healthy eating by modernising food in primary schools.

**FOOD**  
& Co.  
BY sodexo

JANUARY 2019

**schools**  
by sodexo

## Facts and figures

- Food & Co. by Sodexo is our food and dining solution for government schools, informed by insights and research, conducted with pupils, for pupils.
- Five Foodies Days is our new Food & Co. menu, designed specifically for primary schools to increase uptake with pupils at key stage 2 (KS2).
- We conducted a pilot in one school over nine weeks with 290 pupils (15% of whom are entitled to a free school meal (FSM)), serving an average of 158 meals a day<sup>1</sup>.
- We gathered feedback from pupils, parents, teaching staff, catering staff, the account manager and senior craft chefs.
- We engaged a team of pupils, known as Agents for Change, to help implement the changes by engaging their peers, making observations in the dining hall, tasting the food and conducting surveys to inform cook.
- When weighted against 2017 performance, the pilot showed a 13% increase in uptake in paid and FSMs (which was better than expected, considering the significant change to the service offer).
- Lessons learnt from the pilot informed our marketing and communications plan for the nationwide roll-out.
- Training completed ahead of the nationwide roll-out included three roadshows to develop skills. We also set up a helpline to answer managers' questions about the change.
- The menu launched in 50 primary schools in September 2018.
- Matt Garner, Managing Director for Government Schools, issued a letter to all our cooks to ensure they understood their valued role and contribution to the success of this new menu.
- Matt also sent letters to headteachers introducing the new menu, explaining the changes, and sharing the insights and results from the pilot.
- We created and distributed a booklet for parents to introduce the new menu, and share the pilot's insights and results.
- To decorate the counters, we also created marketing materials, such as Five Foodie Days bunting, plus a range of information posters, newsletters and communications for pupils and parents.
- We developed a taster toolkit to promote Fun Foodie Days, for cooks to engage pupils and parents to sample the menu. It included posters and acetates to empower them to work collaboratively with their schools. We supported this with training for cooks to develop their confidence.
- We also provided training to cooks on how to set up the Agents for Change programme, plus supporting tools, including simple surveys, clip boards and a badge. Agents work with cooks to provide feedback and help with taster sessions.
- Since the launch, sales have increased at a steady pace - at some sites better than expected - thanks to constructive, co-ordinated support and continuing collaboration with the main stakeholders.

## Introduction

At Schools by Sodexo, we've been providing catering services to government schools for more than 50 years. Last year, we embarked on a journey to review our school food offer and challenge the market norm. Food & Co. by Sodexo, our new catering and dining solution for government schools, is the result of a year's worth of research, consultation, trials, partnership working and - most importantly - pupil engagement.

We've coproduced Food & Co. with pupils in KS2, 3 and 4 to ensure it meets the needs and expectations of today's generation while still conforming to the Government's school food standards. Pupil input has been crucial to the development of the look and feel of our Food & Co. brand, as well as the dishes featured on our Food & Co. menus, where we've turned traditional school dinners on their head.

Five Foodie Days is part of Food & Co. and represents our new catering offer designed specifically for primary schools. The insight we've gained from developing it has also informed a new and innovative food offer for our secondary schools.

## The need for change

School meals are universally regarded as an important aspect of children's development and an indication of the care our society takes of the youngest generation. As a caterer with a mission to improve the quality of life of those we serve and work with, we're fully committed to improving the quality, nutrition and appeal of the meals we serve, but the same drivers also come from the Government and the schools themselves.

### Focusing on improving health and learning outcomes

The School Food Plan (Department for Education July 2013) revealed that take-up of school food nationally was only 43% and only 1% of packed lunches brought from home met the nutritional standards that apply to school food.

This isn't entirely surprising when most lunches are prepared by frazzled parents who are already pressed for time and are working within a tight budget. That's why the best solution is a nutritious school lunch.

Additionally, nearly a third of children aged 2 to 15 are overweight. This means younger generations are more likely to become overweight adults and are more at risk of health issues such as type 2 diabetes, some cancers and heart disease, and other diet-related health problems, such as tooth decay.

These children are also staying overweight and/or obese for longer, with the burden falling hardest on those from low-income backgrounds. As such, it's crucial children learn from an early age about healthy eating and the importance of activity in their lives, so they can carry this information with them beyond primary school.

Although there is little evidence showing a link between a healthy school lunch and a reduction in obesity prevalence and dental caries, or improved attainment, Public Health England acknowledges there is a collective acceptance that:

**“Pupils with better health and wellbeing are likely to achieve better academically. So, helping children achieve and maintain a healthier lifestyle remains a key foundation for promoting a better diet.”**

In 2014, the Government introduced universal infant free school meals (UIFSMs) for KS1 pupils to improve academic attainment and save families money. However, there is a marked drop-off in the uptake of meals when pupils move on to KS2, where, on average, paid uptake is only 30% and FSMs uptake is around 70-80% (DfE School Food Plan 2013).

While this could be for varying reasons, such as parents not being able to afford (or appreciate the advantages of) school meals, it could also be because of a lack of desirability of the meals themselves. Whatever the reason, it was clear something had to be done.

### Responding to feedback to continually improve our services

Our Clients for Life programme involves engaging in conversations with our clients to gain feedback to help us understand how well we're meeting their needs and how we can improve our services. Feedback from our portfolio of primary schools showed we were doing well, but could benefit from greater innovation, pupil engagement and improved consistency. It also highlighted the importance of craft skills training for our staff and meal uptake levels, especially among pupils eligible for FSMs.

This background clearly showed that increasing school meal uptake would be in everyone's interests: for children's health, to improve learning outcomes and to reduce inequality.



## Seeing through the eyes of the child

In 2017, in our Government Schools business, we decided to address these issues by developing a new food offer. Matt Garner, MD of our Government Schools business, was adamant the changes should be based on market insight to ensure the service met the needs of our customers and clients.

This led to the appointment in May 2017 of Rosemary (Rosie) Molinari BSc MSc RNutr (Public Health) as Marketing Manager for Government Schools. Rosie has over a decade of experience working in school food policy; engaging with schools, local authorities, pupils and families; commissioning research investigating barriers to school meal take-up; and developing resources. She's also a founding member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on School Food, contributing towards policy. Her experience and expertise were crucial to the development of Food & Co. and Five Foodie Days.

Rosie's area of particular interest and expertise is pupil engagement, underscored by empowerment models. This mirrors the advice in the School Food Plan that a successful school food service must be driven through the eyes of the child, with headteacher leadership and a whole-school approach. All of which is necessary to establish sustained behavioural change and create a viable school meal service.

### Pupil-led service development

Understanding the customer is important and one of the most effective ways to do this is by listening to their feedback and translating it into a service that meets their needs.

To achieve this, we conducted focus groups over a 12-month period with pupils aged 7-16 across the UK. We asked them about the food they want to eat and why, when, and how they want to eat it. We also received some interesting feedback about how they'd like to see their dining experience improved.

### Pupil consultation in action



This case study focuses on the menu and not the dining room make-over programme.

Lead Author by Sodexo:  
Rosemary Molinari BSc MSc RNutr (Public Health), Marketing Manager For Schools

The message was clear, with pupils telling us they wanted to:

- eat high-street-style food that included their favourite choices
- enjoy a high-street experience, with food served in a box or similar, offering a more grown-up feel
- try new foods from different countries and cultures
- be able to choose tasty sauces to add extra flavour and customise their menu choices.

### Verifying our findings with the latest market insight

The findings of our research also aligned with the latest insights into market trends, showing how pupils today (Generation Z children, aged 0-18) are brand-savvy and active consumers of high-street food.

Research also shows they have more sophisticated palates than ever before (Mintel 2017):

- 72% of children aged 7-15 want to try food they haven't eaten before
- 68% would like to eat food they've seen in adverts and on the high street
- 33% read food labels and are actively making healthier choices, and doing so is perceived to be "cool"
- 93% of children think it's important to have a healthy diet and look out for food that's nutritious
- They're aware of the effect humans have on the environment and expect companies to act responsibly, and are prepared to hold them accountable
- They want a greater say in their school food and dining experience
- They want nutritional information that will help them make informed choices.

This alignment validated our findings and gave us complete confidence in using our research data as the foundations to build our new Food & Co. menus and designs for our dining room make-overs, designed to influence the dining experience in school.

## Developing our primary school offer: Five Foodie Days

Using our experience and the insight we gained from our research, we developed our Five Foodie Days menu for primary schools.

We knew we needed to address pupils' preferences and overcome the problems we'd identified with the traditional meal format of roast on a Wednesday and fish on a Friday, while complying with the Government's school food standards. Our research findings enabled us to create a menu that moved away from tradition to better meet the needs of children and young people in our schools.

Rosie used our research results and the latest market insight to develop a brief for our craft chefs on what our new primary school menu needed to achieve. She also engaged a design company to develop the look and feel of the new offer, which would:

- move away from set days for set meals by mixing things up to create interest, while keeping quality consistent
- include innovative new dishes to meet the expectations of food-savvy young people
- draw pupils to the service by providing a dining experience that's more aligned with the high street
- introduce grown-up days for KS2 pupils
- provide balanced, nutritious meals that give parents confidence in the benefits of school meals
- be served in a fun and colourful dining environment, where pupils can dine and relax with friends.

### The new offer: excitement, change and balance

Under the concept of Five Foodie Days, each day has a different theme:

- **Planet Earth Day:** a celebration of plant-based foods to encourage pupils to try interesting vegetables.
- **Street Food Day:** dishes inspired by high-street trends and served in our hot-box to increase the fun-factor and create a more grown-up dining experience.
- **World Food Day:** exploring foods and tastes from a different country each week.
- **Originals Day:** classic and familiar dishes that pupils love to eat.
- **Favourite Friday:** popular foods for the end of the week – not just fish!



Poster explaining the Five Foodie Days



This gives us consistency from week to week without being dull or predictable, while also keeping the most popular dishes.

These five themes reflect pupils' preferences and feedback, as identified in our research, their awareness of environmental issues, their desire to try new foods and enjoy established favourites, and their interest in handheld, fun-to-eat dishes.

Our craft chefs took the brief and developed menus that included favourites, veggies and a reduction in sugar. We want to reassure parents that school meals can be both popular and healthy, and teach children that eating well is about balance and variety.

We also significantly changed our dessert offering. To reduce sugar and fat, we now only serve hot puddings once a week (making them a treat rather than an expectation). In their place, we serve largely fruit-based desserts, such as mango frozen yoghurt and fresh melon slices.



To meet the older pupils' desire for a more grown-up food experience, we introduced hot-box days once a week on Street Food Day. Staff like it because it's quick and easy to serve, and pupils enjoy the different dining experience.

**"I like the grown-up days because they're fun, the food feels special and it's posh."**  
Pupil, aged 8



We also service food in a box once a month to KS1 pupils to prepare them for KS2 and encourage continued uptake of school meals after UIFSMs ceases.

## Driving change

Five Foodie Days is a big change from what we've done before, not just for the pupils but also for parents and our staff. To prepare everyone to embrace the change, we knew early engagement with pupils, headteachers, parents and our own employees would be crucial to the success of the new offer. So, we developed an implementation plan to set our schools up for success when we rolled out Five Foodie Days in September 2018.

We began by educating and training our teams on the new menus and Food & Co. concept, explaining and sharing the research and why change was necessary. We used flexible training methods, including roadshows and webinars, to raise awareness of the changes and share new cooking skills.



### Executive Development Chef Paul Eastmead, demonstrating the FFD menu at a roadshow

We also wanted to prepare cooks to work with pupils through the new Agents for Change programme, being led by our central marketing team and business support managers.

With our managers as the main spokespeople, we used the training to make sure staff understood the concept, so they could then cascade the messages to their teams, and talk to school staff, pupils and parents about it. Evaluation of the training showed cooks welcomed the new menu, were excited about the fresh approach, understood the reasons for change and were looking forward to the launch, with 80% expressing confidence in being able to deliver it.

## Engaging pupils through Agents for Change



We know schools want pupils to have a greater say in school food service – and so do we. Besides, we value their contribution, and want to empower and engage them.

It's also well-documented that, when pupils are given a voice in the food offer, they're more likely to take ownership of the environment and develop an interest in the food they eat<sup>2</sup>. Our Agents for Change initiative puts pupils in the driving seat, giving them an opportunity to talk to their peers and get to know our cooks.

To ensure we meaningfully engaged pupils in their school food, we used Agents for Change to help launch the new offer and will use it to support continual development

Each school selected a small group of pupils from years 5 and 6 to be representatives for their peers and advocates for the new menu. The Agents had four aspects to their jobs:

1. Getting to know and working with the kitchen team.
2. Conducting surveys with pupils and feeding data back to the kitchen.
3. Acting as spokespeople for their peers and offering proposed changes.
4. Supporting taster sessions and encouraging pupils to try the new foods.

This generated ownership and boosted pupil engagement, which helped increase meal uptake. Going forward, it will also give us valuable insight that will allow us to continually tailor and improve our offer based on pupils' needs and views. Additionally, it fits with Ofsted and the school curriculum by giving pupils a meaningful voice and encouraging responsible behaviour.



A certificate thanking Agents for their work



## The pilot

To test our plans and gain feedback to refine our new Five Foodie Days menu, we ran a nine-week pilot at Pinewood Primary Academy for KS1 and KS2 pupils.

Beforehand, we briefed our pilot team, Business Area Manager Jo Adamson and Senior School Cook Nancy McLaughlin, in the new menu and the benefits behind the changes to our primary school food offer. We also trained them in how to implement Agents for Change and provided them with the tools they needed to do the job, including surveys, clipboards, training and a job description for the Agents.

Supported by our craft chefs Russell Edwards and Gary Periti, they tested and served each dish, working with the Agents to gather pupils' feedback. We also engaged and fully involved the Principal, Jenni Elliott, in our drive to modernise the school's food.

After school, Nancy met with parents for a Q&A session, and presented the menu to parents, pupils and teaching staff.

**"I thought it was going to be really hard in the beginning, but once we got organised we found it easier, and enjoyed working with the pupils."** Nancy McLaughlin

We created new marketing materials to enable our on-site team's ability to decorate the catering service area and counters.

The school identified pupils to act as Agents for Change, who proved invaluable in engaging with parents and our on-site team, gathering feedback from their peers and promoting the food.



Example of a Food & Co. dining room designed by pupils (Ridgeway Primary, South Shields)

Ms Elliott endorsed the role of Agents for Change, confirming it was important, and recommended engaging with parents as early as possible in the process, stating:

**"Agents for Change has given the younger Agents responsibility and empowerment."**

We can't stress their importance enough in being our eyes and ears on the ground, and acting as advocates for Five Foodie Days.

**"I am proud to be an Agent because it makes me feel special. You get to go in the kitchen and talk to people, and you make new friends."** Agents for Change pupil, aged 9

Our team at the school received special recognition from Ms Elliott, who commended Sodexo in the development of the new Five Foodie Days menu.

**"The new menu offers something new, it's innovative and the children enjoyed it."** Jenni Elliott, Principal

Rosie likewise commended the pilot team, for their commitment to help transform the food, culture and service delivery on site, and for training the staff. Nancy also won Star of the Month, through our employee recognition scheme, for willingly embracing the change.

## Evaluation framework

To ensure we got it right, the pilot was supported by a comprehensive evaluation framework that considered not just uptake but also the main stakeholders' opinions.

Led by Rosie, it included both quantitative and qualitative measures, involving:

- monitoring overall meal uptake as well as within specific pupil groups (UIFSMs, FSMs, cash-paying)
- conducting interviews with the Principal
- gathering feedback from pupils, parents, our on-site team and school staff
- gathering feedback from the Agents about their role and how we could improve it.

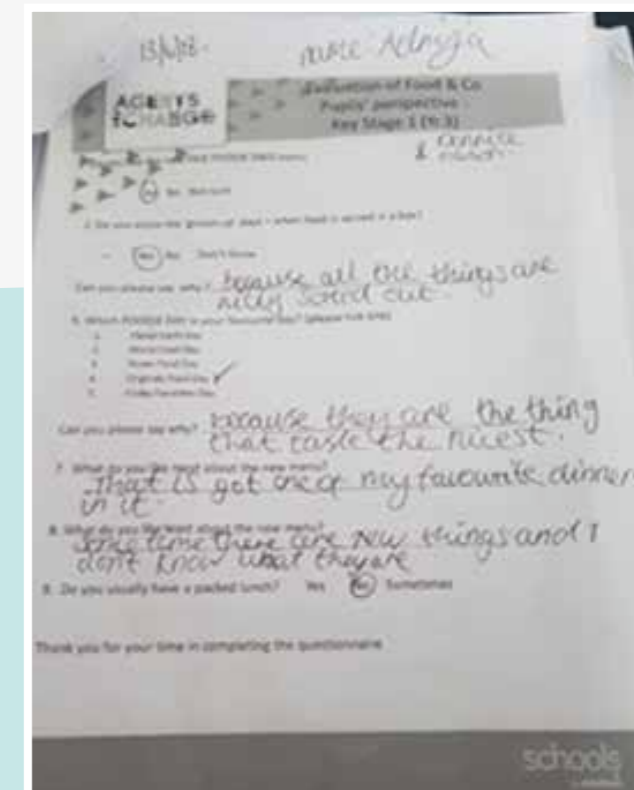
The feedback our Agents captured was also invaluable, covering:

- the food – pupils liked nearly everything; it was tastier and yummiier.
- the box – pupils felt special and posh, and said it was fun.
- Five Foodie Days – pupils enjoyed trying new foods from around the world, while staff said it created interest in and welcomed the links to the curriculum.
- Agents for Change – pupils liked the idea, saying it made them feel happy, special and proud, and they enjoyed talking to different people and making new friends. Staff said it was important as pupils tend to listen to their peers.

**"The Agents programme is a good idea. It's important, as pupils tend to listen to pupils, and it gives them an opportunity to talk about what they do and don't like."** Teacher

The results of our evaluation clearly showed we were getting things right. That's not to say everything was perfect, and the pilot certainly revealed the scale of the change we were undertaking, but it confirmed we were on track to make Five Foodie Days a success in every primary school we partner with.

**"It's all gone down really well, and [the food] looks and tastes great."** Teacher



Example of pupil survey feedback



## Using lessons learnt in our implementation plan

### Explaining new foods

The pilot showed us we needed to educate pupils (and parents) on the less familiar aspects of the Five Foodie Days menu. For example, some pupils avoided dishes with ingredients such as halloumi or gnocchi simply because they didn't know what they were.

The Principal stressed we shouldn't change the menu back, but advised we engage parents to enable the pupils to benefit fully from the new offer. So, we prepared a flyer for parents, telling the story of how we developed Five Foodie Days, from concept to completion, and sent it home with pupils, along with copies of the new menu.



Parent flyer introducing the new menu

Matt Garner also wrote to all our cooks and headteachers, describing the intention behind Five Foodie Days and the journey, and sharing the insights gained through the pilot.

We also created a range of posters to be displayed in dining rooms to promote the menu, explain the packaging and recycling of waste, help embed the changes, and educate pupils on the new foods we were serving and encourage them to try them.

The posters and flyers responded to insights showing how Generation Z want to make informed choices, as well as reassurances we are looking after the environment.

### Bridging the flavour gap through taster sessions for pupils and parents

We know pupils want their favourite and familiar dishes, so worried we weren't giving them something familiar because that would have meant continuing to serve the same old school food. The key was to make the new menu familiar in a school setting, not just a high-street one.

To help overcome this barrier, we decided to run taster sessions, called Foodie Fun Days. We created a toolkit and guidance for our teams on how to conduct them, providing posters for new dishes we wanted pupils to try so they'd become familiar with them.

The posters feature a simple, healthy eating message related to the dish. For example, calcium is good for strong bones. Our aim is to educate our children and encourage them to make informed choices about the food they eat, and to choose a school meal.

The aim of the toolkit itself is to empower our cooks. Featuring a range of tools, it gives them the freedom to develop, design and implement taster sessions by working with the school, parents and pupils. It's also flexible, suggesting different ways to host the sessions, because all our cooks and school dining arrangements are different.

Supported by the Agents, these sessions proved a great success. So much so, our cooks on site will continue to hold them periodically, according to local needs.

The toolkit is self-explanatory, encouraging cooks to 'do it for themselves' rather than waiting for a chef to visit the schools (which would create delays). The empowerment model means they can get on with planning and having fun engaging the pupils, which is exactly what they've been doing. The kit also contains a range of tools, including allergen information, pupil surveys and templates for parent invitations.

To raise awareness of the benefits of healthy eating, our kit also includes tools based on the Public Health England Eatwell Guide healthy eating model.



Foodie Fun Days taster session toolkit for cooks



A taster dish for pupils to try during a session

Aimed at educating young palates and bridging the flavour gap, our craft chefs and cooks said about these taster sessions:

**"They've been mind-blowing and really insightful."**

Pupils have been excited to try the food and our Agents proudly presented the trays of food to their peers.

As part of this process, we realised we also need to educate the parents to build their trust in the new menus. One child said about a Quorn dish from Planet Earth Day:

**"This is lovely, but mummy won't let me have it because she doesn't like it."**

To tackle this, we used our taster sessions to address myths carried over from parents' time in school, like believing we use mainly frozen ingredients in the food we serve.

Through these sessions, we demonstrated how we cook food from fresh in our kitchens, helping us build trust and relationships with people across the whole school community.



A poster promoting a taster session



Child-friendly Eatwell Guide poster



## Sustainability

Young people today are concerned about planet earth and their environment, so we were prepared for their concerns about the sustainability of the boxes we serve food in to give the service a high-street feel. To address this, we created information posters to reassure clients and pupils that they're recyclable and made from sustainable materials (FSC-accredited card).

We're also working towards having a fully compostable solution by 2023, as part of our ongoing commitment to reducing our impact on the environment.

Additionally, as an alternative to boxes, we offer schools the option of using modern enamel plates, which provide a similarly novel high-street experience.

Importantly, our pilot decisively showed that pupils like the boxes and that they were successful in driving meal uptake among KS2 pupils, which was one of our main goals.

## PACKAGING

We all care for our environment



Our Food & Co. menus are informed by pupils across the UK, who told us they wanted food that would allow them to:

- Enjoy a high street dining experience
- Eat healthy high street style foods
- Socialise with friends, and have fun!

### That's why some days our food comes in a box!

We at Sodexo know that protecting Planet Earth is important to pupils.

Sodexo are environmentally friendly, so we have made sure our boxes are all FSC certified, which means they come from well-managed forests and verified recycled sources.

By 2023 all our boxes will be fully compostable!

This is one of the ways 'Five Foodie Day' menu looks after the environment!

**DO YOUR BIT AND BE A DILIGENT RECYCLER!**

Five Foodie Days poster on display at all primary schools where we operate catering services

## Parent engagement

Key to driving uptake was engaging with parents before we launched the new menu, to gain their confidence in the service and promote school food. As part of this, we held a Q&A session during the pilot phase, which provided an invaluable opportunity to respond to any questions or concerns regarding the new foods and packaging.

Thanks to its success, engaging parents through Q&A – in addition to the leaflet we described earlier – became part of our implementation plan, training programme and toolkit guidance. We encouraged all our schools to host informal events with food tastings to tell parents about the menus, sharing with them the insight behind the changes and allowing them to ask questions.

## The big roll-out

In September 2018, we rolled out the Five Foodie Days menu at all 66 state primary schools in our current portfolio and will be introducing this offer in all future contracts.

We're excited about the change and look forward to seeing the schools and pupils reaping the rewards of our insight and efforts. Our on-site teams accepted the challenge of introducing a new menu and dishes, and the need to develop their cooking skills, and are excited about helping future generations benefit from improved food experiences at school.

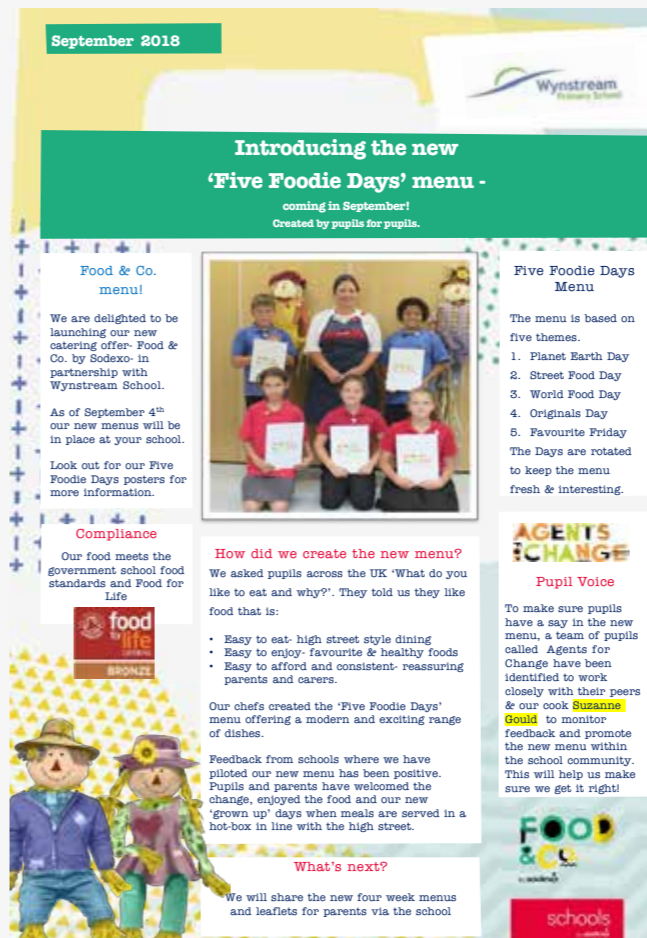


A typical counter serving school meals

The feedback we received post-implementation showed most people welcomed the change; they loved the new menu and appreciated the innovations. The constructive feedback focused mainly on the language used in the menu – e.g. 'bread rolls' vs 'baps' – and cultural differences in how the food is served, so we addressed these matters before launching the new menu. We also advised our area managers to consult with their own schools to ensure the menu met local needs.

Our teams are now working closely with our schools to drive sales together.

The pilot made clear how important it is for us to communicate the changes to parents as early as possible. So, before our mass roll-out, we created and distributed a newsletter to let pupils' families know what was happening and to celebrate the work of the Agents for Change.



Parent newsletter promoting the new menu

We used the lessons we learnt from the pilot to inform our training programme, providing our employees with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to embed our new offer.

The pilot team and our senior leadership team for Government Schools all supported our frontline staff to implement Five Foodie Days across our portfolio. We also set up a helpline for staff during the first few weeks of term, so they could ask questions and speak to our craft chefs.

We respect that parents have the final say in what their children eat at school, and recognise that part of the role of headteachers is to ensure a good school meal service is available to satisfy pupils' diverse needs. We wanted to make sure parents knew we're supporting their efforts to encourage their children to make a healthy option and try new foods at school.

In one school, a group of parents rebelled against the menu and used Facebook to make their voices heard. The headteacher invited them into school and our cook set up a full taster session so we could explain the changes, why we made them and how we went about the process. The school, which was a new contract for us, with Five Foodie Days part of the launch, is now one of our best performers, having experienced a significant increase in sales.

With Five Foodie Days, we've gone the extra mile to create a new menu that promotes health and wellbeing, while also establishing a fully inclusive dining experience for today's generation of young people.

We'll continue to monitor our sales and uptake data, gathering feedback and reviewing the menu accordingly, all of which will inform future changes to the menu.



Food & Co. decorated primary school counter



## Summary of the main benefits of our Food & Co. offer for primary schools

- Five Foodie Days represents a genuine change from traditional school dinners, offering young people a more modern and cosmopolitan meal service that reflects high-street food trends, which is increasing uptake of school food. This is important because it means more young people are eating nutritious, well-balanced meals every day, which in turn has a positive impact on health, wellbeing and learning outcomes.
- The new menu has increased uptake of school meals among FSM-eligible pupils, helping schools close the gap between pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- Five Foodie Days is giving pupils and schools a meal service to look forward to and be proud of, dispelling myths about traditional school dinners.
- The new menu is providing learning opportunities for pupils as well our staff. Our catering teams have learnt new skills and developed confidence, while our themed menu supports the educational curriculum and introduces young people to different foods from around the world.

Based on our insight, and the success of the pilot and launch, we know Five Foodie Days will have a positive impact on school meal uptake across our portfolio, ultimately improving young people's experience of school food, and supporting the Government's health and wellbeing agenda.

While the pilot covered only one school in the south of England, the process of monitoring and impact evaluation, training, taster sessions and so on provided valuable information and guidance for our teams for the big roll-out. Based on the feedback so far, we're confident our new food offer will become the new familiar and favourite.

We continue to develop taster and education sessions with pupils and parents, and look forward to reporting a significant increase in paid and free school meals in the future.

## Beyond the launch – follow-up research

In December 2018, three months after the menu launch, we conducted telephone interviews with cooks and managers at 50 of our schools to gauge the success of the implementation plan. We also wanted to know how they were getting on with the new menu and give them with an opportunity to have their say.

### The main findings

Overall, our findings showed the menu is a success, with the changes having been well received by clients, staff, parents and pupils alike. Some changes were needed to meet local language and taste preferences, but these were minor.

However, the data made it clear we still have work to do to bring everyone up to speed and establish an equitable service. To achieve this, we're working on developing our teams' confidence and skills in key aspects of the offer, such as Agents for Change and use of the taster toolkit.

We've also identified where good practice exists (confidence/skills), and are sharing it through champion networks and future roadshows.

It's critical our cooks and managers are both on board from the outset, so they can influence a positive attitude with the school's head. The cook can't do this alone.

Through our research, we also identified the need for improved communications between managers and school cooks, and between managers and parents.

This experience highlighted how positive attitudes and collaboration between managers and cooks can influence how the changes are welcomed. It also showed how, with a little effort and a taster session, the pupils and parents got on board and sales increased.

Elsewhere, our interviews highlighted the need to improve our marketing of plant-based food and healthy eating with children, which we're now working on.

Managers welcomed tools that empowered and enabled them to work collaboratively. By giving them freedom to act, it meant they could better engage clients and children, and feel proud of the service. They especially appreciated being listened to and felt it motivated them to continue working hard to make sure the menu is a success.

## Sales analysis

Since the launch of the menu in September 2018, a selection of schools in the north and south of England have been gathering detailed sales data related to the Five Foodie Days menu. Having conducted a detailed analysis of the results, they show an overall improvement in sales across the schools. We've also used the data to identify days and dishes that need additional support or tweaks, and training for staff.

## Conclusion and next steps

It cannot be argued that the consistent availability of a wholesome meal at school ensures children and adolescents, regardless of social or cultural factors, have at least one balanced meal a day.

A child's environment is shown to greatly influence the way they eat and positive changes in that environment can promote healthier choices. Studies have also shown that the eating choices of children and adolescents are influenced by their peers and social environment, because they're likely to pick up social cues from their environment.

Through this programme, we've shown that, when harnessed successfully, the school environment is an excellent setting to instil behavioural change strategies to promote healthy lifestyle choices.

As our new food offer, Food and Co. by Sodexo includes the Five Foodie Days menu, which we designed from scratch to suit the diverse tastes of Generation Z. Developed by pupils, for pupils, it has shown how to influence behavioural change, with:

- gentle nudging through effective, fun engagement with children and young people
- collaborative working with parents and clients
- support and training for frontline teams
- transparent communications between managers and staff, and staff and parents.

When used together, we've shown pupils will make healthier choices.

We've made good progress towards achieving this outcome, and have had a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Thanks to these changes, and the hard work and effort of our teams, more children now are eating a healthier school meal than before.

Food and Co. has acted as choice architects to influence behaviour with positive results and help pupils make informed, healthier choices.

The main take-home messages are that:

- change needs to time to bed in
- we shouldn't alter our menu in response to those who worry about change and want to go back to what's familiar, but instead engage and work with them to gain their understanding and support.

We've made the new menu familiar again. We're proud of this result and will continue to listen to our cooks, pupils and clients to make sure we provide a school meal service that meets the needs of children and young people, and supports their health and wellbeing.



THANK YOU

