

Hungry for Success – Further Food for Thought

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**A Report on the Implementation of
*Hungry for Success: A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland***

January 2008

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RR Donnelley B54419 01/08

ISBN 978-0-7053-1132-8

HM Inspectorate of Education

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Foreword

This is the second progress report on *Hungry for Success*. It includes evidence from primary, special and secondary schools. The report finds that *Hungry for Success* has been successful in meeting many of its aims. There have been notable improvements in the quality of school meals in Scotland. Improvements in the nutritional quality of meals have been accompanied by greater encouragement and opportunity to eat healthily. In particular, primary schools have continued to make good progress in achieving improvements and establishing healthy eating firmly within the context of health promotion.

Progress in secondary schools has been slower. In part this relates to a lack of priority and urgency in implementing *Hungry for Success* in secondary schools. In part it relates to the influence of adolescent culture with its increased peer, societal and commercial pressures and greater freedom to go beyond school grounds at lunchtimes.

The period of successful implementation of *Hungry for Success* has unfortunately been paralleled by increasing levels of childhood obesity and inactivity and a greater awareness of the impact of these on the lives of children and young people in Scotland. This report therefore makes proposals on two fronts. Firstly, it makes recommendations to achieve the effective implementation of *Hungry for Success* across all schools and identifies a range of good practice, which will support local authorities and schools in securing continuous improvement. HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) will share good practice by holding a conference and by sharing video clips on our good practice website. In time, this will be included in the *Journey to Excellence* resource. Secondly, the concluding section raises the question of whether *Hungry for Success*, even if implemented well across all schools, will, on its own, be sufficient to address our current problems. It calls for the further development of the policy framework for health and nutrition, including possible limitations on choice and an increased focus on the responsibilities of a wide range of contributors.

I commend this report to you in the hope that it will be used to improve the health and nutrition of Scotland's children and young people.



Graham Donaldson
HM Senior Chief Inspector
January 2008

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Introduction

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- 1.1** In 2003, the Scottish Executive's Expert Panel on School Meals produced its report *Hungry for Success: A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland*¹, initiating significant developments in the provision of school meals in Scotland.
- 1.2** HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) was invited to monitor the progress of *Hungry for Success* as part of its programme of school inspections. In October 2005, HMIE published a first progress report on the implementation of *Hungry for Success*, focusing on primary and special schools².
- 1.3** HMIE has continued to monitor the implementation of *Hungry for Success: A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland*. Specialist Nutrition Associate Assessors (NAAs) work with HMIE to inspect a sample of schools in the general inspection programme. Since the publication of the previous HMIE progress report in October 2005, the December 2006 target date for implementation of the *Hungry for Success* recommendations within secondary schools was reached. From September 2005 to June 2007, 165 primary schools and 23 special schools from all 32 local authorities (LAs) were inspected. From September 2006 to June 2007, 35 secondary schools across 23 local authorities were inspected. Thirteen of these secondary schools were inspected prior to the December 2006 target date. The schools inspected varied in size, geographical location and percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.
- 1.4** In addition to collecting evidence from school inspections, NAAs met with representatives of all LAs.
- 1.5** *Hungry for Success* set out seven principles, supported by recommendations to improve the quality of school meals in Scotland. This report evaluates progress up to July 2007 in implementing these key recommendations in primary and special schools, as well as reporting for the first time on progress made in the secondary sector.

¹ *Hungry for Success – A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland*, Scottish Executive, 2003

² *Monitoring the Implementation of Hungry for Success: A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland, Report on Progress*, HMIE, October 2005

Principle 1: Positive School/Whole Child Ethos

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- 2.1** The *Hungry for Success* guidance recommended that all pupils should have access to appropriate food choices within a health promoting environment. This continues to be an over-arching aim of the health promoting school. Implementing the recommendations of *Hungry for Success* will support LAs and schools in addressing the requirements of the *Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act, 2007*.
- 2.2** Pupils need to have a good knowledge and understanding of food and nutrition to be able to make informed choices within the dining room as well as in other aspects of their daily lives. Ensuring clear links between learning and teaching on food and nutrition in the curriculum and food provision in school was, therefore, a key factor in successful implementation of *Hungry for Success*.
- 2.3** Most schools inspected could demonstrate links between learning and teaching on food and nutrition in the curriculum and food provision in the school. Pupils could discuss basic principles of healthy eating, although their level of understanding and application of knowledge varied. Pupils' ability to make informed choices was a key factor in achieving dietary change. In schools with effective practice, pupils' knowledge and understanding of food and nutrition was developing progressively. These schools had improved the range of items sold in tuckshops, increased the numbers of pupils bringing fruit as a snack from home, encouraged frequent water consumption and promoted well-planned school lunch menus. In a few secondary schools, pupils were unable to identify strategies that the school had adopted to promote health. Overall, more work needed to be done in the secondary sector to ensure that all schools were actively promoting health and well-being. A few primary and secondary schools were still, inappropriately, using sweets as rewards.

2.4 Examples of effective curricular links to *Hungry for Success* included the following.

- Studies of nutrition were enhanced by visits to local greengrocers, fishmongers, butchers and supermarkets, and often involved food tasting and cooking.
- Pupils grew fruit and vegetables in school gardens or poly-tunnels and used this produce in school lunches or tuckshops.
- Pupils prepared leaflets to give advice to other pupils or their parents on healthy packed lunches.
- Practical food preparation increased pupils' motivation, and was sometimes linked to enterprise activity.
- Joint work on recipe development, involving catering staff and home economics departments, promoted healthy lunches and practical cookery skills. The dishes developed were included on school lunch menus.
- Pupils in one school produced a DVD to promote healthy eating, which was then used in other schools in the LA.
- Courses on skills for independent living, for example healthy cooking on a budget, were offered to senior pupils.
- Home economics classes used school lunch menus as a resource for investigations. In one school, S1 classes compared healthy food choices in primary and secondary lunch menus.

Features of good practice: Active involvement of pupils in promoting healthy eating

As part of its efforts to improve healthy eating among pupils and the wider community, a school had secured funding to provide easy access to fresh produce. The 'roots and fruits co-operative' sold subsidised fruit and vegetables to parents and the wider community. Pupils staffed the stalls, dealing with customers, weighing produce and handling cash. They were enthusiastic about the project and some had given up time during their holidays to ensure that the co-operative operated throughout the year. As well as increasing pupils' understanding of healthy eating, the project provided a relevant context to develop pupils' numeracy and enterprise skills.

Principle 2: Partnership Working

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- 3.1** Partnership groups had developed across authorities as a result of *Hungry for Success*. Membership often included staff who had similar roles within an LA, such as responsibility for menu planning or development of resources. Groups met regularly to discuss common issues and share practice and some had input from HMIE, the Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit (SHPSU) and the Food Standards Agency Scotland (FSAS). The Association of Public Service Excellence also continued to discuss key issues at their quarterly meetings, and had close links with SHPSU, FSAS, HMIE and the Scottish Government.
- 3.2** Successful partnership working was a key feature of effective implementation of *Hungry for Success*. Most LAs continued to implement *Hungry for Success* recommendations through strategic groups comprising representatives from catering, education, health and, occasionally, finance. The most successful partnerships were those where communication between catering and education staff was positive and mutually supportive.
- 3.3** Many schools worked with a range of partners, including their associated primary or secondary schools, to support their health education curriculum and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. They often benefited from regular input by a range of health professionals. Increasing numbers of schools used productive links with a diverse range of partners to support health promotion. Parents continued to participate in School Nutrition Action Groups (SNAGs) in a few schools, and to offer practical support for healthy eating initiatives. In some cases, discussion of *Hungry for Success* at parent-teacher association meetings had led to improvements in food and drink provision at events organised by parents. Partnership working in some schools had generated innovative opportunities to further the implementation of *Hungry for Success*. Examples included the following.
- Pupils and parent-teacher associations worked together to encourage parents of children in primary schools to provide only fruit for snacks.
 - To encourage practical cookery skills, one school worked with a local pizzeria where pupils learned about food hygiene and preparing food. They experimented with different toppings to make their pizzas a healthier food choice.
 - One school cook worked with pupils to investigate sandwich fillings, some of which were tested in the dining room for inclusion in the lunch menu.

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The potential remained, however, for many schools to increase the effectiveness of their partnerships. The composition, function and effectiveness of health promotion groups in secondary schools, for example, varied widely. Groups worked well when membership was wide-ranging and included pupils and parents, and when action plans were developed and implemented according to agreed timescales. Effective groups also consulted and communicated well with their school community. In a few schools inspected, health promotion groups lacked direction, commitment or clarity about their function.

3.4 Communication with parents about school meals and health promotion had improved. Almost all schools inspected were providing some information to parents on health promotion and school meals. Where practice was effective, schools provided a variety of detailed, regular information through the following.

- School handbooks described provision for school lunches and packed lunches, cashless payment systems and choices on offer for breakfast and at morning break. Some also included information about free school meal entitlement, and a few about how to request a special diet.
- Articles in school newsletters highlighted school food, health promotion events, menus, pricing, competitions and cookery clubs.
- A few schools had used questionnaires to gather parents' views on school food provision, and also on wider health promotion issues.
- School and LA websites were being used increasingly to provide information about school food.
- Health events for parents had been organised in a few schools. Examples included workshops on healthy eating and opportunities for parents to sample food available in school.
- A few schools had issued letters or leaflets asking parents to encourage pupils to stay in school, to support healthy eating and to promote the school meals service.
- It was increasingly common for parents of pupils in P1 to attend for a school lunch. A few LAs provided attractive branded welcome packs comprising, for example, a coin purse, menus, information on packed lunches and breakfast clubs, and toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Some LAs had included information in local newspapers or council mailing.

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A few primary schools did not manage communication with parents on *Hungry for Success* effectively, and information for parents of secondary-age pupils lacked detail about the food and drink available in school.

Features of good practice: Partnership working

A school had established a food skills group to encourage parents and children to learn to cook together. The school cook planned and led a series of after school classes in the school kitchen. These involved parents and their children in preparing a range of dishes, many from the school meals menu. The local authority had allocated time for the cook to develop a comprehensive package of materials to support the practical sessions. The classes were very well received by parents, to the extent that they were over-subscribed. This very successful partnership working with parents, as well as involving parents in their children's learning, was also effective in promoting health and well-being.

3.5 Partnerships between schools and catering services had strengthened since the implementation of *Hungry for Success*. Catering staff were increasingly involved in school working groups, SNAGs and pupil councils, to promote the school meals service and healthy eating. In many schools, catering staff felt part of the school team and saw the positive impact of effective communication and consultation. Weaknesses in communication between senior managers and catering staff persisted in a number of schools. School staff, for example, were not always informed in advance of the introduction of new menus or other initiatives, while catering staff were not always advised when school events were likely to result in an increase or decrease in customers. In some cases, catering staff in schools were not involved in consultation on plans for the development of kitchen and dining areas. Examples of productive partnerships included:

- sharing ideas and information on healthy packed lunches with parents and pupils;
- working with school staff to encourage pupils to eat more fruit and vegetables and take fewer fizzy drinks and sweets to school;
- presentations at assemblies or to pupils in class;
- school meal displays provided at parents' evenings; and
- developing food skills courses for parents and their children.

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Features of good practice: Partnership working

A group of experienced cooks was involved in developing realistic menus for one local authority. The group reviewed proposals for centrally-planned menus and provided feedback on:

- ease of production across schools of varying sizes;
- suitability in relation to equipment available in school kitchens;
- practicality and suitability of recipes;
- appropriateness for transportation to schools in outlying areas;
- popularity with pupils; and
- anticipated impact on uptake of meals.

This effective consultation and partnership working had led to greater ownership of the menus by cooks and their increased commitment to the overall implementation of *Hungry for Success*.

Principle 3: Pupil Consultation

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- 4.1** Effective consultation had been a key factor in the process of change. Where consultation with pupils had been effective, pupils had higher expectations and an increased sense of ownership of changes implemented through *Hungry for Success*. Constructive, mutually supportive outcomes had been achieved when relationships among pupils, school staff and catering staff were respectful and inclusive.
- 4.2** Almost all schools had systems to consult with pupils. Consultation was usually carried out through the pupil council, and topics discussed included food quality and pricing, dining room facilities and queuing. Increasingly, schools provided questionnaires, comment cards and boxes or books for ideas and suggestions from pupils. The majority of schools inspected invited pupils to provide feedback on menus. In a few schools, catering staff actively engaged with pupils by providing tasters of proposed dishes and discussing menu plans with them. A few secondary schools involved pupils in health groups, or had a health group for pupils which contributed to the overarching health group in the school. Some schools had a SNAG which dealt specifically with food issues. Some SNAGs had good links with the pupil councils in their schools. A few LAs had set up a SNAG in all schools and had a member of catering staff and the school health coordinator on each SNAG. Pupils felt more engaged where they thought that their comments were valued and addressed and they could see that their feedback was taken seriously. Often, mechanisms to share the outcomes of discussion at pupil council meetings did not work in practice or did not exist. Pupils in secondary schools sometimes reported weaknesses in consultation, which often reflected their view that the pupil council was not successful in influencing change in general.

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4.3 Effective consultation with pupils had contributed to:

- the development of incentives and reward schemes to increase uptake of healthier choices at lunchtime and morning break;
- strategies for reducing or removing chips from the menu;
- suggestions to improve the dining room experience and to reduce queues;
- implementation of pre-ordering systems to ensure preferred choice of meal at lunchtime;
- effective relationships between pupils and catering staff;
- award of a substantial grant to improve playground facilities for outdoor eating;
- questionnaires to evaluate the success of health promotion events; and
- centrally-based catering staff visiting schools to consult with pupils using the lunchtime service.

4.4 LAs had also continued to consult with pupils on wider *Hungry for Success* issues such as menu development. They had used a variety of methods to collect comments from pupils, including surveys, focus groups, pupil parliaments and suggestion boxes. The frequency of surveys varied, as did the level of response, despite attempts by LAs to engage with as many stakeholders as possible. Examples of the impact of effective consultation included extending free fruit provision for pupils beyond P1 and P2 and purchase of tuckshop trolleys, as well as installing plasma screens and commissioning artwork to enhance the dining room environment.

Principle 4: Eliminating Stigma

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- 5.1** It has been recognised that identifying pupils who are in receipt of free school meals can inhibit them from taking up their entitlement. *Hungry for Success* recommended that schools should maximise the anonymity of pupils entitled to free school meals and that education authorities should adopt cashless catering systems, particularly in secondary schools.
- 5.2** A few LAs promoted uptake of free meals by distributing leaflets which explained their systems for maximising the anonymity of pupils entitled to free meals. These leaflets were distributed through schools as well as being available from local libraries. LA websites and school handbooks also provided this information. A few LAs had introduced arrangements to enable parents to pay for school lunches through online payment systems.
- 5.3** Most schools had systems that maximised the anonymity of pupils entitled to free school meals. However, a few primary schools and just under one quarter of secondary schools inspected did not protect the anonymity of these pupils. Staff in most of these schools tried to ensure that their procedures were handled as discreetly as possible. For example, where payment for meals was made by cash at a servery, pupils receiving free meals were discreetly noted on a list as they passed the till point. However, anonymity was not always ensured. In too many schools, the approach used was to provide only pupils entitled to free meals with a token or ticket to exchange for their meal, thereby openly identifying them. In a few cases, secondary pupils entitled to free meals were being further disadvantaged by not being able to use pre-ordering systems.
- 5.4** Most secondary schools inspected used cashless payment cards to ensure anonymity for pupils in receipt of free school meals. A few schools reported an increase in the number of pupils taking their free school meal entitlement after the introduction of card systems. The majority of pupils thought that the cashless card was an acceptable method of payment which helped to reduce queuing time in the dining room. Pupils particularly valued the card system where it was linked to use of other services such as libraries and sports centres, or where it entitled pupils to discounts in shops. In some schools, cash allocations for pupils entitled to free school meals were put on the card before lunch so that pupils could use their entitlement at breakfast, morning break or lunchtime.

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- 5.5** In most secondary schools, however, pupils also identified the following problems which discouraged them from using the card system.
- If it was time-consuming to obtain a replacement card or if a cost was incurred, pupils often went elsewhere for lunch.
 - Where pupils 'ran out' of credit, they did not like having to queue to put money on their cards and then queue again for lunch.
 - Some systems accepted only coins and pupils were unable to use notes to add credit to their cards.
 - Pupils who had added money to the card, which had then not been spent, were unable to get refunds.
 - They were not always able to use cards to purchase items from vending machines.
 - It was difficult for pupils to keep track of how much money they had spent because this information was not displayed at the point of transaction, or because prices were not displayed clearly.

Principle 5: Managing the Process

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- 6.1** Pupils' perceptions of the social experience at lunchtime influenced their decisions to choose school meals. Many schools had to accommodate pupils in a variety of settings for lunch. Multi-purpose dining rooms, storage of tables and chairs, and time restrictions had to be taken into account when organising the lunch break. Commitment of senior managers in fostering good relationships and encouraging open communication and respect among pupils and all staff continued to be crucial to a positive social experience.
- 6.2** In most primary schools inspected, the length of time allocated for lunch was sufficient. Pupils were served and ate their lunch without being rushed, and still had time for outdoor activity before or after eating lunch. The length of the lunch break in secondary schools varied from 40 minutes to one hour and, in the majority of schools, pupils felt they had sufficient time for lunch. A few schools had reduced the length of the lunch break to encourage pupils to take school meals. Almost all primary pupils were not allowed to leave school at lunchtime. In a few secondary schools, pupils in S1 were either not allowed to leave school at lunchtime or were strongly encouraged to stay within the school grounds.
- 6.3** In most schools, serving and rota systems were effective in reducing time spent queuing and ensured that pupils had equal opportunities to be served. Pupils in secondary schools often commented that they were more likely to use the dining room on days when they were early in the rota and so would be served quickly and have more choice. In almost all primary schools, pupils from P1 to P3 were served lunch first, with pupils at other stages taking turns to be first into the dining room thereafter. In one school, the youngest pupils came for lunch last so that they could eat without the potential anxiety of being rushed by older pupils. Factors such as long queues and perceived unfairness of some rota systems sometimes influenced primary pupils' decisions on whether or not to take a school lunch. Where pupils had been given a valid explanation of why a certain system had to be used, for example because of lack of space in the dining room, they generally accepted the situation. In the majority of secondary schools, a long queue was a factor which discouraged pupils from using the dining room. LAs were increasingly installing additional service points to minimise the length of time pupils queued for meals.

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- 6.4** In most primary schools inspected, dining room supervision was carried out effectively. It was usually carried out by teaching and support staff, but, occasionally, catering staff had supervisory roles. In a few LAs, specific staff had been employed to supervise and assist pupils in making appropriate choices in the dining room. Younger pupils, in particular, commented on feeling safe and comfortable in primary school dining rooms. In a few schools, the roles of supervisory staff were unclear and resulted in less effective management of the lunchtime process. In a very few cases, over restrictive procedures detracted from the lunchtime experience. In the majority of secondary schools, senior managers supervised the dining room at lunchtime. In some schools, prefects assisted in supervising queues, and other schools deployed additional staff members for lunchtime supervision.

Features of good practice: Support staff employed to promote healthy eating

One local authority employed Eating for Health Assistants (EFHAs) to help meet the aims of *Hungry for Success*. The EFHAs had received appropriate training, including training for a food hygiene qualification. In one school, the EFHA had a plan of activities for the year, which was agreed with school staff, and had carried out many successful healthy eating promotions. These health promotion activities included tasting of healthy foods linked to religious festivals and cultural celebrations, smoothie making and exotic fruit tasting as part of class topics, a fish tasting week, an apple promotion, a best diner award to encourage social eating, preparation of pancakes with berries for Shrove Tuesday, and a 'fit for life' campaign. The EFHA also encouraged pupils to select and try vegetables and salad items in the dining room at lunchtime. Pupils were very knowledgeable about basic nutrition and healthy eating messages.

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- 6.5** Less than half of primary schools permitted a completely free choice of seating for all pupils in their dining rooms. Most provided designated areas for pupils eating school meals to ensure that seating was available for pupils choosing hot food. A few schools allocated seating for younger pupils to sit with older buddies who helped them with food and trays. Pupils who brought packed lunches were usually allowed to eat in the dining room alongside pupils having school meals. In some schools which lacked space in the dining room, pupils ate their packed lunches in another area, occasionally without tables or chairs. In many schools, pupils bringing packed lunches were given priority to enter the dining room, while those choosing school meals had to queue. Pupils taking school meals often felt that such arrangements were unfair. In almost all secondary schools, pupils could choose where to sit in the dining room. Where seating was limited, schools often made an additional room available for pupils eating packed lunches. In a few schools which did not allow food to be taken out of the dining room, pupils often felt discouraged from using the school meal provision, particularly if their friends were having a packed lunch and sat elsewhere. Primary and secondary pupils enjoyed having the option of using picnic benches and outdoor seating areas in good weather.
- 6.6** Pre-ordering systems had been adopted by less than half of all schools inspected. A few secondary schools made them available only to pupils attending lunchtime clubs. Pupils able to pre-order their meals were pleased to know that they would receive their preferred choice. Staff found that queuing time and food waste had been reduced. Many primary schools used coloured bands or tokens which corresponded to particular meal choices. One primary school had introduced the use of electronic white boards in classrooms so that pupils could independently pre-order their meals, with orders going directly to the school kitchen. The system was proving to be very effective. One LA had developed an interactive audio menu board for use in special schools. The menu had pictures of the meals on offer as well as audio descriptions that pupils could hear when they pressed the appropriate buttons. The success of pre-ordering systems in secondary schools varied. They were most effective when the ordering system was accessible and straightforward, and when the service had been well promoted to pupils throughout the school.

6.7 The majority of schools took steps to evaluate their success in implementing the recommendations of *Hungry for Success*. Approaches to self-evaluation included:

- SNAGs, pupil councils or health promoting school groups gathering stakeholders' views;
- catering staff recording meal and food uptake and waste;
- informal monitoring by supervisory and catering staff, and senior managers on duty in the dining room;
- headteacher and catering provider meeting to discuss the lunchtime service;
- questionnaire-based surveys seeking comments from pupils, parents and staff;
- use of comment cards in dining rooms;
- specific analysis of information on sales of each menu item and data from cashless card systems;
- school feedback to LA on specific promotions, including uptake of free fruit; and
- quality control monitoring by LA catering services.

Only a few primary schools and less than half of secondary schools inspected had used *How good is our school? Hungry for Success Benchmarks for Self-evaluation*³, as part of their self-evaluation process. Many schools were collecting data related to uptake of food. However, they were not always making effective use of this data to measure the effectiveness and success of activities.

6.8 HM Inspectors have monitored progress made by schools whose inspection reports contained main points for action relating to *Hungry for Success*. In all cases, the schools were found to have made good or very good progress in making improvements.

³ *How good is our school? Hungry for Success Benchmarks for Self-evaluation*, HMIE, June 2006.

Principles 6 and 7: Influencing Choice and Incentives to Improve Uptake of School Lunches

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- 7.1** At national level, the proportion of pupils taking school meals remained fairly steady from 2005 to 2007, at just over 46%⁴. The proportion of primary pupils taking school meals dropped to 46.3% in 2007, following an increase in 2006. However, the proportion of secondary pupils taking school meals rose from 43.4% to 44.9% in 2007. Uptake of school meals varied across LAs, with some achieving encouraging improvements in the percentages of pupils taking school meals. The proportion of entitled pupils taking free school meals dropped to 67.5% in 2007, following an increase in 2006. The proportion of primary pupils taking free school meals increased from 74.4% in 2005 to 76.2% in 2007. The proportion of secondary pupils taking free school meals dropped from 53.4% in 2005 to 50.1% in 2007. As the data on school meals is collected in January, the impact of *Hungry for Success* on the uptake of schools meals in secondary schools will not begin to show until data is collected in January 2008.
- 7.2** The dining environment influenced pupils' decisions on whether to choose a school meal. In the majority of schools, dining rooms provided a pleasant atmosphere for pupils to eat and socialise with friends. In almost all schools, relationships between catering staff and pupils were very positive. Almost all staff encouraged pupils to take their full meal entitlement and specifically promoted uptake of fruit and vegetables. Staff who worked closely together, and were well informed and actively engaged in the implementation of *Hungry for Success*, were having a positive impact on food initiatives. In a few schools, poor behaviour and lack of supervision detrimentally affected the atmosphere within the dining room.
- 7.3** *Hungry for Success* recommended that improvements to dining rooms, to enhance their atmosphere and ambience and encourage their use as social areas, should be considered as a priority by LAs, and should be taken into account in their wider school estate planning. The report noted the desirability, wherever possible, of provision of a separate dining area. The majority of dining rooms were bright, clean and well maintained. Improvements, including increased service points, blinds, plasma screens and music systems, had been made to the dining rooms in many schools, and a few had benefited from complete refurbishment.

⁴ *School Meals in Scotland 2007*, The Scottish Government, IAS Division, Analytical Services Unit – Pupil, Teacher and School Statistics

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Increasing numbers of primary schools had enhanced their dining rooms with examples of pupils' project work and artwork. One secondary school had used well-developed links with its local church to attract pupils to the dining room and enhance the atmosphere. A volunteer from the church acted as a disc jockey in the dining room each lunchtime and played music requested by pupils. In the majority of secondary schools and a few primary schools inspected, however, dining rooms were too small, and pupils had to cope with cramped and uncomfortable seating. A few primary schools organised two or three sittings for lunch or used classrooms for additional space, to overcome constraints related to the capacity of the dining room. No secondary schools inspected, however, had introduced flexible arrangements for the lunch break to address issues of limited dining capacity. Dining rooms which were either too hot or too cold had a negative impact on pupils' decisions to use the school meals service. In a few schools, the dining room was in a state of disrepair. A few secondary schools had still to remove branding of products high in sugar and fat from dining room decoration or from vending machines.

Features of good practice: Action to create a pleasant dining environment

Effective management of the dining environment and enhancing the overall social experience were key aims for one local authority when it commissioned local artists to take up short-term residences in primary schools. Pupils worked alongside the artists to find imaginative ways to improve the environment of dining rooms and related areas. Schools benefited from acquiring original artwork, ranging from murals to ceramics, for display in their dining rooms. Pupils displayed a greater sense of ownership of these areas, and catering and support staff appreciated the improvements to their working environment.

- 7.4** In schools where meals were served on moulded plastic trays, the trays proved popular with pupils. In some schools, however, the presentation of food was less attractive as a result of using the moulded trays. Several schools had changed to using colourful china plates to improve the presentation of meals, while a few used plastic plates. Most schools used metal cutlery, which pupils much preferred to the plastic cutlery used in a few.
- 7.5** Improvements to dining room furniture continued to be made, sometimes using *Hungry for Success* funding. Many LAs had a phased programme to upgrade dining furniture within their schools. Where facilities for dining were shared or multi-purpose, furniture was quick to clean and easily manoeuvrable. In one school that had purchased round tables, pupils commented that eating lunch had become more sociable as a result. Lack of storage in shared dining rooms still influenced the type of furniture it was possible to provide.
- 7.6** Some schools had refurbished their servery areas, often installing lower counters in primary schools, which enabled younger pupils to see the food choices more easily. A few had also introduced additional service areas to serve cold food or for pupils to help themselves to salad and drinks. A few LAs were promoting their lunch service by highly visible branding around the servery area. Attractive clearing stations which were easily accessible to all pupils were provided by a few schools.
- 7.7** The overall quality and presentation of menus in primary schools had improved. The majority of schools displayed their lunch menus at one or more points throughout the school including around the dining room, beside the servery, in classrooms and at the school entrance. Several schools displayed their daily menus illustrated with photographs of the meals, while others displayed plated meals as examples of the food on offer. A few schools displayed menus on their school websites to facilitate discussion of menus by parents and their children. In some schools, teachers discussed the menus in class in the morning, often as part of the collection of meal numbers for that day. A few schools had made innovative use of smart boards and plasma screens for this purpose. A very few schools did not display menus in the dining room or placed menus in locations which could be seen only after meals had been selected.

7.8 The quality, accuracy and accessibility of information about the food and drinks provided in the secondary schools inspected varied considerably. A few schools were providing very good information by:

- displaying daily and weekly menus in locations around the school, including on plasma screens;
- including menus in school bulletins so that all pupils were regularly made aware of the food available;
- making menus available for pupils to take home; and
- including menus on school websites.

Too often, however, the information for secondary pupils about food and drink available in school was limited. Daily or weekly menus were not always displayed, or were often unclear. For example, generic menus, which provided information on standard daily items such as baked potatoes and sandwiches, were commonly displayed. However, such menus did not show the main meal choices for each day. Often, menus were displayed only in the dining room, so that only pupils going to the dining room for lunch would be able to find out the choices on offer. Where displays were limited to daily rather than weekly menus, pupils had to attend the dining room daily to find out what was on offer. Weaknesses in menu display also hampered the speed of service as pupils had to ask staff what was available. Information on the price of menu items was also limited in most secondary schools. Pupils felt that they were not able to find out the price of individual items easily, and that price lists were generic and sometimes out of date. They wanted more accurate and accessible information on prices, especially on individual items such as sandwiches and rolls.

7.9 The majority of primary schools were working well to promote school meals and to influence pupils' food choices. Many cooks organised theme days focused on specific foods, countries, celebrations or events. Pupils were frequently awarded stickers or house points for eating or selecting particular foods. These had greatest impact where the use of stickers was not over frequent. Pupils were positive where incentives including sports vouchers and football tickets were on offer. A few schools had introduced coding to their menus to assist pupils in making healthier choices. The interpretation of the coding was not always clearly understood by pupils or staff and the impact on food selection had not

been assessed in all cases. Food sampling proved popular with pupils. An increasing number of schools used this approach to familiarise pupils with existing menu items. Sometimes catering staff used tasting sessions to gather pupils' comments on proposed menu items. There were improvements in the presentation of fresh fruit, salads and cooked vegetables which were often more prominent on counters or provided for pupils to serve themselves. Fruit was increasingly provided in ready-to-eat form to encourage uptake. In some schools, limitations of space restricted the scope of these improvements.

7.10 Schools, caterers and LAs used a number of approaches to increase the uptake of school meals, and of healthy choices, in secondary schools. Approaches used included the following.

- Branding helped to change pupils' perception of school meals provision. For example, one school had used a 'Café Vogue' theme. Branding was displayed above serveries and on menus, and was used on other promotional materials.
- Meal deals offered value for money by providing a complete meal for a set price, and were popular with pupils.
- Pre-ordering systems ensured that pupils received their preferred choice of meal. They were popular with pupils attending lunchtime activities, and helped to reduce queuing. However, they were not always well promoted.
- Meals offered in take-away containers appealed to pupils and were useful for those attending lunchtime activities.
- Carefully-operated incentive schemes encouraged pupils to make healthy choices through collecting points for prizes, which ranged from vouchers to electrical equipment and bicycles.
- Health promotion weeks and conferences promoted healthy eating. Theme days also encouraged pupils to try different foods and dishes. A few schools did not allow pupils to bring fizzy drinks into school.
- Provision of free fruit, milk and salads with meals helped to increase uptake.
- Positive pricing, with subsidies for healthier items, and tasting sessions encouraged pupils to make wise choices.
- Promoting healthy eating and use of the dining room was increasingly included on induction days for new pupils in S1.

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- Some LAs had introduced mobile vans to sell their products outwith the dining room.
- A headteacher of a secondary school promoted the school meals service and sought support from parents so that only pupils with parental permission were allowed to leave school at lunchtime to visit food vans and local shops. Most parents, however, gave their permission for pupils to use the food vans.

LAs and schools did not always give sufficient attention to evaluating the success of these approaches. Where initiatives had been reviewed, the evaluations often indicated notable impact in the short-term. However, more attention needed to be given to using sustainable approaches which would have long-term impact.

7.11 Pupils offered a range of reasons for not choosing school meals or making healthy choices. The issues that they raised could be addressed by:

- ensuring that items such as fruit and vegetables are not more expensive than less healthy options such as home baking;
- ensuring effective positioning of healthier choices, for example removing crisps and confectionery from till points and improving accessibility of fruit;
- providing clear information about choices and promotions;
- staff being more proactive in promoting healthy choices and value for money to pupils;
- retaining the full range of choices until all pupils have been served;
- allowing take-away food to be taken out of the dining room;
- allowing pupils to socialise in the dining room until the end of the lunch break; and
- addressing weaknesses in the dining environment and the overall social experience of lunchtime.

Meeting the Scottish Nutrient Standards for School Lunches

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- 8.1** Scottish Nutrients Standards for School Lunches were set out in *Hungry for Success*, and can be found at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/05/17090/21742. They set clear expectations for the nutritional content of school lunches. The Standards were set so that an average school lunch would provide around one third of the daily requirements of key nutrients. The Standards for some nutrients, which are found to be low in the diets of Scottish children and young people, were set at a higher level with the aim of helping to address this deficiency.
- 8.2** Overall, LAs continued to make good progress in producing menus to achieve the Scottish Nutrient Standards. Analyses of menus showed that the Nutrient Standards for sodium, iron and saturated fatty acids were proving consistently challenging to achieve, in both the primary and secondary school sectors. In primary schools, there were also problems achieving the Standards for non-milk extrinsic sugars and carbohydrates. In some secondary schools, the Standards for calcium and folate were not being achieved.
- 8.3** The quality of the food was good in most schools inspected. It was a key factor that pupils considered when deciding whether or not to have a school lunch. Improvements in food preparation and choice of cooking methods had also helped to improve food quality and nutritional value of meals. In a few schools, the quality of food was too variable or was poor overall. Sometimes the quality of food served was adversely affected by the transportation of meals from the kitchen in which they were cooked to a servery in another school. In some schools, pupils had raised issues of food quality with catering services through pupil councils or school suggestions boxes. Examples of issues raised included:
- foods not kept at the correct temperature throughout the lunchtime service;
 - soggy vegetables;
 - over-cooked or burnt foods served regularly; and
 - changes in the quality of food served, which were sometimes due to a change of supplier.

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Features of good practice: Improvements in school meal provision

In following up progress made by a school and its local authority to improve school meal provision, HMIE found notable improvements. Pupils in the school were now able to make healthy choices from a varied menu. They had been consulted about school meal provision and were positive about the changes in the range and quality of food. School and catering staff had worked productively together to introduce changes in provision. They had shared menus with parents, as well as a leaflet on 'Working together to encourage healthy eating'. Pupils had introduced a healthy tuckshop which sold fruit at break time.

- 8.4** Pupils in almost all schools inspected felt that they had enough to eat at lunchtime. A few secondary schools were providing over-large portions of chips or other fried potato products. Some primary schools offered second helpings to pupils, usually on a first-come, first-served basis. Most of these schools used a sensible approach by limiting the foods and size of portion served, as well as expecting pupils to have eaten all of the food from their first serving. A few schools, however, gave inappropriate second helpings of fatty or sugary foods. In many primary and special schools, the range of meal items decreased before the end of service. This meant that pupils near the end of the queue did not receive their preferred choice of meal. Some schools had made effective use of previous sales information or introduced a pre-ordering system to prevent such problems recurring. Pupils in almost half of the secondary schools inspected also felt that there was often less choice for those queuing longest, and that the most popular items ran out quickly.
- 8.5** Almost all LAs planned menus for primary schools centrally. For secondary schools, some menu planning was done centrally and some at school level. Menu cycles ranged from three weeks to six weeks. They were changed, for example termly or annually, to introduce greater variety. In menu cycles which included set meals, the combination of items to form these meals was not always appropriate or compatible. For example, pizza served with pasta provided inappropriately high levels of carbohydrate. Some LAs consulted with groups of school catering staff to plan their menu cycles. In a few LAs, cooks in individual schools planned their own menus, which could change as frequently as every

four weeks. Where this approach was used, monitoring by the LAs of how well the menus met the Nutrient Standards was not always sufficiently rigorous.

8.6 All LAs used nutritional analysis software to analyse their menus. Almost all used the 'H4S' software which had been produced by 'Nutmeg' for the Scottish Executive. HMIE requested a nutritional analysis for every school inspected. An analysis was received for the majority of primary and special schools, but for less than half of secondary schools inspected. Variations in the approaches used by LAs to analyse school meals provision affected the accuracy of the nutritional analyses and the extent to which they could be used for evaluation.

8.7 LAs had adopted two different methods of analysis. Some analysed their menus using data on actual sales from a particular school or group of schools. This method was more accurate as it represented what pupils actually selected from the menu. Other LAs analysed their menus by estimating the uptake of each menu item. This estimate reflected the caterer's knowledge of the popularity of each dish. Figures used for analyses carried out using this approach were sometimes unrealistic. They did not always reflect the meal items being selected by pupils in school, particularly in relation to uptake of fruit and vegetables, which was often less than estimated. Other recurring difficulties in relation to nutritional analyses, using either method, included the following.

- Often, the nutritional analysis did not include all items available for pupils to select at lunchtime. Examples of foods that were omitted regularly from the analysis included condiments such as tomato ketchup, drinks, bread, fillings for baked potatoes, meal accompaniments such as rice, home baking, and packed lunch choices.
- Often, the information on uptake of each menu item and portion size was not provided with the nutritional analysis. This meant that the accuracy of the analysis could not be checked.
- In schools which served meals to both primary and secondary pupils from the same menu, separate nutritional analyses to show how the different Nutrient Standards for the two age groups were met were not always provided.
- Where schools operated a cash cafeteria system, the school did not always record the number of customers or the number of meals served.

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- Some schools offered a reduced lunch service on one day of the week when the school closed early, but relevant information was not always included in the analysis.
- Some LAs set out all of the meal components on the plate for pupils or assumed that all pupils would choose to take their full entitlement at every meal. These items were included in the nutritional analysis, but the uptake of items by pupils was often notably different.
- Some LAs used different software packages including some which used non-standardised measurements to calculate the amount of particular nutrients.
- Staff involved in using the analysis software had varying levels of knowledge, training and experience of data input, menu planning and nutritional analysis.

8.8 Some secondary schools included popular items to attract pupils to take school lunches, but limited the amounts of these items available. Inevitably, this meant that pupils were disappointed when their preferred choice of meal was no longer available. This approach was also used by some LAs to help achieve the Nutrient Standards.

8.9 Almost all of the primary and special schools had removed table salt from the dining room. In contrast, less than half of secondary schools inspected had completely removed table salt. Where salt was provided, it was normally available in sachets. Sauce portions were still available for pupils to purchase at an additional cost in most secondary schools.

8.10 In almost all of the primary and special schools inspected, additional free bread was provided for pupils having a school meal, and was usually a popular accompaniment. Bread was particularly popular when speciality breads or freshly prepared varieties were on offer. Free bread was available in the majority of secondary schools. However, in some secondary schools, bread was offered only with soup. Not all primary or secondary schools providing free bread were promoting its availability to pupils.

8.11 Meal deals were available in more than half of secondary schools inspected. They had been developed to encourage choice of particular menu items, to encourage fruit and vegetable uptake, and to offer better value for money. In a few schools where meal deals were linked to incentive schemes, some pupils valued the points accrued more than the content of the meal, and parts of the meal were not eaten.

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8.12 The availability of fruit and vegetables in primary school lunches was good overall and in some cases it was very good. It varied in the secondary schools inspected where less than half of the schools actively promoted and encouraged the uptake of vegetables, salads and fruit. Schools which did promote these foods positioned them well, with clear signage, at the servery and used pricing incentives, in addition to catering staff encouraging pupils to take these items. Such action had resulted in higher uptake of vegetables and salad. A few schools had disincentives to pupils to select meals with vegetable accompaniments where vegetables were charged at an additional cost to a meal or sandwich. For example, a ham salad sandwich could be more expensive than a ham sandwich.

8.13 A few LAs had reviewed pricing structures to encourage the uptake of lunches and healthier choices. One LA had reduced considerably the price of whole and chopped fruit and this action had achieved a notable increase in uptake.

8.14 Examples of strengths and areas of improving practice included:

- use of wholemeal bread or rolls for all sandwiches, many of which had a salad component;
- salad or hot vegetable included in meal prices and actively promoted to all pupils;
- pupils reporting that the quality and variety of food had improved; and
- increased pupil awareness that the food on offer was healthier, enabling pupils to put into practice more easily the healthy eating messages they learned in class.

Examples of weaknesses included:

- limited or incorrect labels on sandwiches or filled rolls;
- use of only white bread, rolls or baguettes for sandwiches, and no salad component;
- inappropriate servery displays, for example home baking having a more prominent position than fruit and salad;
- healthier items more expensive; and
- a few schools selling confectionery in the dining room after the main lunch service.

Special Diets and Allergies

8.15 *Hungry for Success* recommended that LAs should develop policies to deliver appropriate provision for children and young people with medically prescribed diets. Almost all of the LAs now had an appropriate policy in place or were finalising their policies and procedures. Most LAs worked in partnership with schools, catering staff, dieticians, nutritionists or other health professionals when developing their special diet policy. Provision for pupils with nut allergies had improved through the sourcing of nut-free ingredients and products as well as through recipe development.

8.16 The majority of primary schools and almost all secondary schools inspected had procedures to provide a medically prescribed diet where this was required. Appropriate provision was made in the special schools inspected. Schools had often developed their own procedures in addition to adopting LA policies. Increasingly, school staff took account of pupils with special dietary requirements when planning food-based activities in classrooms. Schools which did not have a policy or procedures lacked consistency in dealing with pupils' special dietary needs. In some schools which did have a policy, some staff did not understand fully the reasons for specific dietary requests.

8.17 In secondary schools, it was appropriate that pupils were expected to take more responsibility for meeting their own special dietary requirements. Some schools had developed strategies to assist pupils in making dietary choices appropriate to their needs, using:

- informative and accurate labelling on products such as sandwiches and filled rolls;
- cashless payment systems flagging warnings on specific foods; and
- notices displayed to remind pupils to ask if they were not sure about ingredients in products.

8.18 For pupils wishing to follow a vegetarian diet, a daily choice was available in all schools inspected, although sometimes only on request. Pupils often found the choice and variety available to be limited, and the dishes often relied too heavily on cheese as a source of protein.

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8.19 Most LAs were able to provide Halal meat if requested. However, most had received very few requests for Halal meat and pupils generally chose to select a vegetarian meal. Pupils and staff were not always aware that Halal meat could be provided. Where Halal meal options were available regularly, these items were not always highlighted on menu displays or on product packaging.

Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs

8.20 In all schools inspected, children with additional support needs were fully integrated with other pupils in the dining room arrangements. Often these pupils were able to access the dining room earlier than the rest of the school. In some instances, pupils chose to eat elsewhere. Where required, pupils benefited from additional help in the dining room during the lunch period from support staff.

Training

8.21 A wide range of training had been undertaken to support the implementation of *Hungry for Success*. Many headteachers and caterers had attended general briefing sessions arranged by LAs. Almost all catering staff felt they had had sufficient training to be able to carry out their day-to-day duties competently. They had received more detailed information on menus, recipes, food presentation and other specific issues at local meetings with other catering colleagues. Increasing numbers of staff were attending nutrition training courses, such as the Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland (REHIS) Elementary Food and Health course. Almost all found these courses to be relevant and helpful to their role in implementing *Hungry for Success*. One LA had offered places on the REHIS course to the owners of local food vans that operated close to secondary schools, with the aim of encouraging them to sell a healthier range of products. LAs had also trained caterers in cooking skills, special diets, nutritional analysis and customer care. One LA had organised training for staff to facilitate cookery groups for pupils and their parents. Training for catering assistants and support staff working in dining rooms was less evident. Some staff felt that further training on special diets would be welcome. In a few schools inspected, catering or dining room staff had not been offered any training related to *Hungry for Success*.

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8.22 *Hungry for Success* included a recommendation that education authorities should consider the introduction of incentive schemes for staff to recognise innovation and celebrate success. Some LAs had implemented small-scale reward or incentive schemes for catering staff such as an 'away day' or an annual awards ceremony. A few LAs offered gift vouchers as incentives for specific promotions such as increasing the uptake of fruit and vegetables or of meal deals in their schools. The majority of LAs, however, had not taken this recommendation forward.

Other Food Provision in Schools

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Breakfast

- 9.1** Less than half the primary schools inspected had a breakfast club. Some schools used parental surveys to scope the need for a breakfast club. Some LAs offered a free breakfast to all pupils, whilst others levied a nominal charge. To encourage attendance by families with more than one child, a tiered pricing incentive was in place in some schools. Breakfast clubs offered a variety of foods including cereals, toast, fruit juices, fresh fruit, yoghurts, milk, hot chocolate and tea. In addition, a few clubs regularly offered jam and cheese. Where less healthy items such as sugar-coated cereals were offered, staff were advised to consider changes to foods which were lower in sugar and salt. As well as enjoying the breakfast food, pupils liked to socialise with their peers and play games before the start of school.
- 9.2** In most secondary schools, the catering service sold food and drink each morning before school started. There was wide variation in the range of items provided. They included hot and cold drinks, cereal, cereal bars, toast, baguettes, toasties, fruit, rolls with bacon/sausage/egg, as well as home baking and confectionery. The popularity of the provision varied from school to school and was often related to how successfully the service was promoted. Pupils who were transported by bus usually arrived too late to make use of the service. In a few schools, pupils were not aware that the provision was available or what was on offer. A few schools had identified the benefits of a breakfast club for potentially vulnerable pupils. These clubs were often organised by pastoral care and/or home economics staff.

Tuckshops in Primary Schools

- 9.3** The majority of schools inspected were making changes to provide healthier snacks in their tuckshops. Tuckshops were run by school or catering staff, pupils or parent helpers or any combination of these groups. In making changes to the types of food and drink sold, some schools had sought advice from catering staff, oral health practitioners, nutritionists and dieticians. In almost all schools, the tuckshop operated at morning break with a few schools selling items before the start of the school day, after lunch, or at the end of the day.

- 9.4** The range of items sold included fresh, whole or chopped fruit, fruit juices, milk, low-fat crisps, cereal bars, dried fruit, home-made biscuits, popcorn, pancakes, toast, scones and muffins, many of these items being provided by school catering staff. Most items promoted healthy eating, and often took account of surveys of pupils' views. In some schools, where catering staff provided the tuckshop, LAs had given useful guidance on promoting healthier snacks and the range of items to be sold. Many schools guided pupils' choices by restricting the number and type of items purchased or the amount of money pupils could spend. Schools which provided free fruit to all pupils usually did not run a tuckshop. Most pupils in these schools felt there was no need for further snacks.

Morning Break in Secondary Schools

- 9.5** All schools inspected provided food and drink for sale at morning break. In addition, a few schools had tuckshops which were run by the school to raise funds. The range of choices at morning break varied widely across schools. Some schools were selling a healthier range of items by reducing the range of confectionery and fizzy drinks. Other schools, however, continued to sell a wide range of products high in fat, sugar and salt and did little to promote healthier items. While fresh fruit was available at morning break in almost all schools inspected, the variety and quality, as well as standards of presentation, varied. Food provision at morning break in secondary schools was much wider than that now found in primary schools, and included many items which did not contribute to healthy eating.

Vending Machines

- 9.6** A very few primary schools had vending machines which sold chilled plain or flavoured still water. Pupils could choose to buy this water, while continuing to have access to free drinking water. The majority of secondary schools inspected had vending machines. The number and type of vending machines in each school varied, and included refrigerated and non-refrigerated vendors and hot and cold drinks vendors. The content of vending machines was wide ranging, from those which stocked only water to those which sold meal deals or crisps and confectionery. Products included confectionery, crisps, cereal bars, sandwiches, rice cakes, fresh and/or dried fruit, home baking, yoghurts, crackers and cheese, biscuits, and hot and cold drinks.

- 9.7** The majority of vending machines were run by LA catering staff. Where schools had contracts with vending companies, the profit generated contributed to school funds. Although most of the branding of products high in fat and sugar had been removed from vending machines, a few schools still had machines with commercial branding.
- 9.8** Some schools had altered the products sold to introduce a healthier range of options. Changes were often made following discussion by the health group or SNAG. A few schools had recently introduced vending machines offering meals deals – such as a sandwich, yogurt and a drink – to help reduce queues at the till points and to give pupils another option for purchasing lunch.
- 9.9** Pupils often had access to vending machines throughout the school day. This meant that pupils could make purchases before school, at break time, at lunchtime and after school, as well as between classes. Commendably, some schools had limited access by placing timers on vending machines or locking them at set times.

Fairly Traded Products

- 9.10** Fairly traded items were increasingly available in schools for pupils to purchase at morning break or from vending machines. However, they were often mistakenly perceived as a healthier option, even though they may have been chocolate or other confectionery items.

Milk in Primary Schools

- 9.11** Milk continued to be provided in some primary schools at break times. It was often free of charge to pupils entitled to free school meals, while other pupils paid a nominal weekly or termly charge. Some school tuckshops also sold milk at break times. A few schools provided milk for pupils in P1 and P2 along with free fruit. In the majority of schools, milk was available as part of a school lunch at least three times a week. It could be purchased separately or as part of a meal. Most schools offered plain and flavoured varieties of semi-skimmed milk. However, whole milk was still being provided in some schools inspected.

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Fruit in Primary Schools

9.12 In almost all primary schools, the provision of free fruit for pupils in P1 and P2 had been very well received. Some LAs had extended the provision of free fruit from three days a week to daily provision, or to pupils at every stage. A few LAs were piloting increased use of local produce. Schools offered a variety of whole, chopped and/or dried fruit, as well as fruit juice. There were a few ongoing concerns about the quality of fruit provided.

Water

9.13 The majority of schools were encouraging pupils to drink water throughout the school day by allowing them to drink water in class. Some schools had developed a policy to encourage pupils and staff to drink more water. Pupils in primary schools had developed the habit of drinking more water throughout the day, at school and at home. They were also encouraged to drink water during sports activities. Strategies used to ensure easy access to drinking water in primary schools included water fountains with adaptors to allow refilling of water bottles, chilled water coolers, and bottled water provided free by the school or LA. Re-usable water bottles were issued by some schools or LAs. In some schools, pupils could refill bottles at water taps, but it was not always clear if the water from these taps was suitable for drinking. In most schools, pupils were encouraged to bring freshly filled water bottles from home and to refill them in school if required. Where drinking water was less easily accessible, the cause was often faulty or broken equipment, or lack of a suitable mains water supply to install a fountain or to site additional dispensers.

9.14 Provision of fresh, chilled drinking water needed to be improved in many secondary schools. Problems preventing pupils gaining ready access to fresh drinking water included:

- water not available free of charge in the dining room;
- lack of drinking water dispensers;
- water dispensers being dirty, switched off, damaged, incorrectly installed or located in inappropriate places;
- lack of drinking vessels if pupils did not have their own bottles; and
- teaching staff not aware of, or not implementing, the school's policy on drinking water in class, and not allowing pupils to drink in class.

Conclusions – What has been the overall impact of *Hungry for Success*?

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10.1 *Hungry for Success* has been successful in meeting many of its aims. Implementation of its recommendations has resulted in notable improvements in the quality of school meals in Scotland. Improvements in the nutritional quality of meals have been accompanied by greater encouragement and opportunity for pupils to eat more healthily. Almost all schools inspected had also increased their focus on healthy eating within the curriculum, resulting in benefits to pupils' awareness and understanding of basic principles of nutrition. LAs had made good use of their experiences of implementing *Hungry for Success* in primary and special schools in taking forward implementation in secondary schools.

The successes of *Hungry for Success*

- LAs are increasingly effective in producing menus which meet the Scottish Nutrient Standards. As a result, the nutritional quality of meals has improved significantly and the quality of the food was good in most schools inspected.
- Use of a variety of well-considered approaches has encouraged pupils to select healthier choices.
- Many schools have improved the attractiveness of presentation of meals and the majority of schools now provide a pleasant atmosphere for pupils to eat and socialise with friends.
- Almost all schools have increased their focus on developing pupils' understanding of nutritional aspects of health so that pupils are better prepared to make informed choices.
- Almost all primary schools and most secondary schools have removed the potential stigma associated with free school meals.
- Uptake of school meals has remained fairly steady overall in primary and secondary schools, despite fears that healthier choices would reduce uptake.
- Improved provision of fruit and drinking water and changes to tuckshop provision and vending machines have increased the healthy choices available to pupils throughout the school day.
- There are increasing examples of effective partnerships with parents to gain their support for healthy eating.

Examples of good practice will be made available at www.hmie.gov.uk

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10.2 This report has also highlighted significant aspects where further improvements are needed. Some of these are set out below as recommendations for all LAs and schools to consider. In several aspects, however, and allowing for the later date for secondary schools to meet the recommendations, secondary schools needed to give greater priority and urgency to *Hungry for Success*. For example, less than half of the dining rooms in secondary schools actively promoted and encouraged the uptake of vegetables, salad and fruit and a similar low proportion had removed salt from dining tables. Many secondary schools continued to sell home baking and confectionery before the start of the school day. The cramped quality of dining accommodation was a greater issue in secondary schools, yet no secondary school inspected had introduced flexible arrangements for the lunch break to address this issue.

10.3 To improve the consistency of effective practice LAs should continue to work, in partnership with their schools, to ensure:

- further development of school lunch menus to meet required nutrient standards;
- increased uptake of school meals, in particular free school meals;
- anonymity for pupils entitled to free school meals in those schools which had not yet implemented appropriate systems;
- further improvements to accommodation to provide consistently attractive dining environments which will accommodate increased numbers taking school meals;
- more consistently effective communication and partnership working among all key staff in the development of healthy eating;
- more rigorous self-evaluation to secure continuous improvement of food provision in schools, as well as improved food choices by pupils; and
- that secondary schools increase the pace of implementation of *Hungry for Success*.

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10.4 Schools should:

- take further action to promote uptake of meals, including uptake of fruit and vegetables;
- continue to take steps to ensure that pupils have the best possible lunchtime experience;
- continue to strengthen the promotion of healthy eating through all aspects of their work, including involving pupils in consultation and health promotion;
- review their overall food provision to ensure that it complies with the requirements of the Act; and
- improve communication and consultation with parents on food provision in school, and seek their support in promoting healthy eating.

10.5 A wider question is whether *Hungry for Success*, even if implemented consistently and well, will by itself have the desired outcomes for Scotland's children and young people and create a healthier Scotland. Significant challenges remain in improving the overall health of Scotland's children and young people. Obesity in children is now common and increasing, with nearly one in five boys and over one in ten girls aged two to 15 years identified as obese. The *Obesity in Scotland* report⁵ noted that the decline in daily levels of physical activity and the rise in sedentary lifestyles are seen as important factors contributing to the obesity epidemic. The activity levels of many children and young people are too low across childhood and 59% of secondary pupils report that they take no part in physical activity outwith secondary classes⁶. Yet young people who participate in regular exercise and sport are less likely to become overweight. They often develop increased interest in following a healthy diet as part of overall commitment to a healthy lifestyle. *Hungry for Success* is most effective when it is reinforced by other strategies, including the expectation that all schools should provide at least two hours of good quality physical activity for each child every week, and more if possible, by 2008. Strategies to provide sufficient opportunities for all young people to develop skills in practical food preparation are also vital in encouraging them to develop confidence in using a range of fresh food to prepare healthy meals.

⁵ *Obesity in Scotland – An epidemiology briefing*, 2007, Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO)

⁶ *Young people's participation in school-based physical activity in Scotland*, Scottish Consumer Council, 2007

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- 10.6** *Hungry for Success* aimed to improve nutrition through improvements to school meals. It adopted a sound approach which made available healthier menus for pupils and worked towards their long-term education for healthy eating. Implementation of *Hungry for Success* has not provided comprehensive information about what pupils actually eat at school lunches – as some may leave food or regularly select less healthy choices. Moreover, around 54% of pupils choose not to take school meals, and data on the percentage of pupils taking school meals has shown that uptake overall has remained fairly steady since the introduction of *Hungry for Success*. In addition, many of the pupils who do take school lunches supplement these with other food during the school day. There is a need to get a clearer picture, through research, of what children and young people actually eat over the course of a day.
- 10.7** This research should be accompanied by a widespread and informed debate, with parents as key stakeholders, about nutrition for young people. Our views as a society on limitations to choice in relation to nutrition for young people need to be considered. The current government pilot of providing free school meals for all P1 to P3 pupils in five LAs seeks to influence choice and improve uptake through financial incentive. National guidance also affects choice, for example by reducing the frequency of availability of less healthy options. Many schools have attempted to influence pupil choice through, for example, education about healthy eating, through presenting healthier foods more attractively or by providing them free or at reduced cost. Some schools have taken further steps to limit choice, for example by banning sweets or fizzy drinks or by seeking parental agreement to keep pupils within the school at lunchtime or by providing advice on the contents of packed lunches. Such initiatives were controversial with some parents, yet it is likely that further limitations on choice will be necessary if nutrition issues are to be addressed for all children.
- 10.8** Secondary schools, in particular, are dealing with greater challenges in changing food provision and increasing uptake of school meals because of the freedom of choice available to secondary aged pupils, and the ready access that they often have to local food outlets. Baseline research⁷, commissioned at the start of implementation of *Hungry for Success*, identified that almost half of secondary pupils in the sample of schools

⁷ *Baseline Research of Implementation of Recommendations of Expert Panel on School Meals – Hungry for Success*, Scottish Executive Social Research, 2006

visited expressed a preference to go out of school for lunch. Local food outlets and vans do not have to comply with the nutritional standards that have been set for school meals. Some councils had begun to review local licensing regulations for mobile food outlets. It would be helpful to schools if a clear policy framework emerged from a debate about national expectations in relation to nutrition.

10.9 *Implementation of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act, 2007* provides part of such a framework. It is aimed at bringing about further improvements in food provision in schools as part of overall health promotion. The Act places expectations on LAs and schools in relation to health promotion and the provision of food and drink. All food and drink provided in schools, including food and drink provided outwith lunch, will have to comply with nutritional requirements. LAs will also be required to promote school lunches and encourage their uptake. This latter requirement is particularly important, as children and young people will not benefit from nutritional improvements to school meals if they choose to eat elsewhere at lunchtime.

10.10 At the other end of the age spectrum are our youngest children. Where healthy eating habits, tastes and preference are developed early and as part of a social experience, they are more likely to persist. The work of early years centres in promoting healthy eating and working closely with parents and carers to influence the development of nutrition needs to have a higher profile in national developments on nutrition.

10.11 In the review⁸ of the implementation of the Scottish Diet Action Plan, which had set targets to be achieved by 2005, the impact of *Hungry for Success* in leading to improvements in food provision in schools was recognised. The panel that undertook the review suggested that Scotland's future priorities should be to build on existing work and achievements in schools and improve children's diets. Improvements in food provision in schools have influenced many pupils to make healthier choices. Often pupils interviewed during inspections noted their desire to emulate the healthier meals eaten in school in their eating patterns at home.

⁸ *Review of the Scottish Diet Action Plan: Progress and Impacts 1996 – 2005*, Health Scotland, 2006

10.12 While work in schools can make a significant contribution to improving the diets of children and young people, eating patterns outwith school also need to change. The respective responsibilities of parents, shopkeepers and food outlets, food manufacturers, and elected representatives to the promotion of healthy eating are important in achieving change. In its conclusion, the *Review of the Scottish Diet Action Plan* noted that “to shift the entire food system in a more health-enhancing direction will take time”. It also expressed the view that “government must be prepared to be bold on food and health issues, without waiting for the rest of the UK”, and recognised “the strong commitment to cross-government action to improve health and sustainability as well as a strong political will to achieve health improvements”. The good work and achievements described in this report need to be continued and extended to secure the necessary improvements in the eating patterns of Scotland’s children and young people.

What further actions and improvements are required?

- 10.13** The Scottish Government should consider the following as part of its strategies to improve the health of Scotland’s children and young people.
- How best to support LAs and schools in encouraging their pupils to use the school meals service, and in accommodating increased numbers of pupils choosing to use the service.
 - Ways of extending parental involvement in supporting healthy eating.
 - Commissioning research on pupils’ food consumption across the day.
 - Encouraging a widespread and informed debate, with parents as key stakeholders, about nutrition for young people, to develop the policy framework.
 - Asking HMIE to promote good practice through its website and the *Journey to Excellence* resource.

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Looking ahead

- 10.14** Guidance and support will be provided for LAs and schools to assist them in fulfilling their duties as required by the Act. In preparing the nutritional regulations, account has been taken of LAs' experiences in implementing the Scottish Nutrient Standards for School Lunches. LAs will be advised on approaches to menu analysis to ensure that the data will be accurate and reliable for use in self-evaluation and that the issues related to menu analysis, identified in earlier sections of this report, will be addressed.
- 10.15** HMIE will be involved in monitoring the implementation of the Act. Inspections will build on the activities that inspection teams undertook to evaluate aspects of health promotion and the implementation of *Hungry for Success*. They will focus particularly on the impact of actions taken by schools and LAs to improve food provision in schools and the uptake of food provided. Self-evaluation by schools and LAs will continue to be important in measuring impact, identifying effective practice and securing continuous improvement.

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RR Donnelley B54419 01/08

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ISBN 978-0-7053-1132-8



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