Leeds Free School Meals Research Project

Phase 2 Report
Findings from the pilot phase

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<u>Acknowledgements</u>

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- The project's steering and operational groups. Including representatives from Education Leeds (finance and parent partnership teams), catering providers and Leeds Primary Care Trust.

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Abbreviations

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EL	Education Leeds
FSM	Free School Meal
LEA	Local Education Authorities
PHSCE	Personal, health, social & citizenship

Executive Summary

Introduction

Free school meals aim to provide a "nutritional safety net" for the poorest UK children. Yet it is estimated that up to 30% of those entitled do not take up this entitlement. In Leeds approximately 6,000 children do not take the free school meals that they are entitled to. National and local targets are for 100% take up.

Phase 2 of the Leeds Free School Meal Research Project aimed to develop, implement and evaluate a series of interventions to increase the uptake of free school meals. The interventions were tested in ten Leeds schools between December 2007 and October 2008.

The research was undertaken by the Department of Nutrition & Dietetics within The Centre of Food Nutrition and Health at Leeds Metropolitan University on behalf of Education Leeds.

Method

Ten pilot schools (five primary and five secondary) participated. All had high numbers of pupils not taking the free school meals they were entitled to. They had a range of pupil ethnicity profiles, catering providers and payment systems (both cash and cashless in secondary schools).

The proposed interventions were developed following the phase 1 findings (report available separately www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals *and* www.leedsmet.ac.uk/health/cfnh and a key stakeholder workshop. These were split into two phases; first "foundation" level, second "building blocks".

Foundation level interventions tackled issues specific to free school meal uptake. These included ensuring free school meals were easy to claim, that parents and pupils knew how to claim and that potential stigma was minimised. Schools were asked to implement these first. Building block interventions aimed to tackle more general issues relating to schools meals (both provision and the dining environment) as highlighted by pupil and parent questionnaires. These were to be implemented afterwards.

An active decision was made to focus on foundation level interventions first as it would be possible to implement these within the time-scales of the project. It would also enable these interventions to be evaluated fully.

Each school set up a working party consisting of representatives from their administration, catering and teaching staff with a project lead (generally the healthy schools co-ordinator or deputy head-teacher). A training session was held for each working party run by the research team and Leeds Benefits Agency. An individualised action plan was agreed for each school, implemented by the working party and supported by the researchers.

The results were evaluated by:

- School meal uptake data collected weekly. A unique template designed by the researchers and Leeds Benefit Agency was used.

- Pupil and parent questionnaires. To assess what pupils were doing for lunch, perceptions of school meals / payment systems and whether these varied depending upon whether they received their meals for free or not.

Pre-intervention questionnaires (January 2008). 227 year 5 primary school pupils, 527 year 8 secondary school pupils and 78 primary and 124 secondary parental responses .

Post-intervention questionnaires (September/October 2008. 226 year 6 primary school pupils, 528 year 9 secondary school pupils and 52 primary and 79 secondary parental responses.

- Focus groups with each school working party at end of intervention period.

Action Plans
For the foundation level interventions schools were asked to designate a member of staff to deal with any free school meal queries, to assess and amend where necessary their anti-bullying policies and to audit and potentially amend how pupils claimed for their free schools meals in order to minimise visibility. To improve awareness of free school meal entitlements amongst parents and pupils schools were asked to hold a lesson and an assembly on the subject of school meals, display posters, distribute postcards and send out letters to parents. One letter regarding potential entitlement was sent to all parents whilst another more specific one just went to those who were entitled but not claiming their free school meal.

Most schools implemented all the foundation level interventions. The principle message of the communication pieces and the lessons / assembly was, at the request of the pilot schools, on school meals in general. The value of a free school meal, entitlement criteria and how to claim were introduced as secondary, more specific messages. Some primary schools amended how dinner monies were collected so that it was not visible to other pupils; similarly free packed lunches for school trips were made less obvious. Secondary schools with cash based systems trialled different methods of identifying pupils entitled to a free school meal at the till.

The majority of schools were reluctant to amend their anti-bullying policies either because they did not think pupils were bullied about claiming for a free school meal or because their policies did not focus on specific reasons for bullying.

The original intention was to follow these foundation level interventions with building block interventions (general school meal improvements). These were to be based on the questionnaire results. In the majority of the pilot schools however the intervention period was fully occupied with implementing the foundation interventions. Other interventions that did take place included:
- Distributing menus to parents / newsletter articles
- Reading menus out at registration to aid pupils decisions
- "School dinner inspectors"
- Captain / Golden Tables
- Demonstrating food at parents' / new entrants evenings
- Improved signage in dining rooms
- All meal deals being available for the cost of a free school meal
- Decorating dining rooms

The school working parties performed well with many examples of inclusive team work. A positive side-effect of the project was improved communication between catering teams and teaching / administration staff – a more *"Whole School Approach."* It was evident that at the start of this project there had often been little or no communication between the various departments. Team members talked about how this project had made them more aware of issues relating to

schools meals and served as a catalyst for action. This resulted in many actual and planned initiatives.

Key findings

School meal uptake data

Free school meal uptake was higher than paid school meal uptake. In the pilot primary schools average free school meal uptake was 73% and paid school meal uptake 21%. In the pilot secondary schools average free school meal uptake was 61% and paid 33%. Less secondary school pupils are therefore claiming the free school meals they are entitled to suggesting that at transition to secondary school factors come into play that act as barriers to claiming their free school meal.

Free school meal uptake did not rise in all the pilot schools over the intervention period. Two primary schools and three secondary schools saw some increase in uptake but it was only slight. The other five schools saw no real change.

The research team suggest the following possible explanations. One is that there was not sufficient time for the effects of the interventions to be felt. Some schools did not implement the foundation level interventions until very late (up until the summer term) meaning there was not sufficient time for behaviour change to occur. The second suggested explanation is that the interventions implemented only tackled free school meal specific issues. Yet it was evident that there were many issues relating to school meals in general that were outside the scope of this project. These affected both free school meal and paid school meal uptake.

Pupils' perceptions of school meals

In primary schools the most dominant issues related to food choice and portion sizes. Nearly ¾ of pupils said there was not enough choice of food. Nearly 2/3 said portion sizes were too small and a 1/3 were still hungry after school lunch (an additional 1/3 were sometimes). Perceptions of the dining room were also not positive. More than half of pupils said there were long queues, half said the dining room was messy and over 80% that it was very noisy.

In secondary schools results were very negative. The most important factors related to the lunch-time environment. Over 90% of pupils said there were long queues, over 80% said dining room was over-crowded and nearly 90% said it was very noisy. Nearly half said there was not enough time to eat. Only a third said the food tasted good

Comparisons between those pupils receiving their school meal for free and those paying reveal very little difference.

Parental perceptions of school meals

The responses from parents re-enforced the pupil findings. Many rated the quality of provision of school meals as poor with more parents of secondary school pupils having this perception. There was also a lack of knowledge of the recent changes in school meals and parents reported not being informed either by their children, the school or elsewhere.

Was stigma an issue?

It was originally thought that stigma explained the low uptake of free school meals. This issue was explored during this project.

In primary schools claiming for a free school meal is generally not visible as pupils do not pay in the dining room. The only exceptions are on school trips (when free school meal pupils get given a packed lunch) and if dinner monies are collected in class. These can be remedied by using less obvious packed lunch packaging and parents paying at the school office.

In secondary schools claiming for a free school meal is potentially more visible as free school meal pupils have to show a ticket / get their name ticked off a list at the cash till. Cashless systems (these were in operation in two out of the five pilot secondary schools) eliminate the need for this.

The school working parties did not feel that stigma was an issue. The only school that changed its mind about this was one that conducted a pupil questionnaire on name calling. This revealed that some pupils were teased.

Secondary school pupil questionnaires revealed that the majority did not feel stigmatised. They said they did feel comfortable claiming, were not embarrassed and did not worry about getting teased. However a minority (between 10% and 17%) did express concerns saying they felt uncomfortable, embarrassed and were worried about being teased. Similarly most parents said they felt comfortable with their children claiming for a free school meal but up to 21% did not.

Having a cashless system did appear to offer potential improvement –the best results were from the school with a well operated system. Another school that installed one during the intervention period saw an improvement. However the systems were not always operated well with pupils still exposed due to inadequate administration.

Toolkit Development

During the life of the project it became apparent that in the absence of the research team, schools required support and guidance to address their free school meal uptake. It was decided with Education Leeds that a resource in the form of a toolkit would be useful to develop and disseminate to the schools. The Free School Meal toolkit consisting of a step by step guide together with templates of surveys and communication resources such as templates for letters, posters and postcards was therefore developed. This toolkit is available from the Education Leeds School Meals team www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals/

Conclusion

Implementing the interventions was feasible and many were felt by the schools to be effective. Schools were willing to implement the interventions once they were aware of the issue and were supported. This is assisted by the Free School Meal Toolkit developed by Education Leeds. This project reinforced the need for a Whole School approach to improving school meals with regular communication between departments being vital.

Stigma did not appear to be a major factor affecting uptake of free school meals. The majority of pupils in the pilot schools were comfortable with claiming, were not embarrassed and did not fear being teased. However all the pilot schools had

a high proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal meaning it was perceived as normal. An important finding however is that a minority of pupils did potentially feel stigmatised – saying they were not comfortable claiming, were embarrassed and did fear being teased. If Every Child Matters this stigma needs to be eliminated. The best solution in secondary schools is for a well-operated cashless system to be installed. In primary schools systems can be tweaked to ensure pupils are never aware who is claiming for a free school meal.

The key finding of this project is that free school meal uptake can not be tackled on its own. The issue is bigger than just free school meals. The school meals provided are not satisfying either the pupils who receive them for free or those who pay for them. In primary schools the principle source of discontent is the amount of choice available throughout the service period. In secondary schools the main issues relate to the whole lunch-time experience. Lunch time is too short, too hurried and often too late in the day. It is clear that for uptake to be increased substantially provision needs to be considerably improved with pupil and parent feedback being taken seriously.

Recommendations

Local authority level
▪ Improve the accuracy of the school meal uptake data collected. The local authority needs to work with schools to agree a system of data collection that is consistent, accurate and not too time-consuming for schools. If possible, this should fit with the systems that schools already utilise, rather than adding to their administrative burden.

▪ Output private finance initiative contracts to set clear measurable parameters to promote free school meal uptake and data monitoring.

▪ Communicate with schools so they understand why free school meal uptake matters. Utilise Leeds School Meals Tool Kit.

▪ Provide training and guidance on eligibility criteria to schools (in partnership with benefits service). Utilise Leeds School Meals Tool Kit.

▪ Provide support to schools to help them increase their free school meal uptake. This should be in the format of templates that can be personalised by the school. Utilise Leeds Free School Meals Tool Kit.

▪ Continue to support schools in adopting a whole school food approach – potentially utilising the Healthy Schools and Well Being Team.

▪ To rigorously monitor and act upon the quality of the school meal experience within their schools. This needs to include an assessment of:
  o the quality of the food served
  o whether portion sizes are adequate
  o the amount of choice available (including halal and vegetarian options). Both at the beginning and end of service.
  o the dining room environment (including the size of the dining hall and its cleanliness)
  o how long pupils have to queue for
  o the length of time pupils have to eat their lunch in

▪ Promote structure of school day that considers and promotes a positive dining experience.

- Ensure school buildings are fit for purpose in terms of ensuring a positive dining experience

- Encourage secondary schools to install cashless systems and operate them effectively.

- Encourage schools to set up pupil feedback through arenas such as forums, school councils and satisfaction questionnaires.

- Encourage all partners to support free school meal entitled families e.g. early years, extended schools

School level
- Increasing the uptake of free school meals should be the responsibility of a senior member of the school. This should be included in the School Improvement plan and potentially as a standing item on governor's agenda.

- Senior members of staff in schools need to ensure they are aware of uptake levels. In primary schools the school meal administrator can report this information to senior staff. In secondary schools the administration and catering teams need to work together to provide this information.

- Healthy school co-ordinators need to be allocated time free of teaching and other duties to focus on improving the school meal service (including free school meal uptake)

- School meal administrators need to be allocated time to manage the free school meal figures and liaise with Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service and the catering team.

- Adopting a whole school food approach should be prioritised within schools rather than leaving school meals as the sole responsibility of the catering provider.

- Work with the catering provider to ensure that the lunch-time experience is a pleasurable and civilised one for pupils and catering staff.
    - Reduce queuing times by extra till points, longer lunch-times or split lunches
    - Ensure pupils have enough time to eat their lunch
    - Ensure they have a seat
    - Ensure they are not separated by choice of lunch (e.g. packed lunch eaters sitting separately)
    - Ensure the dining hall is clean and hygienic
    - Utilise Leeds Free School Meals Tool Kit

- Schedule the school lunch-time so pupils energy levels are maintained throughout the day i.e. at 12 / 12.30 if they have started at 8 / 8.30.

- Pupils and parents should be regularly encouraged to give feedback on the school meal service – either via questionnaires, discussion groups, the school council or suggestion boxes. Their suggestions / feedback to be reported to senior members of school staff and acted upon where possible. Utilise Leeds Free School Meals Tool Kit.

- To not assume stigma is not an issue in their school. To instead conduct a survey on name-calling and / or bullying to assess whether pupils are teased in school about claiming for a free school meal.

- To make every effort to maintain the anonymity of those pupils entitled to a free school meal. To conduct an audit of how pupils claim for their meal and identify when their identity is potentially revealed.

- In primary schools it is recommended that dinner money is not collected in class – instead parents should be asked to use the school office. In addition, free packed lunches for trips should not be in obvious packaging and handed out in a way that means other pupils can see.

- In secondary schools it is recommended that cashless systems be utilised. This needs to be well maintained and effectively operated.

- To ensure pupils entitled to a free school meal are aware of the monetary value available to them each day. Utilise Leeds Free School Meals Toolkit.

- Engage with parents more intensely about free school meal claiming process and also about school meal provision generally including changes. Invitation to sample meals and experience the dining experience.

- Schools need to communicate regularly (2 or 3 times a year) with pupils eligible for a free school meal – Parent Support Workers or similar could assist in this. Particular emphasis to be placed on identifying those pupils who are not taking up their entitlement to ascertain why this is and how they could be encouraged to take up their free school meal. Letter templates are available in the Leeds Free School Meals Toolkit.

- Communication methods could include letters, postcards, texts and items in newsletters. Message to emphasise how much money the free school meals are worth and what pupils can get for their allowance. Templates are available in the Leeds Free School Meals Toolkit.

- Demonstrate the school meals currently available to parents.

Catering Providers
- Adopt a whole school food approach by working closely with teaching staff and school pupils to promote the link between food and health including the role of school meals for all pupils

- Undertake pupil satisfaction surveys of school meals; comments/suggestion boxes, questionnaires and discussion groups. Allow pupils to give anonymous comments.

- Ensure adequate food choice and portion sizes are provided for pupils entitled to free school meals

- Ensure food choice is maintained through the lunch serving i.e. that the most popular choices do not run out early.

- Ensure that the pricing of meals is clear so that those entitled to free school meals can easily make selections within their allowance.

- Work with the school to ensure a pleasant dining room experience

- Ensure pupils claiming for a free school meal are not identified at the till (or elsewhere in the dining hall)

- Encourage catering teams to adapt their offering to fit with their pupils' requirements. Communicate with them so that they understand that conforming to the nutritional standards still allows for changes to be made in response to pupil feedback.

Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service
- Maintain a close working relationship with the school administrators in identifying and notifying schools of pupils entitlement status

- Work with the schools and local education authority to continue to improve data collection methods

Further study
- Investigate stigma in schools with low levels of free school meal entitlement

- Investigate food choices (and how the introduction of school meal standards) is affected by socio-economic status

- Ensure any future research into school meal uptake gives equal priority to both primary and secondary schools

Section 1: Introduction

"There is still a huge job ahead; over 200,000 children who qualify for free school meals, don't claim them. We want to make sure that children from disadvantaged backgrounds, who need it most, are not missing out on a free healthy meal every school day." Ed Balls (Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, 2008)

1.1: Summary of Phase 2 of this project
The Leeds Free School Meal Research Project was split into two distinct phases.

Phase 1 explored the factors that influenced the take up of school meals, in particular free school meals and identified examples of good practice. A full report on this phase is available at *www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals* and *www.leedsmet.ac.uk/health/cfnh*

Phase 2 used the findings from phase 1 to develop interventions aimed at increasing the uptake of free school meals. Ten pilot schools then implemented and evaluated these interventions. This report presents the findings from this phase.

Following this the plan was to disseminate the research findings in order to inform emerging good practice to increase free school meal uptake. The findings will also inform the Leeds school meals strategic partnership to ensure a sustainable school meals service.

1.2: Background
Local Education Authorities (LEA) have a duty to provide a free school meal (FSM) consisting of a two course meal and a drink to those children who are entitled. For children from poorer families the free school meal makes a particularly significant contribution to their overall intake and therefore it is a priority that those children who are entitled to a free meal, take up this right (CPAG, 2006).

Low take-up of free school meals has been recognised at a national level as an area of concern that requires addressing. Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food states that schools and local authorities should aim for complete take-up of free school meal entitlement. In Leeds approximately 16,000 pupils were eligible for a free school meal in 2007. It was estimated by Education Leeds that of these, 30% (or 6000 pupils) were not taking them. The target is to achieve 100% uptake (Education Leeds, 2007).

The reason free school meals are seen as so critical is that many children and young people are eating an inadequate diet. In particular a diet that is too high in saturated fat, sugar and salt and too low in nutrients, fibre and fruit and vegetables (Gregory et al. 2000). Children from lower income households (and therefore those likely to be entitled to a free school meal) are more likely to have a poor diet. The Health Survey of England reveals that they are also more likely to suffer from obesity (DH, 2007) and chronic diseases in later life (DH, 2004).

School meals act as a "nutritional safety net" providing between a quarter and a third of daily dietary intakes (School Meals Review Panel, 2005). For those entitled to free school meals, the contribution is even higher - see appendix 1. School meals also offer the opportunity to model healthier choices, help children learn and establish healthy eating patterns and potentially improve their concentration and performance. The introduction of nutrient based standards

aimed to help ensure that school meals provided a healthy, balanced diet to pupils.

Since the start of this project in early 2007 the issue of free school meals has risen up the agenda in both England and Scotland with calls for the entitlement criteria to be changed – or abolished. In October 2008 the Scottish government announced that from 2010 all pupils in the first three years of primary school would receive free school meals (BBC, 2nd October 2008). This followed a trial of free school meals for all younger primary pupils in five Scottish local authorities. Uptake increased amongst all pupils; for those previously registered for a free school meal it increased from 89% to 94%, for those not previously registered it rose from 41% to 69% (MacLardie et al., 2008). It was felt that there was a "ceiling" to uptake levels that was below 100% as some pupils were not willing to have a school meal even if it was free and their parents wanted them to have one. Other positive outcomes from the project included pupils trying more types of food, asking for more healthy food at home and talking more about food at home.

In September 2008 it was announced that two areas of England would run a trial offering free school meals for all the pupils in primary schools. A third area would test the effect of amending entitlement criteria (BBC, 24th September 2008). At the time of writing which local authorities these would be had not been announced.

From April 2009, local authorities are required to report on school meal uptake performance indicator (NI52), as a measure of improvements for child health and well-being.

A further commitment to improve the lives of children and young people is set out in the recent joint government 'Healthy lives, brighter futures' strategy for children and young people's health, which makes clear the link between school meal and improving child's health outcomes. (DCSF, DH, 2009). The commitment is supported by 21st Century Schools vision (DCSF, 2009) focus on pupils' health and wellbeing, and pilots to test the impact of extending free school meals to a greater number of pupils.

1.3: The Leeds policy context (contributed by Rosemary Molinari, School Meals Strategy Adviser, Education Leeds)
Education Leeds value this research programme for its unique opportunity to address health inequalities by removing barriers for families and pupils. The research forms a key action set out in the Leeds School Meals Strategy. The Leeds School Meals Strategy is an important city wide public health policy that aims to improve the diet and health of children and young people, by reducing the prevalence of diet-related diseases in later life (such as diabetes and coronary heart disease) and prevent obesity. The strategy actions will contribute towards achieving the national ambition to preventing childhood obesity and by increasing the uptake of free school meals, will also contribute towards reducing food poverty in many of our most disadvantaged families. Since the introduction of the 2005 legislation for mandatory school meal standards, the importance of increasing school meals has continued to develop.

1.4: Aims of the study

The aims of the Leeds Free School Meal research project are detailed below. The first four aims apply to phase 1. The final aim (number 5) applies to phase 2.

1. To explore factors that influence uptake of all school meals with a focus on free school meals.
2. To explore the processes and systems that schools employ to administer free school meals.
3. To investigate the views of pupils, parents, teachers and caterers on the following aspects:-
   - Why is take-up low?
   - What are the barriers?
   - What factors would increase take –up?
   - Which examples of good practice are acceptable and feasible to implement in Leeds?
4. Identify examples of good practice that are feasible, acceptable and cost effective.
5. Develop, implement and evaluate interventions that aim to increase take-up of free school meals.

The primary outcome of phase 2 was an increased uptake of free school meals. In addition it was anticipated that process evaluation using qualitative data would be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the various interventions.

It was anticipated that key learnings from phase 2 would be able to be used by all schools within the Leeds area to increase their uptake of free school meals.

1.5: The research team

The project was commissioned by Education Leeds, School Meals Team. The research project was conducted by The Centre for Food Nutrition & Health, Faculty of Health, Leeds Metropolitan University (Leeds Met). The principle investigator was Dr Pinki Sahota, Reader in Childhood Obesity. Two research fellows were responsible for conducting the research on a daily basis.

1.6: Steering and operational groups

Initially two groups assisted the research team; a steering group met quarterly to assist with overall strategy and an operational group met monthly to address more regular matters. Mid-way through the project these two groups merged to form one operational group. The group members were actively involved in assisting the research team with information, contacts and feedback at the meetings. The group consisted of the following representatives;

- Rosemary Molinari (nee Denison), School Meals Strategy Adviser and Chair.
- David Pattison, Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service
- Ian Parker, Financial Support Services, Education Leeds
- Mary Cooper, Community Dietician
- Hannah Oldfield, Exclusion Manager
- Katie Gathercole – Exclusions Rights Officer – Parent Partnership
- Diane Oxley, Mandy Smith and Gillian Banks of Leeds City Services, Catering Agency
- Liz Messenger, Healthy Schools Adviser
- Helen Collins and Kate Drumond, School Meals Project Assistant, Education Leeds

Section 2: Methodology

This section of the report presents the methods employed in phase 2 of the research project. First, an overview of the methodology is given. How the pilot schools were selected, trained and supported is then described. After that, the interventions are discussed – both how they were developed and how the schools implemented them. The project evaluation is then described.

Throughout this report the participating pilot schools are not named and a consistent identifying code is used instead. The five primary schools are referred to as PS1 to PS5 and the five secondary schools as SS1 to SS5. This is in keeping with the project's ethical protocol. As consistent codes are used throughout the report the effect of the schools interventions can be tracked.

2.1: An overview - see figure 2.1

The findings from phase 1 were used to design a series of proposed interventions aimed at increasing free school meal uptake. Ten schools were selected to test these interventions. Initially each school participated in a training session. They were then asked to complete an action plan detailing when they would action the proposed interventions. These interventions were then trialled in each school.

To evaluate the success of the interventions, schools collected school meal uptake data throughout the intervention period. Questionnaires were conducted with parents and pupils (pre and post interventions). A focus group was also held with the project teams towards the end of the intervention period.

Figure 2.1: An overview of project methodology: phase 2
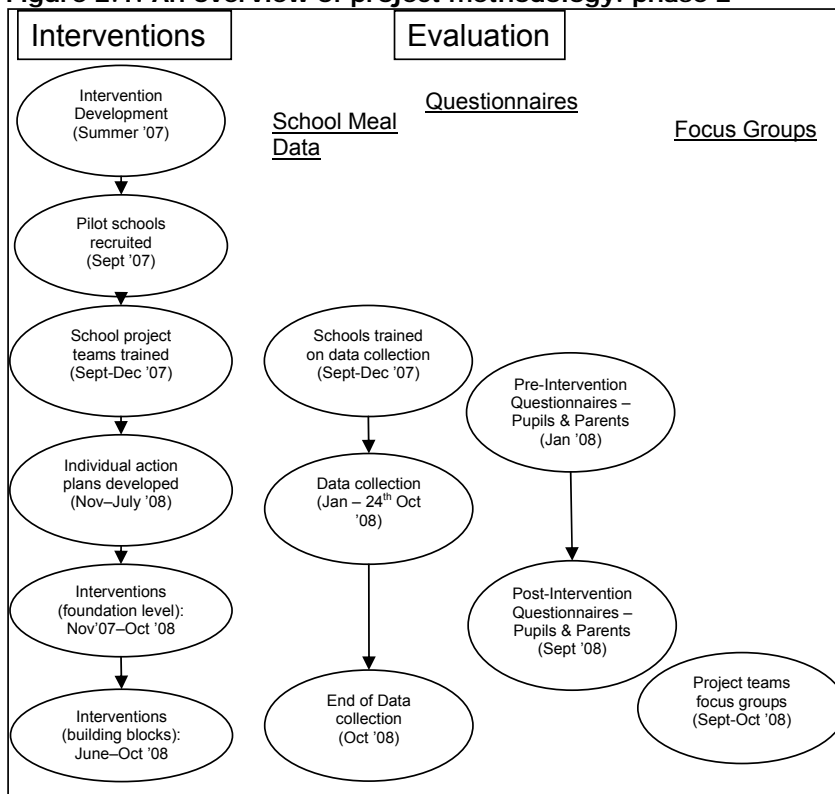
2.2: The pilot schools

▪ *Pilot school selection*

The aim was to recruit five primary and five secondary schools in the Leeds area. The main selection criterion was schools with a high number of pupils not taking the free school meals they were entitled to. This was because these schools had the largest potential increase in pupils taking a free school meal. Percentage uptake was not used as a selection criterion as this could potentially include schools with a low number of pupils entitled – and therefore little opportunity to increase. The aim was also to include schools representing different levels of ethnic minority pupils a range of catering providers and for the secondary schools to include schools with both cash and cashless payment systems.

Two terms of existing data, provided by Education Leeds, was used to rank schools in terms of the highest number of pupils entitled to free school meals but not taking them. An expression of interest was put out to all schools via the Headteachers' Update bulletin (produced by Education Leeds) and the Education Leeds website.

A "long-list" of schools was put forward as candidates to the steering group. Two schools were excluded as they were undergoing major changes to the catering organisation at the time and it was therefore felt not appropriate to include them.

In order to recruit the pilot schools, the research team rang the "long list" of schools with a prepared script. They spoke to either the head-teacher or the healthy school co-ordinator. If the schools were potentially interested this was followed up by a letter detailing what taking part would involve, what support they would receive and what they needed to do (see appendix 2.1). A member of the research team then met with each contact at the schools to explain the project in more detail and answer any questions.

It was emphasised that taking part was entirely voluntary and the schools needed to want to take part - it was likely to involve a significant amount of work and potential organisational change. Those schools still wishing to take part were asked to sign a memorandum of understanding (see appendix 2.2).

The Headteachers' Update bulletin resulted in four expressions of interest – of which two subsequently became pilot schools. An additional three of the pilot schools had already participated in phase 1 so had already worked with the research team. One secondary school actively asked to be involved as they were from the same learning federation as another participating pilot school.

One additional secondary school was recruited specifically as, independent of this project, they had recently installed a biometric cashless system. This research project could therefore evaluate the affect of this in isolation of any other interventions. This school is referred to as SS6 in this report.

▪ *The success of the recruitment process*

Using the Education Leeds data, the desired profile of schools was recruited (see table 2.1). The % of BME pupils ranged from 4% to 95% in primary schools and 5% to 60% in secondary schools. The primary schools were catered for by two different providers. The secondary schools were catered for by two providers and two had their own in-house catering. Two of the five secondary schools had cashless systems.

The recruitment process was however very a time-consuming particularly as it occurred during a difficult time of year – the aim was to recruit all schools by September but phase 1 did not end until July. This therefore clashed with school holidays. An additional problem was sickness of key staff in some of the schools.

Another potentially serious issue that was fortunately addressed at an early stage was the unreliability of some of the data used to select the schools. Once all the schools had been contacted by the research team and Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service, their free school meal data was checked in more detail with the schools themselves. Three of the schools invited to participate were found to not fit the high eligibility / low take-up model. In one school, they had over-declared their free school meal eligibility figures therefore artificially lowering the apparent take-up rate. This school subsequently decided to withdraw from the study. In the other cases, the number of pupils not taking up their entitlement had been significantly over stated. In the most extreme case, one had a true take-up percentage in the high 90's. It was agreed that they would remain in the study as a "control" to enable its evidentially successful policies to be further investigated.

Table 2.1: Participating pilot schools

School	% BME Pupils	Number of Pupils NOT taking their FSM entitlement	Cash or Cashless?	Achieved National Healthy Schools Standard by Sept 2008?
Primary				
PS1	3.6	38	N/A	No
PS2	95.1	48	N/A	Yes
PS3	4.7	50	N/A	Yes
PS4	5.9	49	N/A	Yes
PS5	50	45	N/A	Yes
Secondary				
SS1	5.6	107	Cash	No
SS2	60.3	Unknown (data not provided to EL)	Cashless	No
SS3	28.9	173	Cash	Yes
SS4	60.1	128	Cashless	No
SS5	5.6	119	Cash	Yes
SS6	5.7	104	Cashless	

▪ *The school teams*

Each school was asked to nominate a key contact and set up a working party to work with the research team. Suggested members of this were as follows:

- A key named school representative to serve as the main project contact / driver (this could be the Healthy School link worker but did not need to be)
- The catering manager and / or midday supervisor
- Administration support (for provision of data / FSM entitlement information)
- Pupil representation
- If in existence- parent support worker
- Any other party the school would like to be involved
- Leeds Met researcher

In general the working parties were set up as requested. For a discussion on the effectiveness of this approach please see section 6.2.

▪ *Training*

Once the school had selected their working party a training session for all its members was undertaken. This was delivered by the Leeds Met researchers with the assistance of Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service for particular queries regarding entitlements.

The topics covered included:
1. The history of free school meals
2. The importance of the free school meal in relation to childhood nutrition
3. Uptake levels of free school meals – nationally, locally and in their individual school
4. How the process / system of free school meal entitlement worked
5. Discussions around why free school meals may not be taken (using findings from phase 1)

Project teams were also trained in how to use the data collection tool that was being used to evaluate the success of the interventions. They were also asked to agree to distribute the parent and pupil questionnaires in their school. Finally, action plans were given to each school to complete outside the training session.

▪ *Monitoring and support*
All schools, except one, were visited monthly by the researcher. One school preferred to have a half termly visit. Each meeting was framed around the action plan and the schools progress, ideas for interventions were also discussed. The meeting was also used to keep up to date with the school meal data collection and the distribution of the questionnaires. Attendance at these meetings varied – in some schools one individual from the school attended and represented the whole team, in others the whole project team came.

2.3: Intervention development
Using the findings from phase 1, the research team worked with the steering and operational groups to develop a series of planned interventions. This process included a half day workshop which 22 representatives from Education Leeds, catering providers, schools (admin and teaching staff), representatives from Youth on Health and Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service attended. At the workshop the research team presented the findings from phase 1 and delegates generated ideas for potential interventions.

It was agreed with the operational group that the proposed interventions would fall into two main categories.

The first main category was entitled "foundation" level interventions. Their aim was to tackle issues specific to FREE school meal uptake - rather than paid school meal uptake. These would take place first. At the same time a survey of pupils and parents was to be conducted. The aim of this would be to identify the key issues relating to the uptake of school meals for each individual school.

The second main category of interventions consisted of a series of "building blocks". These aimed to tackle particular issues raised in the school surveys as a way of increasing free school meal uptake. These would take place after the "foundation" level interventions.

This structure was chosen as it was recognised there are some basic "must-dos" in relation to increasing free school meal uptake. These included ensuring the system of claiming was as easy as possible, that parents knew about their entitlement and that stigma was minimised. The project's exploratory research (phase 1) however showed that many factors affecting the uptake of free school meals are common to those affecting school meals generally. This concurred with evidence from Hungry for Success and the Highland Councils School Meals Needs Assessment:

"The best way of improving the uptake of free school meals is to increase the uptake of ALL school meals" (Morrison and Clarke, 2006)

"There are various factors that influence whether children opt for school meals, whether or not they are entitled to free school meals. These are complex and include peer group pressure, quality and choice of food, long queues, overcrowded and unappealing dining rooms and separation (from their friends at lunch-time). ... a growing dislike ... of the sometimes regimented, hurried, often anti-social and institutionalised nature of school dining facilities as a reason for low uptake. This seems to have more significance than stigma, although it undoubtedly has an influence" Hungry for Success, p51, 2002

It was felt probable that the foundation level of interventions would, on their own, be limited in terms of how much they could increase uptake. However in order to meet the project's objectives it was felt necessary to trial these first, on their own. Trying to address all the issues raised in schools regarding the quality and eating environment of school meals was felt to be too broad a remit and too ambitious within the project timescales. In addition, these would be addressed as part of the wider Leeds school meals strategy action plan.

After the foundation level interventions had been tested and the survey results returned, schools could then undertake some of the "building block" interventions. These would address the issues affecting uptake as defined by parents and pupils in the school surveys. It was felt likely that they would also impact on school meal uptake generally.

- ▪ ***Foundation level action plans***
Each school was provided with an action plan "template" (see appendix 2.3). This contained a series of suggested interventions for schools to undertake, grouped under two key aims. Schools were asked to detail when they were planning to undertake the interventions and whether they needed any support to do so.

The first key aim was to *"ensure that pupils felt comfortable claiming for their free school meal"*. It was pointed out in phase 1 that the process of claiming needed to minimise the opportunities for others to know who is entitled. Claiming for free school meals needed to be understood and treated as normal or "a good thing" by all pupils. Finally supportive systems needed to be in place so pupils knew who to go to if they were teased or bullied.

Schools were encouraged to assess their current practice. They were then asked to undertake the following interventions:
- ▪ A senior member of staff to deliver an assembly on the ' History of School Meals' to highlight the 'welfare aspect ' of school meals by provision of FSM
- ▪ Deliver a class-based lesson covering food choice and the importance of all children (including those entitled to free school meals) having a healthy diet
- ▪ Examine the process of claiming for a free school meal. Where it was possible for those claiming a free school meal to be identified, consider alternative methods of claiming.
- ▪ Designate a member of staff for pupils to contact if they have any problems.
- ▪ Incorporate claiming for free school meals into the school's anti-bullying agenda and policy.

The second key aim was to *"communicate effectively with parents"*. This was to ensure all parents were aware of their potential entitlement and that they knew how to claim if they wished to do so. It aimed to reassure parents about the

system of claiming for their children and ensure parents were aware of what their children could get for their free school meal allowance (this included the choice, the amount of food, plus halal or vegetarian options where appropriate).

Again, schools were asked to assess their current practice and then undertake the following interventions:

- All parents:
    - o To be sent a letter / flyer detailing entitlement criteria
    - o Display a poster in school detailing entitlement criteria
    - o Use events such as parents' evenings to increase awareness
    - o Use school newsletters / websites where possible

- Parents not taking up their entitlement:
    - o To be sent a targeted letter / flyer
    - o Use parent support workers to contact

- Flyer for pupils to be distributed showing the amount of food that can be bought for the free school meal allowance (e.g. sandwich + yoghurt + drink = £1.80)

- ***Support material provided***
Over the intervention period the research team developed the following resources to assist schools:
    - o Assembly and lesson plan (appendix 2.4)
    - o Posters (3 versions) showing what was available for the free school meal allowance (appendices 2.5, 2.6. 2.7)
    - o Postcards detailing what was available for the free school meal allowance (appendices 2.8, 2.9)
    - o Letter for all parents regarding potential entitlement (appendices 2.10, 2.11)
    - o Letter for those parents whose children are entitled but are not taking (appendix 2.12)

Later in the project many of these tools were included in the Free School Meal Toolkit produced by Education Leeds (with some slight adaptations). This is discussed in more detail in section 8. For a copy of the tool-kit visit www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals

2.4: School meal uptake data
Critical to evaluating the success of the interventions was being able to track meal uptake levels in the pilot schools. The aim was to examine the free meal uptake trend over the intervention period. It was felt unrealistic to measure the affect of each specific intervention – instead the impact of all the interventions together was assessed.

Collecting this data from the pilot schools in a consistent, reliable way was therefore vital. As data provided previously from the Local Authority had been inconsistent the decision was taken to collect it directly from each pilot school.

A template was developed for schools to complete (see appendix 2.13 for the primary school version). This was developed with assistance from Education Leeds financial services and Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service.

The school project teams were trained in how to complete this at the initial training day. School administration staff were asked to complete the data capture

sheet weekly and forward to the research team monthly. The data capture sheet required the following pieces of information being input:

- The total number of pupils on the school roll
- How many pupils were entitled to a free school meal. In the main, these were the pupils listed by Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service and given electronically to the schools each week. In addition to this however were pupils entitled but who live outside of Leeds plus any asylum seekers.
- How many meals taken in a week – split by paid and free
- Any comments as to why the figures may be affected – for example, a four day week, a school trip or a particularly high rate of absenteeism

From this information the following was calculated by the spreadsheet:

- The free school meal uptake percentage (i.e. of all the pupils entitled what percentage took their free school meal)
- The paid school meal uptake percentage (i.e. of all the pupils NOT entitled what percentage had a school meal)
- The number of pupils entitled to a free school meal but not taking it

NB Uptake percentages were adjusted manually to account for any "short" weeks e.g. weeks containing bank holidays or training days.

- ***The success of capturing school meal data***

Whilst some schools completed the data capture forms with no apparent difficulty others had more problems and the research team had to chase the information up frequently. This was felt to be due to a number of reasons. The first was that it was time-consuming for the administration staff to complete and unless it was done weekly the task would build up. Related to this is the fact that often records were not kept – filling in the data retrospectively was therefore very difficult. Secondly, it required liaison between the administration office (who held the data on pupil numbers) and the catering office (who held the data on school meal numbers). In some schools communication being these two departments was infrequent - see section 6.3 where this is discussed in more detail. Thirdly, many members of staff (particularly the catering team) did not have access to a computer and so could not email the information in.

Once the data sheets were returned and scrutinised, some further issues surrounding the consistency of data recording were identified. First, a new Central Government pre-school funding initiative resulted in some of the primary schools having to provide significantly more lunchtime meals for Nursery children on their premises. Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service has a duty to report these younger children to schools as being entitled to free meals if their parents meet the usual qualifying criteria. However as the legislation states that free meals can only be provided to such children if they receive educational provision both before and after lunchtime, many children only qualify on certain days of the week- often 2 days out of 5 (on the other days they only attended either morning or afternoon sessions). Separating out nursery children from the Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service listings and adjusting the free school meal eligibility figures accordingly proved very difficult for some schools.

Secondly, those secondary schools with sixth forms experienced difficulties at the other end of the age spectrum. Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service does not remove July Year 11/12/13 leavers from free school meal listings until that years Christmas. This is because significant numbers of July leavers subsequently return to the sixth form until well into the following Autumn Term. To have to reinstate their free school meal entitlement would be too administratively burdensome. In order to assist with accurate data collection, Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service kindly adjusted the free school meal totals early to remove all notified leavers.

Finally, this form did not allow for absenteeism. If a pupil did not attend school they would be counted as someone not taking their meal – therefore potentially lowering real uptake levels. It was however felt to be asking too much of schools to provide exact attendance figures – particularly as they would have to split them by free school meal entitlement for uptake percentages to be calculated.

Due to the method of data collection (i.e. using a unique form) it was not possible to directly compare uptake levels with previous years or other schools. This was unfortunate but inevitable if reliable consistent data was to be collected.

In general, the majority of the data was collected successfully – although it was very time consuming for both the research team and the schools. The entitlement figures provided by the schools did, in the majority of cases, match with that provided by Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service. In a few cases where there was some inconsistency this was discussed with the schools and Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service. If it was found to be within acceptable limits the school's data was accepted. In two cases the schools were not able to provide a week or two's worth of data. In order for trends to still been seen the research team inputted average values for that school for that week. The last week of the summer term was removed from all schools because many pupils were on trips or not present and the data was of variable quality.

- *Analysis of school meal uptake data*
The aim of the school meal uptake analysis was to look for "trends" over the intervention period. It was agreed that trying to evaluate each separate intervention would not be possible as schools carried them out at different times, amongst different pupils and often at the same time as other interventions. To that end, school meal uptake percentages were plotted from January to October 2008. Separate values were given for free school meal uptake and paid school meal uptake. Please see section 4 for the results.

2.5: Questionnaires
Separate questionnaire were developed for primary pupils, secondary pupils and parents. Attempts were made to find a standardised, validated questionnaire on attitudes, perceptions and practices related to school meals but none were felt to be appropriate for the particular project aims. Factors explored in the questionnaire were based on findings from phase 1.

The aims of the questionnaires were to:
- Assess what pupils were currently doing for lunch
- Assess attitudes towards school meals and the school meal experience (for both pupils and parents)
- Ascertain perceptions of payment in secondary schools (cash vs. cashless)
- Determine whether there were any differences between pupils entitled to free school meals and those not entitled
- Determine whether any changes occurred during the intervention period
- Assess how pupils and parents feel claiming for free school meals (secondary pupils only – primary pupils may not know they are entitled)

- *Primary and secondary school pupil questionnaires (appendices 2.14, 2.15)*
The primary pupil questionnaire used simple, age-appropriate language with colourful illustrations. Question format followed a similar structure to that in other learning material for KS1 & KS2 pupils. The secondary school version still used simple, easy to understand language but covered more issues, in more depth than the primary version.

Pupils were asked what they did for lunch and whether they had any particular dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian, halal, kosher). They were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements about the school dining room and the food served. They were asked how important certain factors were to them and what would make them choose a school meal more often. Demographic data was collected.

Secondary school pupils were also asked specifically about free school meals and the system of paying and those taking a free meal were asked a series of questions on how they felt about this. There were three versions of the secondary school questionnaire; one for schools with cashless systems, one for cash based systems and one for SS6 (as a specific evaluation was designed for them to assess the impact of their recently installed cashless system).

The questionnaires were piloted in November and December 2007 and in the secondary school version this led to the number of responses to each question being reduced from five to three. In primary schools, classes of year 5 pupils were surveyed pre-intervention (Feb 2008). Post-intervention the same classes were re-surveyed – they were now year 6 pupils (Sept / Oct 2008). In the pilot secondary schools classes of year 8 pupils were surveyed pre-intervention (Feb 2008). Post-intervention the same classes were re-surveyed – they were now year 9 pupils (Sept / Oct 2008).

In primary schools a member of the research team administered the questionnaires, using the briefing notes in appendix 2.16. Pupils were not asked whether or not they were entitled to a free school meal as it was felt they may not know. Instead they put their date of birth and gender on the questionnaire and class lists were then used to find out whether or not they were entitled. In secondary schools the research team gave the questionnaires to schools, using the briefing notes in appendix 2.17. Teachers distributed the questionnaires in an appropriate class. To ensure confidentiality each questionnaire was placed in a sealed envelope by the pupils and returned to the research team via the teacher.

▪ *Parent questionnaire (appendix 2.18 and 2.19)*
There were two versions of the parent questionnaire – one pre-intervention and one post. These were shorter than the pupil questionnaires to maximise response rates.

The pre-intervention version asked the parents what their children currently did for lunch, what they thought about the school meal service in their child's school and what would improve the food. They were also asked a series of questions about claiming for free school meals (if they were entitled). Post-intervention the questions focused more on whether they were aware of any changes to school meals in the school and how aware they were of various communication pieces or school based interventions.

The questionnaires were piloted in November / December 2007. The first version was then distributed by the end of February 2008. Schools were asked to hand the questionnaires out to parents of pupils who had completed the pupil versions. An incentive of £30 of shopping vouchers was offered to be won by one primary school parent and one secondary school parent. Parents were given two weeks to return them. Schools also developed their own incentives with rewards for classes with the most numbers of parents returning them.

- ***Success of the questionnaires***
No problems were reported completing the pupil questionnaires. Most pupils completed them fully and comprehensively.

- ***Analysis of the questionnaires***
Owing to the largely exploratory nature of the project, the main aim was to obtain descriptive statistics from the questionnaire data which would provide an overall snapshot of the pupil's experiences and opinions of school meals. The majority of the questions used three-point rating scales (e.g. 'agree-unsure-disagree'; 'very important- quite important- not important') or were tick-box 'yes/no' style questions. It was therefore decided that percentages and frequency tables would best describe the data and this approach was used to summarise the data.

Inferential statistics were not applied to the questionnaire data for a number of reasons. The main focus of statistical tests would have been the comparison between pupil's pre-intervention scores and post-intervention scores on the questionnaires to examine if they differed significantly. However, owing to issues of concern around maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents, it was not possible to use identifier codes on the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires. As a result the pupils could not be accurately matched pre- and post-intervention. Therefore it was not possible to apply the true repeated measures design which would have been necessary before inferential tests, such as paired t-tests or their non-parametric equivalents, such as the Wilcoxon test, could have been used. In addition owing to the large number of questions in the questionnaires, it would have been likely that even if matching had been possible, a few of the corresponding large number of tests may have showed up as statistically significant purely by chance factors alone. In this scenario it would have been impossible to identify which of any such statistically significant differences represented 'true' differences, and which were purely an artifact of the large number of statistical procedures.

Another factor which influenced the decision not to employ inferential statistics was that the questions and scales used in the questionnaires were of nominal and ordinal levels of measurement. As such any analysis would have required the use of non-parametric statistics. Given that such tests are less powerful than their parametric equivalents, and that the typical scale on the questionnaires employed only three-points, their potential to identify true pre-and post-intervention differences would have been extremely limited.

Qualitative answers were grouped into themes for analysis. For full results see sections 5.1 and 5.2.

2.6: Project team focus groups
The aims of the project team focus groups were:
- To assess the effectiveness of the interventions in increasing the uptake of free school meals
- To learn what barriers / enablers there are within the school environment to tackling the issue of free school meal uptake
- From their experience develop "best practice" guidelines for other schools in the area (this later evolved into the Education Leeds tool kit)

A suggested schedule was developed by the research team and feedback from the operational group was received. The final schedule is attached as appendix 2.22. Participants were asked about their role within the school, the situation regarding free school meals before the project began and whether this had now changed.

The action plan was then used as a basis to discuss what interventions had been taken within the school, what its impact was thought to be and whether any improvements could be made. Participants were asked to make recommendations based on their experience within the project.

- ▪ *Success of the focus groups*

In practice the schedule worked well – most participants discussed the subject matter freely and it was felt most aspects were included. One potential difficulty was an element of defensiveness in some schools if they felt they perhaps had not done enough activities or that they were being judged. In addition, where some teams were headed by a senior staff member, it is possible other less powerful members of the team felt less willing to disclose their opinions.

Participants are listed in section 6. Whilst some of the groups were well attended, others were not due to a combination of staff absenteeism and time pressures.

- ▪ *Analysis of the focus groups*

All but one of the focus groups were recorded and transcribed – one school did not wish to be recorded and in this case, notes were taken instead. A list of themes emerging from the focus groups was developed by the research team. Data from the focus groups was then allocated into these themes. For full results see section 6.

Conclusion

This phase of the project utilised an action-research methodology with interventions being trialled whilst evaluation was conducted alongside. The recruitment strategy successfully recruited ten pilot schools with a mix of pupils and providers. Interventions were developed collaboratively; the decision was made to focus first on free school meal uptake specifically and then school meal uptake generally. Schools sometimes found it difficult to focus just on free school meals as many of the reasons for low uptake were common to school meal uptake generally. The research team worked closely with the schools to implement the interventions and provide support where necessary.

The evaluation process utilised a number of data collection methods. Part of the reason for this was that the research team were unsure as to how reliable the school meal uptake data was. Despite concerted efforts being made to ensure the data was collected as consistently and as accurately as possible there were still concerns over its reliability. This was because gathering the data was a complex process (due to nursery places, six formers, manual processes to count school meals etc) and it was time-consuming for the schools. It was therefore decided to also evaluate the success of the intervention by pupil and parent questionnaires plus focus groups with the project teams. This also ensured a variety of perspectives were attained and enhanced the validity of the findings.

Section 3: Action Plan Results

This section of the report presents the actions undertaken by the schools as monitored through regular monthly meetings between the schools and the researchers from January to July 2008. The final evaluation of the action plans was through focus groups held towards the end of the intervention period. The interventions have been listed in section 2. Here we discuss how the project team planned how to execute the interventions and agreed how much support was required from the research team. First the interventions targeting parents will be discussed and then those targeting pupils. Finally a summary of school actions is presented in table 3.1.

3.1: Development of individual action plans

It was envisaged that following their team training sessions the schools would each complete the details of their proposed interventions on the action plan template provided (appendix 2.3) However, schools appeared reluctant to do this on their own despite being given guidance at each monthly meeting. The meetings themselves followed the structure of the action plans with each section being addressed in turn. At each meeting minutes were taken by the researcher and communicated back to the school project team in writing. Timescales were set either to a 'termly' achievement or as actions required by individuals before the next meeting. In effect therefore the action plans were jointly completed by the researcher and the school team through the monthly meeting.

One potential reason for the action plans not being completed as envisaged was the high workloads experienced by some of the key staff within the pilot schools. Many undoubtedly found it difficult to commit to the amount of time needed. Secondly, some schools were unsure about whether the suggested interventions were appropriate for their particular school.

Despite these issues most schools completed all of the foundation interventions as detailed on the action plans (see table 3.1 and section 6).

Many of the pilot schools found it difficult to separate out foundation level interventions from building block interventions. They struggled to not undertake interventions that improved all school meals uptake – for example, queuing. Therefore, schools that had successfully implemented the foundation level interventions were able to devise their own ideas and implement further actions during the summer term. These tended to focus on improving the quality of the school meal service with the aim of increasing uptake of all school meals rather than being specific to free school meals. Many were based on the results of the parent and pupil questionnaires which had been fedback to the schools.

3.2: Foundation level interventions

The action plan had two key aims and the interventions fell under these two categories. The first key aim was to ensure that pupils felt comfortable claiming for their free school meal. The second key aim was to communicate effectively with parents about potential entitlements.

- ***Key Aim One: Ensuring that pupils felt comfortable claiming for their free school meal***

Designate a member of staff
A designated member of staff was identified by each school as the person who could be seen in confidence if parents or pupils had any questions relating to free school meals. These members of staff were trained to use a "crib sheet"

(appendix 3.1) designed by the research team and Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service to guide them through the entitlement process. Schools were encouraged to communicate the role of this person in their formal communications such as school prospectuses, newsletters or as part of wall displays. This aimed to help encourage those parents or pupils who were reluctant to come forward and make an initial enquiry by making them feel more comfortable about doing so.

Anti–bullying policies and initiatives
During the steering group meetings it was agreed to address the issue of bullying in regards to taking a free school meal. Schools were asked what systems existed to deal with such incidents. Most schools however said it had never been a problem. Some schools were therefore reluctant to change their bullying policies to include this since they could not see the value. This is discussed further in section 6.4.

Identification of pupils entitled to free school meals
Schools were asked to consider the process whereby pupils obtained their free school meal and to change any points, as far as possible, where they could be identified. The actions differed as schools had varying systems for pupils to obtain their meal. The details of the schools actions is described in more detail in section 6.4.

In the curriculum
The aim of the curriculum interventions (a lesson and assembly) was to help pupils see the importance of a healthy school meal that was culturally and religiously appropriate. It also aimed to de-stigmatise poverty by communicating that taking a free school meal entitlement was "normal". The delivery of these interventions took place at various points as chosen by the school. This ensured it fitted with other activities in school at the same time.

- *An assembly*
Following consultation with the operation group and the school teams it was felt that an assembly focussed just on free school meals and entitlement criteria would not be appropriate. Instead the proposed assembly focused on free school meals within the context of school meals and school food generally. Resources were collated and devised by the research team with an aim to focus on the 'History of School Meals' including the welfare aspect of school meals by providing them for free. A timeline of significant events and a list of web sites for further resources and information was provided along with the aims and objectives of the assembly.

The majority of the primary schools used this format and presented an assembly to the whole school or to key stages or separate year groups. Some dressed the pupils up or wrote out placards with significant dates on to highlight specific eras and events important to free school meals. There was usually a discussion that followed relating to school meals in general and the health rating of foods. One school requested that the research team deliver the assembly, however this was not done as the intention of the project was to see if the interventions were sustainable without the presence of a university research team.

In the secondary schools, there was a wide variation as to which year groups received an assembly. There appeared to be more restrictions with fitting an additional assembly into their topic plans. SS2 did not hold an assembly because their plan was written a year in advance with no flexibility for change. Another school waited until they received the questionnaire results before they held their assembly as they wanted to tailor it to any specific points that arose. SS4 delivered their assembly towards the end of the intervention period to coincide

with the introduction of a lock in policy at lunchtime. They therefore used it as an opportunity to market their school meal service.

- *The lesson*

Teachers were encouraged to assess where a lesson on the topic of free school meals would fit into their curriculum over the two terms set aside for the intervention period. The majority included it in the PHSCE, science or Design Technology curriculum periods. Although they were encouraged to be innovative and fit this lesson into wider aspects of the curriculum such as geography, english maths and languages etc. this was not achieved in the duration of the project apart from one primary school who incorporated it into their history topics.

PS3 incorporated the topic of free school meals into their health week and planned to include in next years planning across the wider curriculum. PS1 planned to include 'food' as a topic if the school adopted a cross curricular teaching plan. The majority used the School Food Trust lesson plan as cited in the resources provided by the researcher. This focussed around food choices and the Eat Well plate describing a healthy balanced diet, and discussed the new food standards for school food. However, one of the schools took the theme from the assembly and drew it out into a lesson within the history curriculum regarding the Victorian era.

The secondary schools were given examples of lesson plans from the School Food Trust website for KS 4 and 5. These concentrated on the school food standards to increase understanding and acceptability. The majority of the schools used these as a PHSCE lesson, however SS3 used a wider focus depending on the year group as described in section 6.4.

- ***Key aim 2: Communicate effectively with parents about free school meal entitlements***

Posters

The posters aimed to communicate the fact that pupils might be entitled to a free school meal and to illustrate the meal combinations that were possible within the allowance. Two posters were produced and schools were able to use either or both of them. They were personalised to the school with the name of the designated member of staff to be consulted regarding free school meal enquiries. Once again they were set in the context of all school meals rather than focusing solely on free school meals.

Originally it was envisaged that the researcher would co ordinate the production of the posters and the pupils would be involved in their design and development. However, due to the limited timescale of the project the posters were developed by the research team in consultation with the school project teams. One secondary school felt that the graphics used did not give an accurate representation of the food in their school. They therefore approached their catering provider and produced a series of posters with them. These used three circles to detail a main course, a pudding and a drink for a set price (equating to the free school meal allowance). Since this catering provider serviced other pilot schools in the project they also received these posters.

Postcards

Originally it was envisaged that a letter would be sent to parents but following consultation with teaching staff a postcard was used instead. This was partly because some of the schools used postcards to relay positive messages and give information. It was also felt that a less formal format would be more acceptable to parents. The postcard was used to communicate the following:

1. Improvements in school food following the introduction of the school food standards;
2. The name of the person in school who can answer any free school meal entitlement enquiries;
3. To notify parents of the winner of the parent questionnaire prize drawer

The postcard design matched that of the posters in order to ensure a consistent visual identity for the project.

Letters
A letter was sent to all parents at the start of the school year to inform parents of the eligibility criteria for free school meals. The letter was emailed to all schools so that they could include it in the first parent information pack after the summer holidays.

A further letter was used by one of the pilot primary schools. This was targeted at those parents whose children were entitled to a free school meal but were not taking it. This was then rolled out by the research team to two other primary schools.

Table 3.1: Foundation level interventions completed by individual schools (yes = action completed, no = action not completed)

School	Key aim 1				Key aim 2			
	Design-ated person	Anti bullying Policy Amended	Assembly	Lesson	Postcard	Posters 1 & 2	Start of year letter	Targeted letter (primary only)
PS1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PS2	Yes	No	Yes	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
PS3	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PS4	Yes	No	Yes	Unsure	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PS5	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
SS1	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
SS2	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
SS3	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
SS4	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
SS5	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A

Other
Targeted text messages to parents, newsletters and websites were also used by some of the pilot schools to communicate messages about free school meals. Section 6.5 discusses how these were put into action.

3.3: Building block interventions
The results of the questionnaires were used by the schools to look at changes to school meals that might need to be made in their establishments. The secondary schools were given the results of the questions relating to free school meals specifically (questions 31-41 see appendix 2.15). The primary schools were fed back the pooled results from all the primary schools since some of the results were critical of the catering provision and the aim of the project was not to identify failures in catering systems per se.

Many of the schools decided to carry out further interventions following the survey results. These are discussed in detail in section 6.5 (as they emerged in the focus groups) but in summary are as follows;

Primary Schools
▪ Menu distribution to parents
▪ Menu reading at registration to help decide meal choice in plenty of time

- Payment of dinner monies at a central point rather than in front of the whole class
- School dinner inspectors
- Captain's table
- Purchase of lunch boxes for school trips (to make taking a free school meal packed lunch less visible)
- Demonstrating food at parents evenings

Secondary Schools
- Newsletter articles
- Demonstrating food at new entrants evenings
- Cards for pupils registered for free school meals (rather than using a list)
- Improved signage in the dining room
- All meal deals coming under the bracket of the cost of a free school meal
- Plasma screen in the dining room showing meal deals

During the intervention period a separate programme was being run by Education Leeds as part of its school meal strategy to transform school food. The schools could apply for funding to improve their dining room with ideas gleaned from a consultation with the whole school. Nine out of the ten pilot schools were awarded with £1,800 from this initiative and they were able to use it to fund some of their building block activities.

Conclusion
All pilot schools met regularly with the research team to agree interventions. Whilst many schools did not formally complete their action plans the majority of foundation level actions were undertaken. These included designating a member of staff for any free school meal queries, holding assemblies and lessons addressing school meals in general, displaying posters to raise awareness of the school meal offering and communicating with parents via postcards and letters. In addition, some schools undertook further interventions to improve school meals in general.

Many of the school were reluctant to amend their anti-bullying policies – reasons for this are discussed in more detail in section 6. In addition, schools found it difficult to separate out actions designed to improve free school meal uptake and school meal uptake in general, as they perceived many of the factors affecting uptake to be similar.

Section 4: School Meal Data Results

In this section, the school meal uptake data is presented for each school. Whilst the project's focus is on free school meal uptake, paid school meal uptake is also given for comparison purposes.

Uptake levels are presented as weekly average percentages from January to October half term 2008 (excluding holidays). This is the same time period as when the interventions took place. A general trend was sought as opposed to particular rises and falls. Trend-lines have been added to aid understanding.

In this report free school meal uptake is defined as the percentage of pupils who take the free school meal that they are entitled to. "Entitled to" means that they or their parents have applied for free school meals and have been assessed by Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service as eligible. It does not include pupils who may be entitled but have not yet applied for the benefit. The paid school meal uptake is the percentage of pupils who have a school meal out of those who have to pay (i.e. they are not entitled to a free school meal). For more information on how these figures were collected please see section 2.4.

For context national take up figures are approximately 30% for paid school meals and 80% for free school meals.

Results are given by individual schools – primary schools first.

4.1: Primary schools

Figure 4.1.1: PS1 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08.
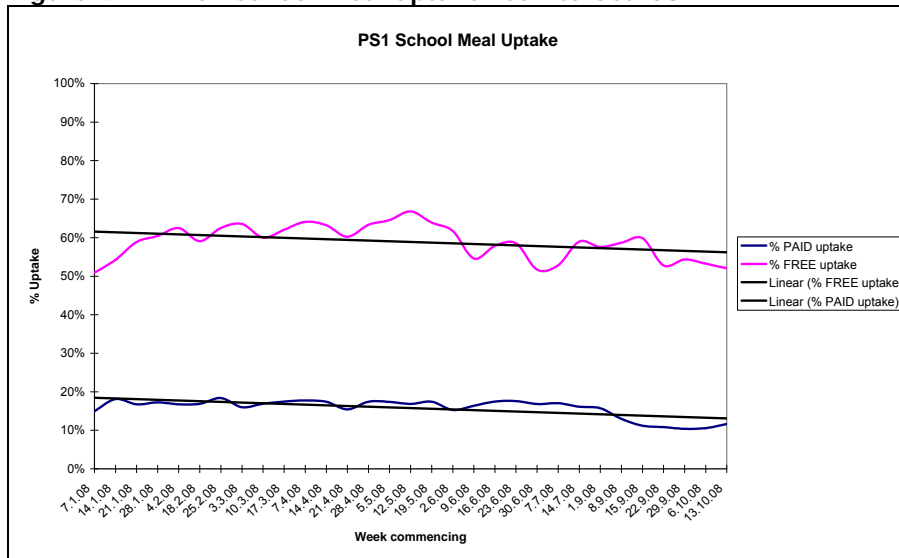
Figure 4.1.2: PS2 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08
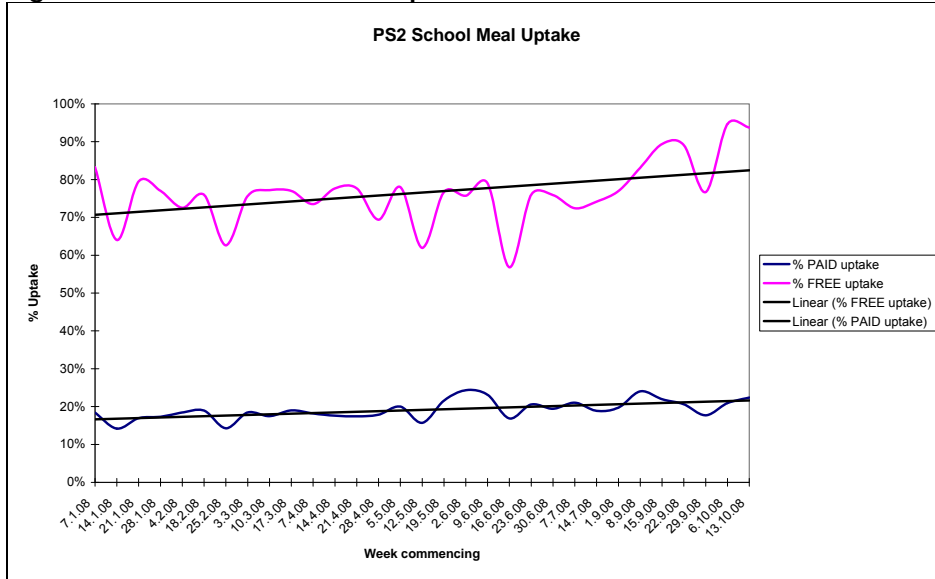
Figure 4.1.3: PS3 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08.
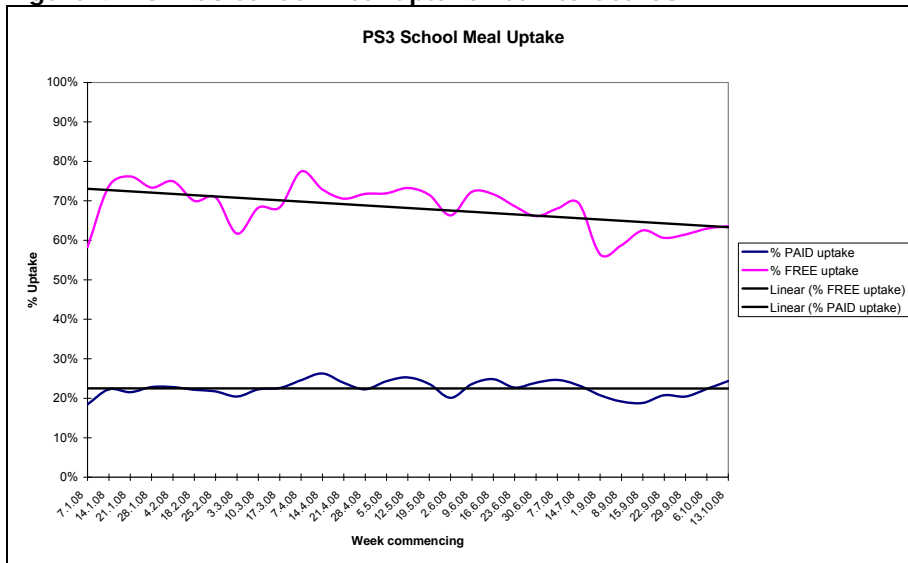
Figure 4.1.4: PS4 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08.
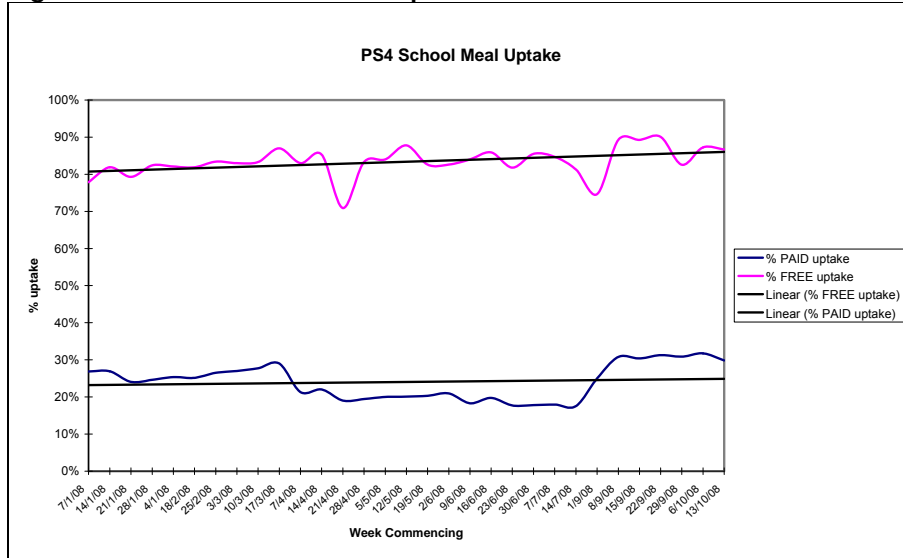
Figure 4.1.5: PS5 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08.
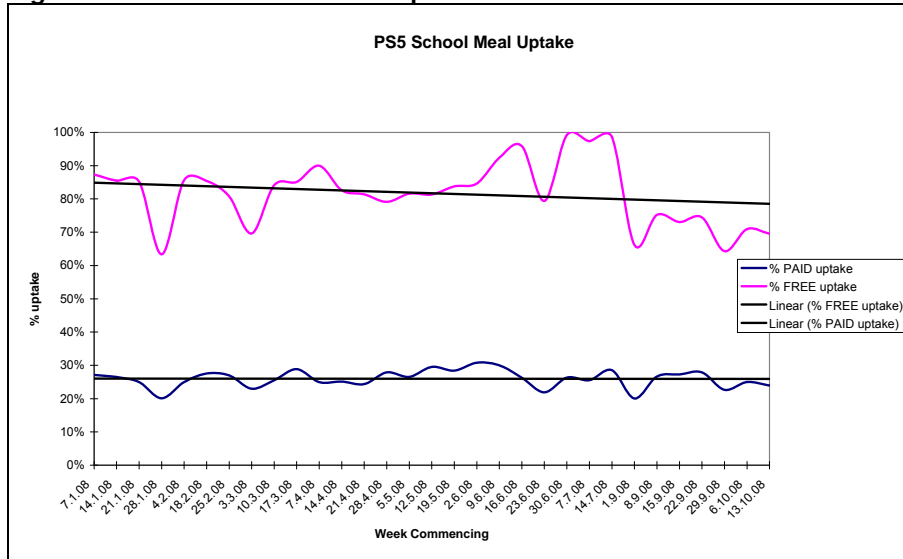
In all the primary pilot schools a far higher percentage of free school meal pupils ate a school lunch, compared to paying pupils. The biggest disparities were in PS2 and PS5 where nearly 90% of those entitled to a free school meal ate it as opposed to approximately 25% of paying pupils.

Two primary pilot schools (PS2 and PS4) showed a slight increase in free school meal uptake over the time period shown. In PS2 the increase seemed confined to just free school meal pupils – in PS4 the trend was similar for both free and paying pupils. The other three schools showed a small decrease in free school meal uptake over the time period. In PS1 this was a similar trend to its paying pupils but in PS3 and PS5 the free school meal uptake seemed to decrease slightly more than the paid school meal uptake.

4.2: Secondary schools

Figure 4.2.1: SS1 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08.
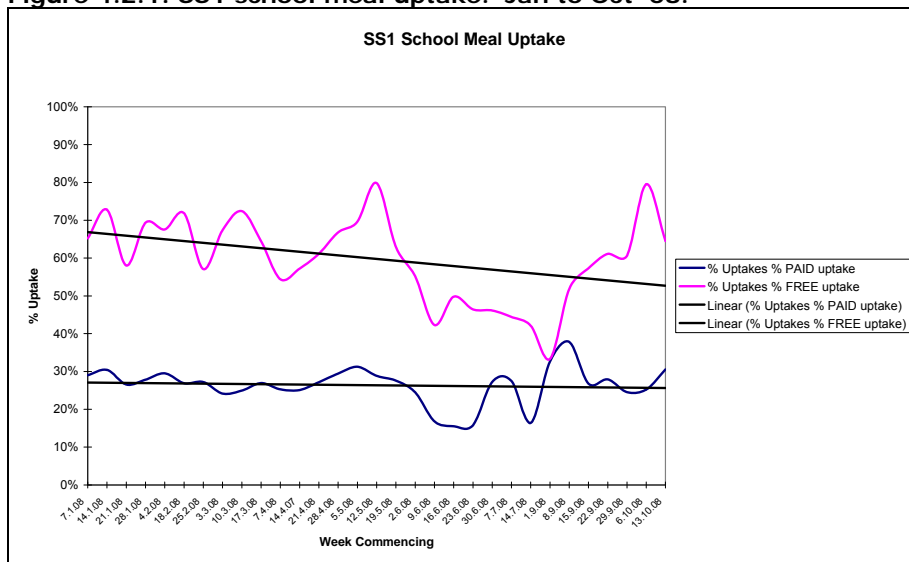
Figure 4.2.2.: SS2 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08.
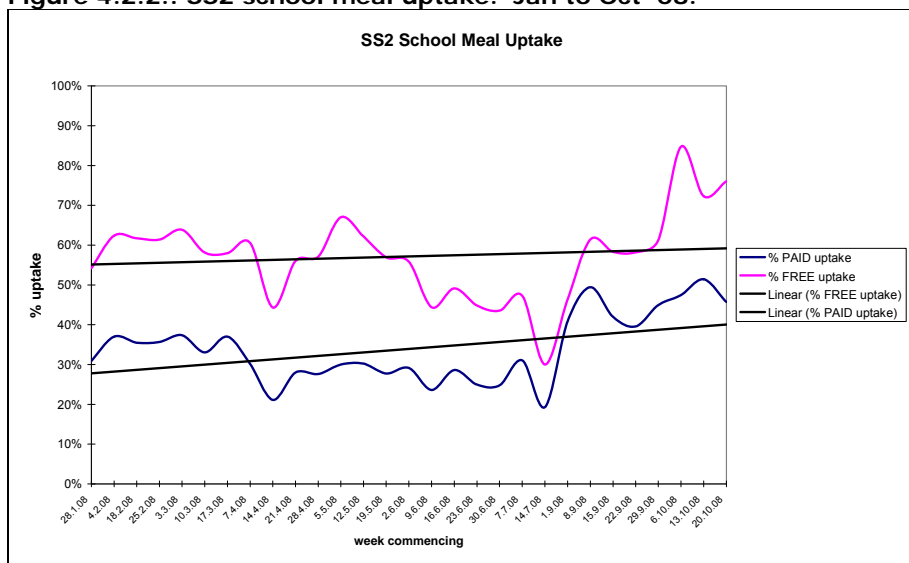
Figure 4.2.3.: SS3 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08.

PS3 School Meal Uptake
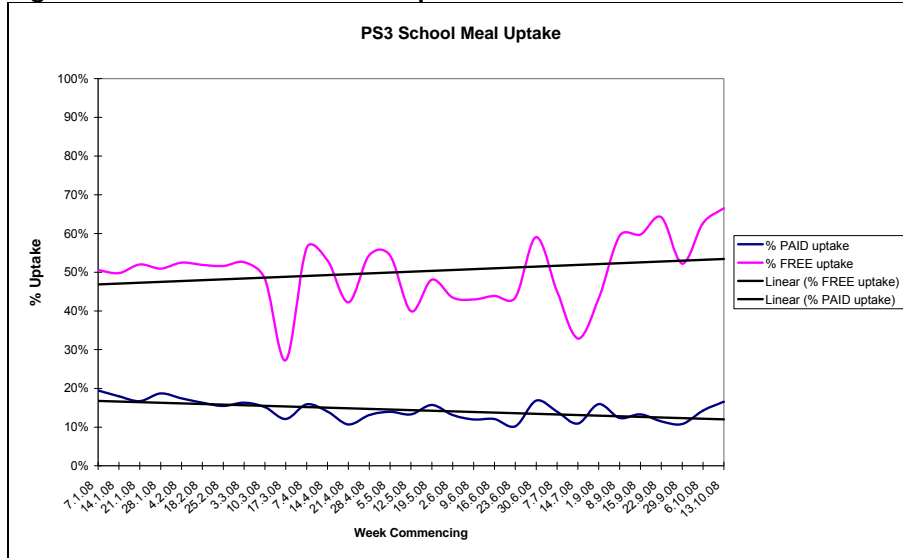
Figure 4.2.4.: SS4 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08.[*]

SS4 School Meal Uptake Data

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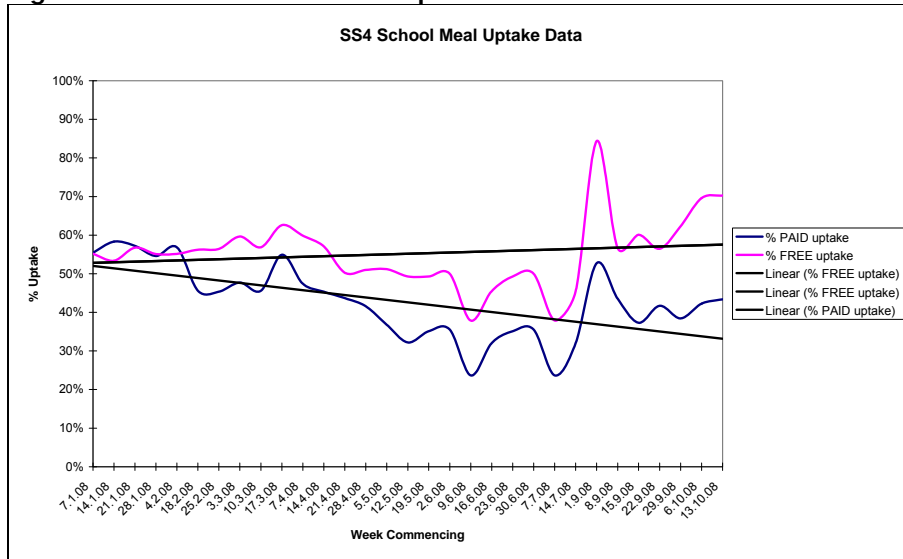
[*] Last four weeks data (June / July'08) has not been provided. An average has therefore been used.

Figure 4.2.5: SS5 school meal uptake. Jan to Oct '08.
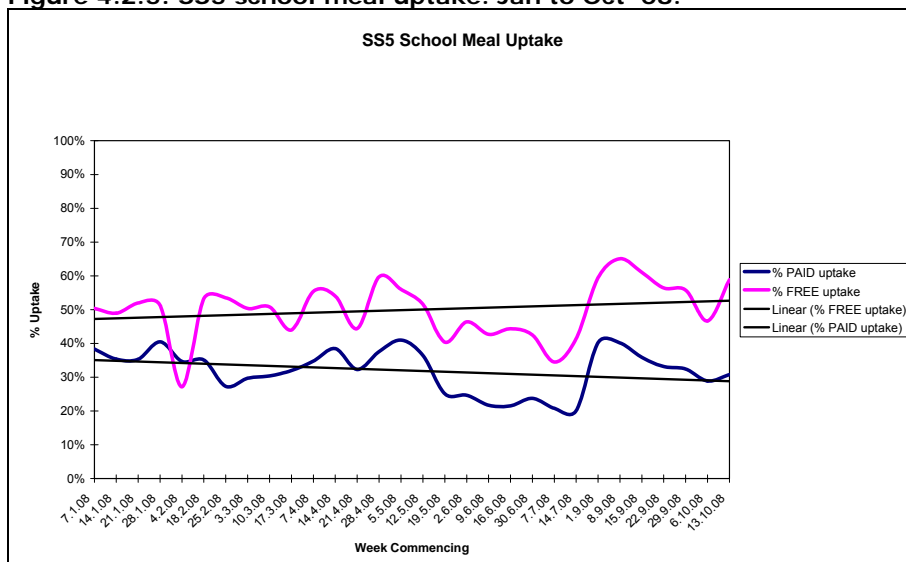
Many of the secondary schools show a "dip" in uptake during June / July. This is likely to be caused by GCSE and AS level students attending less often (therefore eating less meals) towards the end of the summer term, whilst still being on the school roll.

Three secondary schools showed a slight increase in free school meal uptake (SS3, SS4 and SS5) over the defined time period. All increased more than paid school meal uptake. SS4 showed a particular increase at the new school year – potentially because they changed their lunch-time policy so pupils were no longer allowed out of the school grounds.

As per primary schools the free school meal uptake is higher than paid school meal uptake in secondary schools. However the difference appears far less marked. Table 4.1. shows the average uptake of free and paid meals during the 2008 autumn term. From this, it can be seen that free school meal uptake rates are on average higher in primary than secondary schools. However paid school meal uptake is the reverse – being slightly higher in secondary schools.

Table 4.1: Average school meal uptake – autumn term '08

	Primary Schools		Secondary Schools		
School	Free School Meal uptake %	Paying school meal uptake %	School	Free School Meal uptake %	Paying school meal uptake %
PS1	56	12	SS1	58	29
PS2	86	21	SS2	65	45
PS3	61	21	SS3	58	14
PS4	86	30	SS4	66	43
PS5	77	23	SS5	58	35
Average	**73**	**21**		**61**	**33**

Conclusion

The graphs show how there is a greater difference between free and paid uptake rates in the pilot primary schools compared to the pilot secondary schools. In the primary schools nearly three quarters of pupils entitled to a free school meal take their entitlement. In the secondary schools this is reduced to just over 60%. The uptake rates for paid school meals show the opposite trend – in primary schools 1 in 5 pupils who pay for their meal choose to have one, in secondary it is one third.

This finding implies that pupils entitled to free school meals are being put off taking their free school meal in secondary school whilst their paying peers are more likely to have a school meal. This important finding will be explored in more detail in forthcoming sections of this report.

Some schools, more secondary than primary, did increase their free school meal uptake. No dramatic rises were seen in this time period other than in the school that changed their lunch-time policy. The graphs demonstrate how linked the uptake rates for free and paid meals are – when one rises or falls the other also tends to.

It should be noted that whilst these figures are as accurate as possible (see section 2.4 of this report) the fact that collecting the data was a manual, reasonably complex process and a fairly laborious one for the schools, means that the research team are not able to assert that the data is always 100% correct. In addition, it was not possible to compare the pilot schools with other Leeds schools as the data collection process was not comparable.

Section 5.1: Primary School Pupil Questionnaires

This section presents the results of the primary school pupil questionnaires. It should be noted that the questions asked covered the whole school meal service including the food served, the dining room environment and lunch-time organisation. The original aim was for the questionnaire results to inform the building block interventions should schools have time to implement these after the foundation level interventions. In the majority of cases this did not occur during the measurement period so changes post-intervention are not to be expected.

Responses are split by paying pupils and those entitled to a free school meal. This was to ascertain whether perceptions were different between these two groups

Demographic data
In January 2008, 227 year 5 pupils completed the pre-intervention questionnaire. In September 2008, the same class were re-surveyed, with 226 year 6 pupils completing the post-intervention version. Whilst allowing for some pupil movements these should, by and large, be the same pupils. Table 5.1.1 shows the responses by school.

Table 5.1.1: Number of primary pupil questionnaires per school

School	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
PS1	48	21.1	48	21.2
PS2	46	20.3	49	21.7
PS3	39	17.2	35	15.5
PS4	56	24.7	53	23.5
PS5	38	16.7	41	18.1
Total	**227**	**100.0**	**226**	**100.0**

- *By Gender*

Pre-intervention there were 112 female responses and 114 male (1 did not disclose gender). Post-intervention there were 114 female and 112 male.

- *By Diet*

Pre-intervention 37 (16%) participants were vegetarian, post-intervention 19 were (8.4%).
Pre-intervention 37 (16%) participants ate halal food, post intervention 38 did (16.8%).
Pre-intervention 4 (2%) of participants ate kosher food, post intervention 1 did (0.4%).

- *By Free School Meal Status*

Free school meals (FSM) status was established by matching school office records with the date of births and gender given by pupils in the questionnaires. This method was used because it was felt some pupils would not know whether they were entitled to free school meals or not. The numbers of participants entitled to free school meals per school is given in table 5.1.2.

Table 5.1.2: Free school meal entitlement by primary school

School	Pre-Intervention			Post-Intervention		
	Entitled to FSM	Not entitled	Not known[1]	Entitled to FSM	Not entitled	Not known[*]
PS1	13 (27%)	30 (63%)	5 (10%)	11 (23%)	37 (77%)	0 (0%)
PS2	14 (30%)	30 (65%)	2 (5%)	18 (37%)	27 (55%)	2 (4%)
PS3	25 (64%)	14 (36%)	0 (0%)	22 (63%)	13 (37%)	0 (0%)
PS4	27 (48%)	29 (52%)	0 (0%)	28 (53%)	23 (43%)	2 (4%)
PS5	15 (40%)	21 (55%)	2 (5%)	17 (41%)	24 (59%)	0 (0%)
Total	**94 (41%)**	**124 (55%)**	**9 (4%)**	**97 (43%)**	**122 (54%)**	**7 (3%)**

A consistent number of pupils responded pre and post intervention, approximately half male, half female. The proportion of vegetarians fell from 16% to 8%, whilst the number eating halal food remained stable at 37. Very few pupils ate kosher food. Slightly less than half (43%) of the pupils were entitled to free school meals. The school with the highest level of entitlement was PS3 with 63%, the lowest was PS1 with 23%.

The results of the quantitative questions are presented as follows. Each question is presented in turn with overall results for all pupils given first (pre and post intervention). How this varies between those having a FSM and those not is then given. Finally figures for pupils having a FSM are presented by individual school with any particular differences highlighted. Qualitative questions are presented for all pupils by themes, post-intervention only.

Question 1: What dinner / lunch do you have at school?
Before the intervention period slightly more pupils had a school lunch compared to a packed lunch (51.1% compared to 45.8%). After the intervention this had reversed with 47.6% having a school lunch and 51.1% having a packed lunch. A very small number went home for lunch.

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.3: Lunch choice. All primary school pupils by free school meal status.

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
School lunch	84	24.6	72	24.6
Packed lunch	16	70.5	24	73
Goes home	0	4.9	0	2.5

Approximately three-quarters of pupils entitled to a free school meal ate a school lunch. Less than a quarter bring in a packed lunch. Only a quarter of those not entitled to a free school meal chose to have a school lunch. Those entitled to a free school meal are therefore far more likely to eat a school lunch.

By individual school
Table 5.1.4: Lunch choice. Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
School lunch	76.9	72.7	100	88.9	80	59.1	92.6	72.4	66.7	87.5
Packed lunch	23.1	27.3	0	11.1	20	40.9	7.4	27.6	33.3	12.5
Goes home	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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[1] Did not indicate d.o.b. therefore FSM status could not be established

There was a great deal of variation between schools. PS5 had more pupils choosing a school lunch after the intervention period, PS1 had similar numbers whilst the three others showed a decrease.

Question 2: If you take a packed lunch have you ever tried a school dinner/lunch?
Those pupils who ate a packed lunch or went home for lunch were asked if they had ever tried a school lunch. Pre-intervention 99 out of 110 (90%) said that they had tried a school lunch. Post-intervention 105 out of 118 (89%) said that they had.

The figures by individual school are similarly high. Post-intervention 91% of pupils who did not have a school lunch in PS1 had previously tried one, 81% in PS2, 94% in PS3, 83% in PS4 and 100% in PS5.

Therefore, the vast majority of non school lunch eaters had tried one previously, although when this was, was not ascertained.

Question 3: Do you like the dinners / lunches served at your school?
More than half of all pupils said school dinners were "okay". Just over a quarter did not like them.

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.5: Whether pupils liked the school dinners served at their school. All primary school pupils by FSM status[2].

	Pre- Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Like a lot	16.9	15.5	13.5	12.5
Okay	56.2	55.5	59.6	48.1
Does not like	27	29.1	27	39.4

Those entitled to a free school meal were slightly more likely to respond positively than those who paid for them; they were more likely to like their school dinners a lot or say they were okay and less likely to say they did not like them.

Pre vs. Post
The number of pupils saying they liked their school dinners a lot decreased during the intervention period. Post-intervention, pupils entitled to FSM were more likely to say they were "okay". Those not entitled were more negative post-intervention – they were more likely to say they did not like them and less likely to say they were okay or better.

By individual school
Table 5.1.6: Whether FSM pupils liked the school dinners served at their school. Pupils entitled to a FSM, by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Like a lot	30.8	50	8.3	5.6	20.8	19	16	16	6.7	0
Okay	38.5	37.5	75	61.1	66.7	47.6	68	64	20	75
Does not like	30.8	12.5	16.7	33.3	12.5	33.3	16	20	73.3	25

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[2] NB: 19 (pre) and 24 (post) pupils did not know whether they liked school lunches. These have been excluded from percentages above.

PS1 had the most positively perceived school dinners with half the pupils saying they liked them a lot post-intervention - this had increased from 31% pre-intervention. PS5 also showed much improvement, albeit from a low base; pre-intervention three quarters of pupils had not liked their school dinners, the same percentage said they were okay post intervention. PS2 and PS3 had declining results with less pupils, post-intervention, saying they liked them a lot or that they were okay. PS4 showed little change.

Question 4: What are the best things about the dinners served at your school? (All pupils, post-intervention)
Most pupils said the best thing about their school dinner was a particular food. In particular pizza (67 responses), puddings or desserts (43), chips (21), chocolate pudding or cake (15), curry (13) or burgers (13).

Other "main meal" foods mentioned included sausages (4), fish fingers / cakes (6), chicken (9), wraps (5), sandwiches (7), pasta (5), hot dogs (4) and quiches (2).

Eleven pupils mentioned vegetables and 7 mentioned salad. Rice was named 7 times and jacket, mashed or wedge potatoes 7 times. Sweet foods mentioned included biscuits / flapjacks (9), custard (7), ice cream (14), apple pie or crumble (4), jelly and yoghurt once. Fruit was mentioned twice.

Water was named 3 times and fruit juice 5 times. The fact you could sit with your friends was mentioned 3 times, that the dinners were hot twice, that they were healthy 4 times and that they filled you up twice.

Sixteen pupils did not respond to this question.

The overwhelming majority therefore named a particular favourite food as the best thing about their school lunch. In nearly all cases this was something relatively unhealthy e.g. pizza, chips or puddings.

Question 5: What are the worst things about the dinners served at your school? (All pupils, post-intervention)
"Mash" was mentioned most frequently as the worst thing about school dinners with 28 responses, vegetables were the second most often (20).

Salad was mentioned by 8 pupils. A variety of savoury items were cited by one or two pupils e.g. pasta bake, cauliflower cheese, quiche, lasagne, pizza, shepherd's pie. Sweet dishes were mentioned less; carrot cake (3), rice pudding (2), custard (3), fruit (2).

A number of pupils said that the food was uncooked (5) or that there were lumps in the custard (2). Not liking the food generally was mentioned by eleven pupils whilst 13 simply replied "everything". Four said there was not enough choice, two saying that they ran out by the end of service. Six pupils disliked being given food they did not like – even when they did not ask for it.

Some comments related to the water provided, 3 said it was too warm, 2 that it had bits in it and 6 that they would prefer fruit juice. Other general comments related to hygiene – 8 pupils said there were dirty plates or cutlery. Three said the dining room smelt.

Seventeen pupils did not respond to this question.

Pupils therefore thought the worst thing about their school lunch was mash or vegetables. Comments not related to food however did feature. This included a lack of choice, hygiene concerns and dinner ladies giving them food they did not want.

Question 6 asked pupils to complete a series of sentences. They could select one word from a number of options.

6a) The dining room is a _ _ _ _ _ _ _ place to be.
Options: nice / fun / boring / horrid.

Pre-intervention just over a half of all pupils (51.1%) were positive about their school dining room – it was "nice" or "fun". Responses were more negative post-intervention with those saying it was "nice" or "fun" dropping to below half (43.8%). Those saying it was boring had risen from 30% to 38%, whilst those saying it was horrid increased from 15.5% to 17.3%. The most common response post intervention was "boring" (38.1%) followed by "nice" (28%).

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.7: Perception of school dining room by free school meal entitlement. All primary schools, pre and post intervention.

	Pre- Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Nice	35.2	41.3	22.7	32.5
Fun	14.3	13.2	18.6	12.5
Boring	34.1	30.6	37.1	41.7
Horrid	16.5	14.9	21.6	13.3

Pupils receiving their meals for free tended to be slightly more negative than those who were paying – both pre and post intervention. Post-intervention 58.7% of pupils receiving their meals for free said the dining room was either boring or horrid, compared to 55% of paying pupils.

By individual school.
Table 5.1.8: Perception of school dining room. Pupils entitled to a free school meal, by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Nice	41.7	45.5	38.5	22.2	36	18	40.7	28.6	14.3	11.8
Fun	16.7	27.3	0	11.1	16	18	22.2	28.6	7.1	5.9
Boring	25	18.2	38.5	44.4	32	50	37	39.3	35.7	23.5
Horrid	16.7	9.1	23.1	22.2	16	14	0	3.6	42.9	58.8

PS1 had the most positive response. Most of their pupils entitled to free school meals were positive about the dining room and this had improved over the intervention period.

PS3 & PS4 both had quite ambiguous responses pre-intervention but this had worsened over the intervention period. Post-intervention 50% and 39.4% respectively said it was "boring".

PS2 had a negative response pre-intervention and this had declined further. The most common response was that the dining room was boring but nearly a quarter said it was horrid. The most negative responses were for PS5. Pre-intervention 78.6% of responses were negative, post-intervention 82.3% were.

6b) The food looks _ _ _ _ _ _ _ . Options: delicious, good, okay, bad, horrid.

Almost half the pupils (46.3% pre, 49.6% post) said the food looked okay. Post-intervention nearly 11% said it looked delicious, 11.5% good whilst 14.6% said it looked bad and 12.4% horrid.

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.9: Perception of how the food looked by free school meal entitlement. All primary schools, pre and post intervention.

	Pre- Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Delicious	17	12	11	9
Good	8	17	9	12
Okay	51	45	51	51
Bad	12	13	14	16
Horrid	12	13	15	12

Similar results were evident both for pupils having their meals for free and those who pay.

Pre vs. Post
Results did not change markedly between the pre and post period. The majority response both pre and post intervention was that the food looked okay.

By individual school
Table 5.1.10: Perception of what the food looked like. Free school meal pupils, by individual primary school

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Delicious	42	18	15	6	20	14	11	21	7	0
Good	0	27	0	29	8	5	19	0	0	0
Okay	17	36	85	41	64	55	59	61	13	47
Bad	17	18	0	18	8	18	7	11	33	6
Horrid	25	0	0	6	0	9	4	7	47	47

PS1 shows much improvement. Pre-intervention a quarter of pupils said the food looked "horrid". Post intervention none did. More also said the food looked okay or good – although less said it looked delicious.

The most negative responses were for PS5 - pre-intervention 80% of pupils said the food was bad or horrid. Although this negative perception declined to 53% post intervention the results were still negative.

PS2 had very ambiguous responses pre-intervention. Post-intervention there were more positive responses but also more negative ones. Both PS3 and PS4 had a broadly positive response pre-intervention but showed a worsening situation post-intervention.

6c) There is _ _ _ _ _ _ _ . of food to choose from.
Options: lots of / not enough

Most pupils said there was not enough choice. Pre-intervention almost two-thirds of pupils (63%) said there was not, post-intervention almost three-quarters did (73.5%).

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.11: Perceptions of how much choice there was by FSM entitlement. Pre and post intervention, all primary schools.

	Pre- intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Lots of choice	30.1	37.3	20.8	27.7
Not enough choice	69.9	62.7	79.2	72.3

Those entitled to a free school meal were more likely to say there was not enough choice compared to those paying for their meals.

Pre vs. Post
Results became more negative (for both free school meal and paying pupils) over the intervention period. Pupils were more likely to say there was not enough choice.

By individual school
Table 5.1.12: Perception of whether there was enough choice of food. Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Lots of choice	46.2	18.2	38.5	23.5	36	27.3	25.9	21.4	6.7	11.8
Not enough choice	53.8	81.8	61.5	76.5	64	72.7	74.1	78.6	93.3	88.2

In each school the majority of pupils said there was not enough choice. In four out of the five schools (PS1 – PS4) more pupils were saying this after the intervention period. The only school to show a reversal of this was PS5; they had the highest number of pupils saying there was not enough choice but it had decreased from 93.3% to 88.2% over the intervention period.

6d) I am given _ _ _ _ _ _ _ . food to eat.
Options: lots of / not enough

Most pupils said that they were not given enough food to eat. Results became marginally more positive over the intervention period; 64% of all pupils said there was not enough food pre-intervention and 59.3% said this post intervention.

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.13: Perception of whether there was enough food served by free school meal status. All primary schools, pre and post intervention.

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Lots of food	37.1	44.2	41.1	36.2
Not enough food	62.9	55.8	58.9	63.8

Pre-intervention those entitled to FSM were more likely to say that there was not enough food. This had reversed post-intervention.

By individual school – see table 5.1.14
Table 5.1.14: Perception of whether there was enough food served. Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Lots of food	33.3	45.5	36.4	43.8	36	36.4	46.2	53.6	26.7	20
Not enough food	66.7	54.5	63.6	56.2	64	63.6	53.8	46.4	73.3	80

The schools with the highest numbers of pupils saying there was not enough food were, in order, PS5, PS3, PS2 and PS1. The school with the least was PS4.

Three schools showed an improvement over the intervention period – namely PS1, PS2 and PS4. PS3 remained the same, whilst PS5 worsened. Post-intervention 80% of their pupils entitled to free school meals said they did not get enough food to eat.

6e) The food tastes _ _ _ _ _ _ _ .
Options: delicious, good, okay, bad, horrid.

The most common response from pupils was that the food tasted okay (37.9% pre, 45.6% post). Positive responses (either good or delicious) totalled 28.2% pre-intervention and 21.4% post. Negative responses (bad or horrid) totalled 28.2% pre and 30.1% post. Pupils were therefore mainly neutral but more responded negatively post-intervention.

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.15: Perception of how food tasted by free school meal status. All primary schools, pre and post intervention.

	Pre- Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Delicious	10	13	9	5
Good	19	17	12	16
Okay	44	38	51	44
Bad	10	18	13	23
Horrid	17	15	16	12

There were no major differences between those pupils entitled to free school meals and those not. Those entitled were slightly less negative and slightly more likely to say the food tasted okay.

By individual school
Table 5.1.16: Perception of how the food tasted. Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Delicious	25	9	0	24	8	9	15	7	0	0
Good	25	36	33	6	16	9	19	11	7	12
Okay	33	45	58	35	56	50	54	59	7	53
Bad	8	0	0	35	8	5	12	11	20	12
Horrid	8	9	8	0	12	27	0	11	67	24

The most positive response was in PS1. Pre-intervention 83% said the food tasted either okay, good or delicious. Afterwards 91% did.

The most negative response was in PS5. Pre-intervention 87% said the food was either bad or horrid, post-intervention this response had reduced to 36%. However the results were still relatively poor with a quarter saying the food tasted horrid and none saying it was delicious.

Both PS3 and PS4 had a fairly neutral response pre-intervention. There was a slight negative shift post-intervention with more saying the food tasted bad or horrid and less saying it tasted delicious or good. There was a more mixed picture in PS2 – pre-intervention there was a reasonably positive response, afterwards more said the food tasted delicious but more also said it tasted bad.

Main findings from question 6

Question 6 asked pupils about a range of issues relating to their school dinner. They had to choose one response from a limited number of options.

The issue of whether the school dining room was nice, fun, boring or horrid elicited quite neutral responses. Pre-intervention there was an even split between pupils saying it was either "nice" or "fun" and those saying it was "boring" or "horrid". Post-intervention the responses were more negative. Those pupils entitled to a free school meal were slightly more negative than those paying for their lunches. There was a great deal of variation between schools. In one school nearly ¾ of pupils thought the dining room was nice or fun (post-intervention). The same figure in another school was just 17.7%.

The food was generally thought to look "okay". This did not vary markedly with free school meal status or pre vs. post intervention. Again, there was marked variation between schools. In one school none of the pupils said the food was "horrid", in another nearly half did (47%).

Most pupils thought there was not enough choice (63% pre-intervention). The situation worsened during the interventions with nearly ¾ saying this post-intervention (73.5%). Those entitled to free school meals were more likely to say there was not enough choice. Similar results were found in all the schools.

Approximately two thirds of pupils said they did not get enough to eat (64%). This reduced slightly during the intervention to 59.3% post. There was no clear variation depending upon free school meal entitlement. The results were fairly consistent across the individual schools – in all but one over half of those pupils said they did not get enough to eat. In one school 80% said they didn't.

Pupils overall were fairly neutral about how the food tasted, with most saying it was "okay". This became slightly less positive during the intervention period. No consistent picture as regards entitlement status emerged. There was substantial variation between schools – in one nearly half (45%) said the food tasted "good" or "delicious". The equivalent figure in another school was only 12%.

The most conclusive results therefore related to food choice and portion sizes. Most pupils thought there was not enough choice and that they did not get enough to eat. How the food tasted and how it looked elicited more neutral responses. Comparing the results pre vs. post intervention reveals that in most areas there was no improvement; in four out of five the results worsened, the exception was when pupils were asked whether they got enough to eat.

Free school meal pupils displayed very similar results to paying pupils. In two cases the former were slightly more negative – these related to the dining room and the amount of choice available. There was a great deal of variation between schools - both in terms of absolute responses and in whether they improved or not during the intervention period.

Question 7
This question asked for the children's opinions on various aspects of their dining room. They were asked to say whether they felt certain statements were True, Sometimes True or Untrue.

a) There are often long queues (waiting in a line) for a school dinner/ lunch.

Most pupils agreed that there were long queues for a school dinner or lunch – 59% pre-intervention, 53% post (all pupils). Only a small minority disagreed (4.8% pre, 3.5% post). Approximately a third said it was sometimes true (31.3% pre, 38.5% post). After the intervention period fewer pupils said the statement was true and more said it was sometimes true.

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.17: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "there are long queues in line for lunch". All primary schools, pre and post intervention,.

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
True	65.6	58.8	56.5	53.9
Sometimes True	27.8	37	41.3	42.6
Untrue	6.7	4.2	2.2	3.5

Pre-intervention more pupils receiving their meals for free agreed with the fact that there were long queues compared to paying pupils. After the intervention period the results were more even, with a similar number of free and paying pupils agreeing and disagreeing with the statement.

By individual school
Table 5.1.18: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "there are long queues in line for lunch". Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
True	33.3	27.3	58.3	75	80	65	69.2	51.9	66.7	52.9
Sometimes True	41.7	72.7	41.7	25	16	35	30.8	44.4	20	35.3
Untrue	25	0	0	0	4	0	0	3.7	13.3	11.8

In all schools except one (PS1) the majority of pupils agreed that there were long queues (both pre and post). In PS3, PS4 and PS5 there was some improvement post-intervention with more pupils saying that the statement was "sometimes true" rather than "true". In PS2 the situation had worsened slightly – more pupils agreed that there were long queues.

PS1 was the exception. Pre-intervention the majority of pupils said it was "sometimes true" that there were long queues however a quarter disagreed with the statement. Post-intervention the response was less positive – although it still had by far the best results.

In all of the schools very few pupils disagreed with the fact that there were long queues.

b) **There is enough time to eat a school dinner/ lunch**.

The results were fairly evenly split between the three responses (true / sometimes true / untrue). The most popular response was that it was untrue i.e. there was not enough time to eat a school dinner (29.2% pre, 35.8% post). Nearly a third of pupils however replied that this was sometimes true (31.7% pre, 32.3% post) and just over a quarter that it was true i.e. there was enough time to eat (25.1% pre, 29.2% post). The results slightly improved post intervention.

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.19: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "there is enough time to eat lunch". All primary schools, pre and post intervention.

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
True	31.9	22.5	31.9	29.4
Sometimes True	28.6	37.5	33	33.6
Untrue	39.6	40	35.1	37.0

Pre-intervention, pupils receiving free school meals were slightly more positive i.e. they were more likely to say they had sufficient time to eat their school lunch. Post-intervention the results were more even, with those paying and those receiving free school meals giving very similar responses.

By individual school
Table 5.1.20: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "there is enough time to eat lunch". Free school meal pupils by individual primary school

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
True	33.3	45.5	35.7	29.4	20.8	36.4	53.8	37	6.7	18.8
Sometimes True	33.3	32.4	21.4	41.2	29.2	31.8	19.2	33.3	46.7	37.5
Untrue	33.3	36.4	42.9	29.4	50	31.8	26.9	29.6	46.7	43.8

Before the intervention PS4 had the most positive responses whilst PS5 and PS3 had the lowest level of agreement with this statement. PS1 and PS2's responses were more evenly split.

Four out of the five schools saw some improvement (PS1,2,3 and 5). PS4 had slightly worse responses post-intervention with fewer pupils saying they had enough time and more saying they sometimes did.

c) You can eat your school dinner / lunch with your friends.

Most pupils said they were able to eat their lunch with their friends (55.1% pre, 49.6% post). Nearly a third said this was sometimes true (28.5% pre, 29.2% post). Those saying this was untrue increased from 11.5% to 19.9% post-intervention. Results therefore became slightly less positive during the intervention period.

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.21: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "you can eat your school dinner / lunch with your friends". All primary schools, pre and post intervention.

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
True	65.2	53.3	56.8	44.6
Sometimes True	23.6	34.2	23.2	35.5
Untrue	11.2	12.5	20	19.8

Those receiving their school meal for free were slightly more likely to say that they could eat their school dinner with their friends. A similar number of free and paying pupils disagreed with the statement both pre and post-intervention.

By individual school
Table 5.1.22: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "you can eat your school dinner/lunch with your friends". Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
True	50	18.2	54.5	31.2	76	95.5	84.6	78.6	33.3	17.6
Sometimes True	41.7	54.5	27.3	43.8	16	4.5	15.4	14.3	33.3	23.5
Untrue	8.3	27.3	18.2	25	8	0	0	7.1	33.3	58.8

Before the intervention the highest number of free school meal pupils agreeing that they could eat with their friends were from PS3 and PS4. PS2 and PS1 had approximately half of their FSM pupils agreeing, PS5 the least with a third.

After the intervention PS3 had further improved their results with over 95% of pupils saying they could sit with their friends. All the other schools showed a decline in the number of pupils saying they could sit with their friends and an increase in those saying they could not.

d) **You are still hungry after having a school dinner / lunch**.

Overall over a third of pupils said they were still hungry after having a school dinner (35.7% pre, 39.4% post). Saying this was sometimes true was the most common response (37.9% pre, 40.3% post). Those disagreeing with the statement were in the minority (19.8% pre, 16.4% post).

Over three quarters of pupils therefore said it was true or sometimes true that they were hungry after a school lunch. This had increased post intervention from 73.7% to 79.7%.

By entitlement status
Table 5.1.23: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "you are still hungry after having a school dinner/lunch". All primary schools, pre and post intervention.

	Pre- Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
True	43	33.6	41.5	42.2
Sometimes True	37.2	42.9	38.3	44
Untrue	19.8	23.5	20.2	13.8

Pre-intervention more pupils entitled to a free school meal agreed with the statement that they were still hungry after a school lunch. Post-intervention however the situation was reversed. There would appear therefore to be no consistent differences between free and paying pupils on this issue.

By individual school
Table 5.1.24: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "you are still hungry after having a school dinner/lunch". Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
True	50	27.3	40	43.8	43.5	54.5	30.8	14.3	53.3	50
Sometimes True	33.3	63.6	50	37.5	30.4	31.8	34.6	46.4	40	37.5
Untrue	16.7	9.1	10	18.8	26.1	13.6	34.6	39.3	6.7	12.5

In four out of the five schools (PS 1,2,3 and 5) more than 40% of pupils agreed with the statement that they were hungry after having a school lunch. Post-intervention PS1 and PS5 showed some improvement – although most pupils still said it was true or sometimes true that they remained hungry. PS2 and PS3 had worse results post-intervention with more pupils agreeing with the statement that they were still hungry. PS4 was the exception – over a third of their FSM pupils disagreed and said they were not hungry after having a school lunch.

e) **The seating area is messy.**

Few pupils disagreed with the statement that the seating area was messy (15.9% pre, 8.8% post). Most agreed that it was messy (45.8% pre, 43.8% post), or said it was sometimes true (33% pre, 44% post). There were small signs of improvement; post intervention the most popular response was sometimes true, rather than true.

By entitlement status

Table 5.1.25: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "the seating area is messy". All primary schools, pre and post intervention.

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
True	58	41.7	39.8	47.9
Sometimes True	27.3	40	50.5	42.9
Untrue	14.8	18.3	9.7	9.2

Pre-intervention slightly more pupils entitled to a free school meal agreed with the statement that the seating area was messy. Post intervention the responses are similar - the percentage of pupils saying the statement was true or sometimes true was 90.3% for pupils having a free school meal and 90.8% for paying pupils.

By individual school

Table 5.1.26: Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "the seating area is messy". Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
True	83.3	100	70	64.7	48	18.2	88.5	74.1	93.3	75
Sometimes True	16.7	0	20	29.4	32	68.2	11.5	18.5	6.7	6.2
Untrue	0	0	10	5.9	20	13.6	0	7.4	0	18.8

In three out of the five schools (PS1, PS4 and PS5) more than 80% of pupils agreed that the seating area was messy. The school with the least amount agreeing was PS3. There were some signs of improvement in PS5 and PS4 post-intervention. The situation remained broadly similar in PS2 and PS3, whilst it worsened in PS1.

f) **The dining room is noisy**.

Overall most pupils agreed with the statement that the dining room is noisy (45.8% pre, 83.6% post). Very few pupils disagreed (15.9% pre, 5.8% post) whilst a sizeable number said it was sometimes true (33% pre, 7.5% post). The situation had therefore worsened during the intervention period.

By entitlement status

Table 5.1.27: **Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "the dining room is noisy". All primary schools, pre and post intervention.**

	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
True	88.8	82.8	88.2	85.7
Sometimes True	11.2	11.5	7.5	7.6
Untrue	0	5.7	4.3	6.7

Responses to this question did not vary markedly dependent upon entitlement. If anything, those pupils entitled to a free school meal are more likely to agree with the statement that the dining room is noisy.

By individual school

Table 5.1.28: **Pupils agreeing or disagreeing that "the dining room is noisy". Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.**

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
True	83.3	100	83.3	100	91.7	95.2	88.5	74.1	93.3	75
Sometimes True	16.7	0	16.7	0	8.3	4.8	11.5	18.5	6.7	6.2
Untrue	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.4	0	18.8

In all the schools more than three quarters of pupils entitled to free school meals agreed with the statement that the dining room was noisy pre-intervention. No pupils disagreed. In three of the schools more pupils agreed post-intervention (PS1, PS2 & PS3). In PS4 and 5 there was some improvement with fewer pupils agreeing with the statement (albeit three quarters still did) and some pupils disagreeing.

Main findings from question 7
A variety of statements relating to school meals were provided to pupils. They had to say whether these were true, untrue or sometimes true.

More than half the pupils surveyed agreed that there were long lunch-time queues (53% post-intervention). A third (36% post-intervention) agreed that there was not enough time to eat their school dinner. Over a third (39.4% post-intervention) agreed that they were still hungry after a school lunch. Almost a half of pupils said the seating area was messy (43.8%) whilst 84% said the dining room was noisy. Approximately half (49.6%) said that they could eat with their friends.

The situation pre vs. post intervention had not changed markedly in relation to queuing times. There was a slight improvement in regards to having enough time to eat lunch, being able to sit with friends and how messy the dining room was. The issues of still being hungry after dinner and the dining room being noisy had got worst.

Substantial differences between those entitled to free school meals and those paying for their meals were not evident.

Differences between schools were very apparent (except on the issue of noise) By comparing those schools with the best results and those with the worst the range of responses can be seen.
- *There are often long queues.* In the school with the best results 27% of pupils entitled to free school meals agreed with this statement, in the worst it was 75%.
- *There is enough time to eat a school dinner / lunch.* Varied from 46% agreement to 17%.
- *You can eat your dinner with your friends.* Varied from 96% agreement to 18%.
- *You are still hungry after having a school dinner / lunch.* Varied from 14% agreement to 55%.
- *The dining room is messy.* Varied from 18% agreement to 100%.
- *The dining room is noisy.* Varied from 75% agreement to 100%.

This variation demonstrates that there is the potential for substantial improvements to be made in many of the pilot schools (as the worst performing schools could at least equal the best performing ones).

Question 8: What school food do you like?
The answers for this question overlapped very strongly with question 4 (see earlier). For that reason these answers are not given again.

Question 9: What School Food do you not like?
Again, the answers for this question overlapped with question 5. These are therefore not repeated.

Question 10: Which of these would make school dinner/lunch better? (all pupils, post-intervention)
Pupils could tick as many of the factors listed as they wanted.

Table 5.1.29: What factors would make school dinner/lunch better? All primary schools.

Factor	Pre-Intervention. % endorsing.			Post-Intervention. % endorsing.		
	% of all pupils (n=221)	% of pupils entitled to FSM (n=92)	% of paying pupils (n=122)	% of all pupils (n=222)	% of pupils entitled to FSM (n=95)	% of paying pupils (n=120)
More choice of food	91	92	89	88	90	86
More healthy food	61	60	64	45	46	41
Bigger portions of food	78	82	75	77	77	75
More vegetarian food	33	30	37	28	27	29
More halal food	24	19	30	28	25	28
More kosher food	14	13	15	15	14	15
Shorter queues	79	76	80	83	85	84
Being able to sit with my friends	82	82	83	79	75	82
A nicer dining room	86	87	84	84	87	82
More seats	86	84	88	88	90	88

The most important factors for making a school lunch better were, in order; more choice of food, more seats, a nicer dining room, being able to sit with friends, shorter queues and bigger portions. These rankings were consistent across all schools and across all pupils whether or not they paid for or received a free school meal.

There was a slight change pre vs. post intervention. In the latter more pupils indicated that "more seats" and "shorter queues" would improve their school lunch. The biggest change however was seen in relation to "more healthy food" – pre-intervention 2/3 of pupils (61%) said more healthy food would improve their school dinner. Post-intervention less than half did (45%).

By entitlement
There was little variation depending upon free school meal entitlement. Pre-intervention those entitled to free school meals were more likely to indicate that bigger portions of food would improve their school lunch and less likely to say that more vegetarian and more halal food would – these differences did not remain post-intervention.

By individual school

Table 5.1.30: What factors would make school dinner/lunch better. Free school meal pupils by individual primary school.

	PS1		PS2		PS3		PS4		PS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
More choice of food	85	91	83	89	100	100	89	89	100	82
More healthy food	46	46	75	50	60	41	67	61	47	35
Bigger portions of food	85	73	67	61	68	91	93	82	93	71
More vegetarian food	23	27	42	44	32	23	37	32	13	6
More halal food	8	18	50	67	12	0	11	14	27	29
More kosher food	8	9	17	11	4	0	15	21	27	29
Shorter queues	62	100	50	78	84	96	82	79	88	71
Being able to sit with my friends	85	100	75	83	92	36	67	82	94	88
A nicer dining room	69	91	67	78	96	96	93	82	94	82
More seats	92	100	50	72	80	100	93	89	94	77

In PS1 shorter queues and more seats were slightly more important than in the overall results. In PS2 having more halal food was a key factor in making school lunches better. In PS3 being able to sit with friends decreased in importance post-intervention. Having bigger portions of food assumed more importance in PS4 compared to overall responses, whilst in PS5 being able to sit with friends would improve their school lunches most.

Whilst there was some variation between schools therefore, in the main there were consistent factors that pupils identified as being able to improve their school dinners.

Question 11. What else would make school dinner/lunch better?
The most common response to this question was more choice of food (14 responses), more food in general (11) or nicer food (9). Or range, quantity and quality.

A number of responses related to the dining room. Seven pupils requested a quieter dining room. A cleaner dining room was requested by 6 pupils as was better décor or for music to be played. Five wanted to be able to sit with their friends. Four asked for a longer lunch time and a big screen to be on. Other requests related to the dining hall included being able to watch videos (3), shorter queues (2), a quicker service (2), proper plates / cutlery (2) and for packed lunches to be able to sit with school dinners (2). Three wanted to be able to eat outside.

Drinks were fairly frequently mentioned. Seven pupils requested fruit juice, and seven asked for more choice (sometimes mentioning milkshakes or fizzy pop).

Food related requests included more pizza (6), more or better salad (3), more healthy food (3), less healthy food (2) and various other requests such as more sandwiches, doughnuts, sausages, chicken, chocolate and ice-cream.

Question 12. If you have a packed lunch, what would make you change to having a school dinner/lunch?
The most common response was nice or better food (25), followed by "nothing" (17). Seven pupils mentioned having more choice and four asked for more food that they liked. Specific foods requested tended to be sweets, chocolate, crisps, and more pizza.

Seven pupils mentioned being able to sit with whoever they liked and a number asked for more comfortable / bigger seats. Drinks were mentioned by 4 pupils who wanted fizzy pop, milkshakes or "not water".

Conclusion
Over 200 primary school aged pupils completed the questionnaire pre and post the intervention period. There was an even split between boys and girls and representation from vegetarians and pupils eating halal food. Five schools participated, their rate of free school meal entitlement varying from 34% to 63%.

Pupils entitled to a free school meal were far more likely to have a school meal than those paying for their lunch. Most pupils not eating a school meal had tried one previously. Most pupils were fairly neutral about their school dinners in general – albeit less positive post-intervention. Those having a free school meal were slightly more positive, although there was much variation between schools. In one school half the pupils liked their free school meal "a lot", in another none did.

- *The food*
One key issue raised was that there was not enough choice of food. Nearly ¾ of pupils agreed with the statement that there was "not enough choice". In line with this "more choice of food" was the factor most often chosen as being able to improve school dinners (88% of pupils). This seemed slightly more important for those having free school meals, compared with those paying.

The second key issue raised was that of portion sizes. Two-thirds of pupils said they did not get enough food (no variation between those paying and those receiving their meals for free). Over a third of all pupils said they were still hungry after a school dinner, whilst another third said this was "sometimes true". In addition, 77% of pupils said "bigger portions" would make school dinner better.

Responses regarding the look and taste of the food were mainly neutral. The demand for healthy food would appear to be minimal. When pupils were asked to identify the "best things about school dinner" they generally cited unhealthy food items. Less than half said that more healthy food would make school dinner better.

- *The school meal environment*
Issues surrounding the school dining hall were clearly important for pupils. Having more seats, a nicer dining room and being able to sit with friends ranked 2nd, 3rd and 4th in terms of possible improvements to school dinners.

More than a half of pupils said there were long queues in dining room, a half thought the dining room was messy and over 80% that it was noisy. Hygiene

concerns were re-iterated in the qualitative comments. Many also suggested improvements to improve the ambience – namely music or décor changes.

A key finding from this questionnaire is that there were very few questions or responses that differed between those paying for their lunch and those receiving their lunch for free. It is clear that the same factors influenced both sets of pupils.

The questionnaire also reveals that there are a great many areas for possible improvements including the choice of food served, how much is served as well as queuing and seating issues within the dining rooms. Results had not improved overall in many cases (when comparing pre and post intervention results). However the foundation interventions trialled by the schools during this period aimed to tackle free school meals only and cannot therefore have been expected to improve such a wide range of factors. Some individual schools did however show areas of improvement and some were very much better than others.

Section 5.2: Secondary School Pupil Questionnaire Results

This section presents the results of the pupil questionnaires from the five secondary pilot schools. It should be noted that the questionnaires investigated the whole school meal service including the food served, the dining room environment and lunch-time organisation. The original aim was for these to inform the building block interventions should schools have time to implement these after the foundation level interventions. In the majority of cases this did not occur during the measurement period so changes post-intervention are not to be expected. The exception to this is section 5 where questions are asked specifically about how pupils felt about obtaining free school meals – this was something that the project aimed to affect within the time-scales.

Demographic Data
In January 2008 527 year 8 pupils completed the pre-intervention questionnaire. In September and October 2008 the same pupils were resurveyed, with 528 year 9 pupils completing the post-intervention version. Whilst allowing for some pupil movements these should, by and large, be the same pupils. Table 5.2.1 shows the responses by school.

Table 5.2.1: Number of pupil questionnaires per secondary school

School	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
SS1	104	19.7	108	20.5
SS2	82	15.6	117	22.2
SS3	109	20.7	82	15.5
SS4	79	15.0	66	12.5
SS5	153	29.0	155	29.4
Total	**527**	**100**	**528**	**100**

SS2 had more pupils responding post-intervention (117 compared to 82) whilst SS3 had less (82 compared to 109). Other schools had similar numbers pre and post-intervention.

- *By Gender*

Pre- intervention there were 288 female responses and 212 male (27 missing)
Post- intervention there were 257 female responses and 245 male (26 missing)

- *By dietary requirement*

Table 5.2.2: Dietary requirements. All secondary school pupils.

Dietary requirement	Pre-Intervention Frequency (%)	Post-Intervention % Frequency (%)
Vegetarian	28 (5.7)	29 (5.5)
Vegan	16 (3.3)	16 (3.0)
Halal	87 (17.8)	83 (15.7)
Kosher	4 (0.8)	13 (2.5)
Allergies	42 (8.8)	43 (8.1)
Other	15 (3.2)	16 (3.0)
No answer	65 (12)	73 (13.8)

The largest group of pupils with special dietary requirements were those eating halal food (17.8% pre, 15.7% post). The second largest was those with allergies – these pupils were asked what they were allergic to. Those allergic to nuts numbered 12 and to fish 3. Individual pupils said they were lactose intolerant or allergic to milk, egg, mushroom, prawns, pineapple and raisins. Some of the other foods mentioned were composite dishes such as lasagne – it may therefore be that these pupils mentioned food dislikes rather than actual allergies.

Vegetarians comprised nearly 6% of respondents with those eating a vegan diet being approximately 3%. Very few pupils ate kosher food.

- *By Free School Meal Status*

Pupils were asked whether or not they were entitled to a free school meal. This should therefore include all those who had claimed and been assessed by Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service as eligible. It would not include those who may be eligible but are not aware of this (for a fuller discussion on eligibility please see the phase 1 report).

Pre-intervention nearly a third of pupils surveyed (31%) were entitled to a free school meal. Slightly less (28%) were entitled post-intervention.

Table 5.2.3: Free school meal entitlement by secondary school.

School	Pre-Intervention			Post-Intervention		
	Entitled to FSM	Not entitled	Not known*	Entitled to FSM	Not entitled	Not known*
SS1	23 (22%)	75 (72%)	6 (6%)	25 (23%)	78 (72%)	5 (5%)
SS2	34 (41%)	43 (53%)	5 (6%)	39 (34%)	71 (61%)	7 (5%)
SS3	42 (39%)	64 (59%)	3 (2%)	29 (36%)	50 (62%)	2 (2%)
SS4	32 (40%)	33 (42%)	12 (18%)	28 (42%)	26 (39%)	12 (18%)
SS5	32 (21%)	108 (71%)	13 (8%)	27 (17%)	115 (74%)	13 (8%)
Total	**163 (31%)**	**323 (61%)**	**41 (8%)**	**148 (28%)**	**340(64%)**	**40 (8%)**

* Did not indicate if they were entitled to FSM or not

SS4 had the highest percentage of pupils entitled to a free school meal with 42% entitlement post-intervention. SS1 and SS5 had the lowest percentage with 23% and 17% respectively entitled post-intervention.

- *By ethnicity*

Pupils were asked to indicate their ethnic origin. Results are given in table 5.2.4. Both pre and post-intervention 69 pupils (13%) left this question blank.

Table 5.2.4: Pupil's ethnic origin. All secondary school pupils.

Ethnic Origin	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
White	**294**		**301**	
White British	280	53.1	281	53.1
White Irish	6	1.1	6	1.1
Any other white	8	1.5	14	1.5
Mixed			**33**	
White Black Caribbean	18	3.4	20	3.4
White Black African	3	0.6	5	0.6
White Asian	6	1.1	3	1.1
Any other mixed	5	0.9	5	0.9
Asian			**73**	
Asian British Indian	1	0	0	0
Asian British Pakistani	40	7.6	39	7.6
Asian British Bangladeshi	18	3.4	18	3.4
Any other Asian	21	4.0	16	4.0
Black			**39**	
Black British Caribbean	10	1.9	9	1.9

Black British African	28	5.3	25	5.3
Any other black	3	0.6	5	0.6
Other			**9**	
Chinese	0	0	1	0.2
Any other	2	4.0	3	4.0
Not sure	9	1.7	5	1.7

Over half of the pupils categorised themselves as White British (53.1%). The next largest category was that of British Pakistani (7.6%) then Black British African (5.3%). These were consistent pre and post-intervention.

Summary of demographic data
Over 500 secondary school pupils responded to the questionnaire (527 pre, 528 post). The pupils were from five schools – in one school the number of responses dropped substantially between pre and post intervention whilst in another they rose.

More females responded than males – pre-intervention there were 288 female responses and 212 male. The gender imbalance remained post-intervention but the difference lessened with 257 females responding and 245 males.

A range of dietary requirements were evident. Over 15% of pupils ate halal food. Almost 6% were vegetarians. Nearly a tenth said that they had allergies (8.8% pre, 8.1% post).

Nearly a third of pupils were entitled to a free school meal (31% pre, 28% post). This varied between schools from 17% of pupils being entitled to nearly half (42%).

There was a diverse ethnic mix. Those categorised as White British numbered 281. Pupils categorising themselves as Asian numbered 73 with 39 stating they were British Pakistani and 18 British Bangladeshi. Pupils categorising themselves as Black numbered 39 with 25 saying they were Black British African. Pupils saying they were of mixed race numbered 33 – the most common category being White Black Caribbean.

Section 1. Lunch choices.

Questions 1-5: What do you do for your lunch at school?
Pupils were asked how many times a week they did each of the following; bought a school lunch, brought in a packed lunch, went out of school for lunch, went home for lunch or had nothing for lunch.

Table 5.2.5: What pupils do for lunch at school – mean number of times per week. All pupils, all secondary schools.

Lunch choice	Average number of times chosen per week (pre-intervention)	Average number of times chosen per week (post-intervention).
Buys school lunch	1.8	1.8
Brings packed lunch	2.4	2.3
Goes out of school for lunch	0.4	0.2
Goes home for lunch	0.1	0.1
Has nothing for lunch	0.8	0.9

The most common lunch choice was to bring a packed lunch – this was done on average two and a half times per week (2.4 pre, 2.3 post). The next most common type of lunch chosen was to buy a school lunch (1.8 pre and post). Nearly once a week pupils had nothing for lunch (0.8 pre, 0.9 post). There was hardly any change in lunch choices between pre and post-intervention. The only exception was "going out of school for lunch" which dropped from a mean of 0.4 times a week to 0.2 times.

Table 5.2.6: How many times a week on average pupils have a school lunch or bring a packed lunch. By fsm entitlement. All secondary schools.

	Pre- Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled	Not entitled	FSM entitled	Not entitled
Number of times a week **school lunch** chosen	2.7	1.3	2.6	1.4
Number of times a week **packed lunch** chosen	0.8	3.1	0.6	3.0

On average pupils entitled to a free school meal ate one nearly twice as often as those who are not entitled to a free school meal. Post-intervention they ate a school lunch 2.6 times a week on average compared to 1.4 times a week for those not entitled. Those entitled to a free school meal eat a packed lunch far less often – 0.6 times a week compared to 3 times a week for those not entitled.

Table 5.2.7: How many times a week on average pupils have a school lunch. By free school meal entitlement, all secondary schools.

	Pre- Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Every day	36	13	39	15
4 times a week	13	4	6	3
3 times a week	7	6	8	7
Twice a week	8	7	5	10
Once a week	6	16	7	12
Never	30	54	34	53

Over a third of those entitled to a free school meal had one every day (36% pre, 39% post). This is far higher than those not entitled (13% pre, 15% post).

However approximately a third of those entitled to a free school meal never have one (30% pre, 34% post). The remaining third sometimes have a school meal.

Table 5.2.8: What pupils entitled to a free school meal do for lunch at school – mean number of times per week. By individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5		Average	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Buys school lunch	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.5	2.0	1.9	2.7	3.1	1.2	1.3	1.9	2.0
Brings packed lunch	2.5	2.0	1.9	1.8	2.7	2.6	0.9	1.1	3.2	3.1	2.2	2.1
Goes out of school for lunch	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.0	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.3
Goes home for lunch	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Has nothing for lunch	0.7	1.0	1.1	1.2	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.9

Substantial differences between schools can be seen. SS4 had the highest frequency of pupils having a school lunch (2.7 times a week pre, 3.1 post). SS2 and SS5 had the lowest frequency with free school meal pupils having a school lunch 1.5 times a week or less on average. In SS5 pupils entitled to a free school meal were far more likely to have a packed lunch than a school lunch.

In general there were no major changes in how often free school meal pupils ate a school lunch pre and post intervention. SS4 is the exception with an increase in the average number of times free school meal pupils had a school meal increasing from 2.7 times a week to 3.1 times a week.

Table 5.2.9: How many times a week on average pupils entitled to a free school meal have a school lunch. By individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Every day	55	44	26	21	45	52	41	59	13	30
4 times a week	9	4	9	5	14	14	22	4	10	4
3 times a week	9	4	6	8	5	3	6	7	10	19
Twice a week	0	0	6	3	7	0	16	22	10	4
Once a week	0	8	3	5	2	10	16	7	10	4
Never	27	40	50	59	26	21	0	0	47	41

SS1, SS3 and SS4 all had approximately half of their pupils entitled to a free school meal, taking one every day. SS1 and SS3 also had substantial numbers never taking one, whereas in SS4 no pupils entitled to a free school meal never took one.

SS2 and SS5 had far fewer pupils having a free school meal every day (21% and 30% respectively, post-intervention) and approximately half never taking one (59% and 41% respectively, post-intervention).

The situation had worsened in both SS1 and SS2 whereas in the other three schools (SS3, SS4 and SS5) it had improved.

Question 6: Do you do anything else for lunch at school?
Pupils were asked if they did anything else for lunch at school. The most popular response was that they ate at break time instead of lunch (20). Others said they attended lunchtime clubs so had no time for lunch (8). Seventeen pupils said they had no lunch at all, five said they ate snack items such as chocolate and crisps for lunch whilst two pupils said they would throw away their packed lunch if they were not hungry.

Question 7: What do you think of the school meal service at your school in general?
Pupils were asked what they thought of the whole school meal service in their school. Four options were given. Results are shown in tables 5.2.10 and 11.

Table 5.2.10: Whether pupils liked the school dinners served at their secondary school. All pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
I like them a lot	19	3	11	3
I quite like them	29	53	47	39
I don't like them very much	48	34	28	36
I don't like them at all	5	10	15	22

The majority of pupils said they either quite liked the school meal service or did not like them very much. Pre-intervention those not entitled to a free school meal tended to be more positive - 56% said they either liked them a lot or quite liked them compared to 48% of those entitled to a FSM. Post-intervention the situation was reversed – those entitled to a FSM had become more positive and those not entitled were more negative. There was an increase across both groups in the number of pupils who said they did not like them at all.

Table 5.2.11: Whether pupils liked the school dinners served at their secondary school. FSM pupils by individual school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
I like them a lot	19	0	0	0	3	26	12	23	21	4
I quite like them	29	69	27	30	38	30	42	50	63	65
I don't like them very much	48	25	50	43	53	26	39	18	16	22
I don't like them at all	5	6	23	27	6	17	8	9	0	9

In four of the schools more than half the pupils either liked their school meal service a lot or quite liked it. SS2 had the most negative results with only 27% choosing these categories pre-intervention and 30% post.

SS1, SS3 and SS4 all showed improvement over the intervention period. In SS1 pupils selecting the two most positive responses increased from 48% to 69%. In SS4 this number had risen from 56 to 73%. SS5 positive responses declined post-intervention – however they still had nearly 70% of pupils saying they liked their school meal service a lot or quite liked them.

Main findings from section 1 (lunch choice)

Overall, the most popular lunch choice was to bring in a packed lunch – post-intervention pupils brought one in 2.3 times a week on average. The second most popular lunch choice was to have a school lunch – 1.8 times a week on average. Nearly once a week on average pupils had nothing to eat at all.

Those entitled to a free school meal were far more likely to have a school meal. Post-intervention they had one on average 2.6 times a week compared to those not entitled to a free school meal who had one 1.4 times a week. Those entitled to a free school meal had a packed lunch 0.6 times a week on average.

However, whilst over a third of those entitled to a free school meal had one every day (36% pre, 39% post), approximately a third never had one (34% pre, 30% post) and another third only had one sometimes.

There was much variation between schools. In one school pupils entitled to a free school meal had one 1.2 times a week on average, in another it was 2.7 times. In one school 41% of pupils entitled to a free school meal never had one, in another no pupils never had one.

The majority of pupils said they either quite liked school meals or did not like them very much. Pre-intervention those paying for their lunch were more positive but post-intervention this had reversed.

Section 2: The school dining room
Questions 8 to 17 asked the pupils about their school dining room. Pupils were asked to agree, disagree or say they were not sure to a series of statements. These statements were attained from the exploratory research in phase 1.

Question 8: There are often long queues to be served at lunch-time
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.12 and for individual schools in table 5.2.13.

Table 5.2 12: Whether pupils think there are long queues to be served at lunch-time. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	92	92	93	90
Not sure	6	6	6	9
Disagree	2	2	1	1

The overwhelming majority (more than 90%) of pupils agreed that there were long queues to be served at lunchtime. This applied both to pupils entitled to a free school meal and those who were not. It also applied both pre and post intervention.

Table 5.2.13: Whether pupils think that there are long queues to be served at lunch-time. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	100	96	97	92	95	93	84	89	83	96
Not sure	0	0	3	8	2	7	13	11	13	4
Disagree	0	4	0	0	2	0	3	0	3	0

In each individual school pupils agreed that there were long queues. The situation had improved slightly in two schools (SS1 and SS2) and worsened in two others (SS4 and SS5).

Question 9: The dining area is a nice place to be
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.14 and by individual school in table 5.2.15.

Table 5.2.14: Whether pupils think that the dining area is a nice place to be. All secondary school pupils by FSM status

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	20	15	19	16
Not sure	53	52	51	46
Disagree	27	33	31	37

Over half of pupils (both entitled to free school meals and not) replied that they were not sure whether the dining room was a nice place to be. Approximately a third disagreed i.e. said it was not a nice place to be. Less than 1 in 5 agreed that it was nice. Those entitled to a free school meal were very slightly more positive. Response pre and post intervention were very similar.

Table 5.2.15: Whether pupils think that the dining area is a nice place to be. FSM pupils by individual secondary school

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	13	12	21	21	21	17	13	22	30	19
Not sure	48	60	47	36	60	52	55	56	53	58
Disagree	39	28	32	44	19	31	32	22	17	23

Responses by individual school did not vary greatly – in four out of the five schools most pupils said they were not sure and the second most popular response was to disagree. SS2 was the exception with most pupils saying the dining room was not a nice place to be.

SS3 and SS5 had worse responses post-intervention whilst in SS4 the situation had improved slightly. In SS1 and SS2 there was little change over the intervention period.

Question 10: The seating area is often over-crowded.
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.16 and for individual schools in 5.2.17.

Table 5.2.16: Whether pupils think that the seating area is often over-crowded. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	81	84	87	83
Not sure	13	12	8	12
Disagree	6	4	5	5

Over 80% of pupils agreed that the seating area was often overcrowded. Following the interventions more pupils entitled to a FSM commented that the seating area was often overcrowded. There was little change amongst those pupils that were not entitled.

Table5.2.17: Whether pupils think that the seating area is often over-crowded. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	100	88	88	95	79	86	60	64	80	100
Not sure	0	12	12	3	17	7	20	21	13	0
Disagree	0	0	0	3	5	7	20	14	7	0

In four out of the five schools over 80% of pupils agreed that the seating area was often over-crowded. The situation had improved slightly in one school (SS1) and worsened in three others (SS2, SS3 and SS5). SS4 was the exception with 60% pre and 64% post agreeing that it was over-crowded – they were the only school to have significant numbers disagreeing with the statement.

Question 11: I have enough time to eat my lunch
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.18 and for individual schools in 5.2.19.

Table 5.2.18: Whether pupils think that they have enough time to eat their lunch. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	44	34	28	29
Not sure	20	25	24	28
Disagree	36	41	49	43

Pre-intervention results were split between those agreeing they had enough to eat and those disagreeing. Post-intervention more pupils (49% of those entitled to a free school meal and 43% of those not entitled) said they did not have enough time to eat their lunch.

Table 5.2.19: Whether pupils think that they have enough time to eat their lunch. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	35	40	21	21	60	31	48	21	50	30
Not sure	13	24	24	21	14	17	19	32	30	26
Disagree	52	36	56	59	26	52	32	46	20	44

There is some variation between schools on the issue of whether pupils have enough time to eat their lunch. Three schools showed noticeable decreases in the number of pupils agreeing that they had enough time to eat their lunch – in SS3 it decreased from 60% of pupils to 31%, in SS4 from 48% to 21% and in SS5 from 50% to 30%. In SS1 and SS2 figures remained approximately the same pre and post intervention.

Question 12: The seating area is messy
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.20 and for individual schools in table 5.2.21.

Table 5.2.20: Whether pupils think that the seating area is messy. All secondary school pupils by FSM status

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	48	51	55	50
Not sure	38	39	31	35
Disagree	14	11	14	15

Most pupils (approximately half) of pupils said the seating area was messy. Amongst those entitled to a free school meal, this increased post-intervention (55%).

Table 5.2.21: Whether pupils think that the seating area is messy. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	74	63	59	59	31	52	55	67	33	35
Not sure	26	29	32	31	55	31	26	19	40	46
Disagree	0	8	9	10	14	17	19	15	27	19

The most common response in four out of the five schools, post-intervention, was that the dining room was messy – the exception was SS5. There was substantial variation between schools with a third of pupils in SS5 agreeing with the statement but over three quarters in SS1. One school showed some improvement (SS1), in two the situation had worsened (SS3 and SS4) whilst in the other two schools there was little change post-intervention.

Question 13: The staff are not very helpful
Results for **all schools** are shown in table 5.2.22 and for individual schools in 5.2.23.

Table 5.2.22: Whether pupils think that the staff are not very helpful. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	18	26	15	21
Not sure	38	41	41	45
Disagree	44	33	44	34

The most common response amongst pupils who were FSM registered was to disagree with the statement – therefore saying that the staff are helpful. Amongst pupils who were not entitled the most common response was that they were not sure. There was little change post-intervention amongst either of the groups. A substantial number of pupils replied that they were not sure – this could be due to the slightly confusing phrasing of the statement.

Table 5.2.23: Whether pupils think that the staff are very helpful. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	17	0	21	18	10	24	28	22	17	7
Not sure	39	48	41	55	46	28	31	48	30	22
Disagree	44	52	38	26	44	48	41	30	53	70

The responses are reasonably consistent across the schools. The most positive response was in SS5 where 70% of pupils disagreed with the statement. The most negative response was in SS2 where only just over a quarter disagreed (26% post-intervention). Three schools saw an improvement (SS1, SS3 and SS5). In SS2 and SS4 the results worsened.

Question 14: I get to sit with my friends
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.24 and for individual schools in 5.2.25.

Table 5.2.24: Whether pupils get to sit with their friends. All secondary school pupils by FSM status

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	79	80	78	65
Not sure	14	12	12	23
Disagree	6	8	10	12

The large majority of pupils agreed that they could sit with their friends. This was consistent for both those who received theirs for free (79% pre, 78% post) and for those who paid (80% pre, 65% post).

Table 5.2.25: Whether pupils get to sit with their friends. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	78	80	85	80	71	66	94	93	70	74
Not sure	9	20	12	15	21	10	6	4	20	7
Disagree	13	0	3	5	7	24	0	4	10	19

There was some variation between schools but in all of them more than two-thirds of pupils agreed that they got to sit with their friends – the highest figures was 95% (SS4 pre) and the lowest 66% (SS3 post). The largest change was in SS3 which dropped from 71% agreeing to 66%.

Question 15: The dining room is very noisy
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.26 and for individual schools in 5.2.27.

Table 5.2.26: Whether pupils think the dining room is very noisy. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	88	90	88	86
Not sure	8	8	7	11
Disagree	4	2	5	3

Nearly all pupils agreed with the statement that the dining room was very noisy – 88% of those entitled to a free school meal both pre and post. There was little change following the intervention period.

Table 5.2.27: Whether pupils think that the dining room is very noisy. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	91	84	88	90	93	93	87	86	80	85
Not sure	9	8	9	8	7	7	7	7	10	4
Disagree	0	8	3	3	0	0	7	7	10	11

Results were consistent across all of the individual schools. Post-intervention SS1 and SS5 have slightly better results than the other three schools with 84% and 85% respectively agreeing that the dining room is very noisy. Very little change is evident post-intervention.

Question 16: It is clear what is on offer every day
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.28 and for individual schools in 5.2.29.

Table 5.2.28: Whether pupils think it is clear what is on offer every day. All secondary school pupils by FSM status

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	29	24	24	20
Not sure	30	42	39	45
Disagree	41	34	37	35

Less than a third of pupils agreed that it was clear what was on offer every day. This decreased for both groups of pupils post-intervention.

Table 5.2.29: Whether pupils think it is clear what is on offer every day. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	27	20	24	28	19	17	22	21	60	33
Not sure	5	44	32	31	50	38	25	43	23	44
Disagree	68	36	44	41	31	45	53	36	17	22

In four out of the five schools results are fairly consistent with about 1 in 4 or 5 pupils agreeing with the statement that it is clear what is on offer every day. In SS5 the figures were very high pre-intervention (60%) but declined to a third post-intervention.

Question 17: Do you have any other comments about your school dining room?
Nearly all the comments made regarding the dining room were negative. Many related to the infrastructure saying the dining room was too small (27), that there was inadequate seating (20) or that the seating was broken and uncomfortable (7).

Nineteen pupils said the dining room was dirty or scruffy, that it smelt unpleasant (4) and that rats and or mice had been seen in the vicinity (5).

Thirteen pupils said the queues were too long and that people pushed in (5) including teachers (1). Seven said there was not enough time to queue and then eat your lunch whilst two commented that it was noisy.

Inadequate signage regarding the cost of food and what was on offer was noted by six.

Seven pupils said the dining room was boring and that staff are not friendly (5) and provided a slow service (3).

Other comments related to the actual food served being too expensive (4), a lack of variety of choice (9) and portion size (3) being inadequate. There was just one positive comment 'I like it'.

Main findings from section 2 (the dining room)
Pupils were asked to agree or disagree with 9 statements about their dining room. Responses to some statement were very clear-cut. Over 90% of pupils said that there were long queues. Over 80% said that it was often overcrowded and nearly 90% said that it was very noisy. Most pupils said they did not have enough time to eat their lunch.

Other issues showed some dissatisfaction but it was less decided. About a half of pupils said the dining room was messy whilst a third said it was not clear what was on offer every day. About a half said the dining room was nice although a third disagreed. Most said they could sit with their friends and that the staff were helpful.

In all of the issues there was little difference between those entitled to a school meal for free and those paying. The only exception was whether staff were unhelpful or not – on this issue those entitled to a free school meal were more positive.

There was often substantial variation between schools. SS5 had the most positive results regarding the tidiness of the dining room, staff helpfulness, noise and how clear the offering was.

This section clearly highlighted areas where action is needed – namely in regards to queuing, how crowded the dining room is, how noisy it is and how much time pupils have to eat their lunch.

Section 3: The Food Served
This section asked pupils to agree or disagree with a series of statements relating to the food served in their school. Results are given split by FSM entitlement status.

Question 18: The food tastes good.
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.30 and for individual schools in 5.2.31.

Table 5.2.30: Whether pupils think that the food tastes good. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	31	31	34	26
Not sure	40	48	46	53
Disagree	28	22	21	21

Approximately a third of pupils agreed that the food tasted good, whilst approximately a quarter disagreed with the statement. Nearly half were not sure. Those entitled to a free school meal were more positive that those who were not. They also became more positive over the intervention period whilst those who were not entitled became more negative.

Table 5.2.31: Whether pupils think that the food tastes good. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	39	28	18	13	29	41	39	43	37	52
Not sure	30	64	35	59	42	31	39	32	53	40
Disagree	30	8	47	28	29	28	23	25	10	8

Variation between schools was evident – post-intervention one school has only 13% (SS2) of pupils agreeing that the food tastes good, whilst in another over half do (52%, SS5). In three schools there was substantial improvement following the intervention period (SS3, SS4 and SS5) whilst the opposite occurred in SS1 and SS2.

Question 19: The portion sizes are too small
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.32 and for individual schools in 5.2.33.

Table 5.2.32: Whether pupils think that the portion sizes are too small. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	39	40	55	41
Not sure	39	38	26	41
Disagree	23	21	20	18

The most common response was that the portion sizes were too small amongst both sets of pupils. Less than a quarter disagreed. The proportion agreeing that the portions were too small increased post-intervention to 55% of pupils entitled to a free school meal and 41% of those not entitled.

Table 5.2.33: Whether pupils think that the portion sizes are too small. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	35	24	61	80	33	57	50	68	13	28
Not sure	30	44	33	15	45	21	34	14	47	40
Disagree	35	32	6	5	21	21	16	18	40	32

A wide disparity between schools is evident. Post-intervention in 3 of the schools more than 60% agreed that portion sizes were too small (in one school it is 80%). In the other two schools it was approximately a quarter (24% in SS1 and 28% in SS5). The figures worsened considerably during the intervention phase in SS2, SS3, SS4 and SS5 (up by 19%, 24%, 18% and 15% respectively).

Question 20: The food looks nice
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.34 and for individual schools in 5.2.35.

Table 5.2.34: Whether pupils think that the food looks nice. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	31	33	25	28
Not sure	37	39	49	47
Disagree	31	28	26	25

The most common response was that the pupils were not sure whether the food looked nice or not. Post-intervention the results had worsened slightly amongst both groups of pupils.

Table 5.2.35: Whether pupils think that the food looks nice. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	39	12	15	18	34	31	31	32	41	33
Not sure	26	72	44	56	34	35	38	36	41	46
Disagree	35	16	41	26	32	35	31	32	17	21

Post-intervention pupils in four out of the five schools were more likely to disagree with this statement than agree (the exception was SS5). The results were most negative in SS1 and SS2 where less than 1 in 5 pupils thought the food looked nice – a large majority were not sure. In the other three schools about a third of pupils agreed that the food looked nice but more were not sure.

Question 21: There is plenty of choice.
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.36 and for individual schools in 5.2.37.

Table 5.2.36: Whether pupils think that there is plenty of choice. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	25	26	32	20
Not sure	29	33	23	35
Disagree	46	40	45	45

The most common response from both groups of pupils was to disagree with the statement that there was plenty of choice. Approximately a quarter agreed – and post-intervention those entitled to a free school meal were more likely to agree that those who were not entitled.

Table 5.2.37: Whether pupils think that there is plenty of choice. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	5	24	21	21	19	31	28	32	50	60
Not sure	23	28	15	24	55	21	28	25	17	16
Disagree	73	48	65	55	26	48	44	43	33	24

Much variation is evident between schools. Post-intervention a quarter of SS1 agreed that there was plenty of choice whilst 60% of pupils in SS5 agreed. The situation improved in four out of the five schools.

Question 22: They don't serve what I like.
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.38 and for individual schools in 5.2.39.

Table 5.2.38: Whether pupils think they don't serve what they like. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	44	40	41	44
Not sure	36	39	32	40
Disagree	21	21	27	16

The most common response from both groups of pupils was to agree that the school did not serve what they liked. The situation improved slightly for those not entitled to a free school meal but worsened for those who were.

Table 5.2.39: Whether pupils think they don't serve what they like. FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	48	40	50	62	43	41	47	29	30	24
Not sure	26	36	35	15	38	28	31	43	47	44
Disagree	26	24	15	23	19	31	22	29	23	32

In three schools 40% or more of pupils agree that the school did not serve the type of food they like (SS1, SS2 and SS3 post-intervention). In SS4 and SS5 the situation was more positive with less than a third agreeing and nearly a third disagreeing. The situation improved in one (SS2) but worsened in the other four.

Question 23: The food costs too much.
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.40 and for individual schools in 5.2.41.

Table 5.2.40: Whether pupils think that the food costs too much. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	54	62	56	58
Not sure	31	24	27	28
Disagree	15	14	17	13

Most pupils thought the food cost too much both pre and post intervention. This applied both to those entitled to a free school meal and those not entitled. Only a small proportion disagreed.

Table 5.2.41: Whether pupils think that the food costs too much. FSM pupils by individual secondary school

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	39	40	74	74	57	59	69	61	21	32
Not sure	30	32	18	15	31	31	25	21	55	44
Disagree	30	28	9	10	12	10	6	18	24	24

In one school nearly three quarters of pupils thought the food cost too much (SS2). In SS3 and SS4 nearly two thirds did. In SS5 and SS1 the results were most positive with approximately a third saying the food cost too much. The situation was fairly static pre and post intervention except in SS5 where the situation worsened slightly.

Question 24: There are not many vegetarian options.
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.42 and for individual schools in 5.2.43.

Table 5.2.42: Whether pupils think that there are not many vegetarian options. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	36	37	30	28
Not sure	36	42	38	53
Disagree	28	22	33	19

Approximately a third of pupils agreed that there were not many vegetarian options. The responses were fairly evenly split between the three options – particularly for those pupils entitled to a free school meal. The situation improved slightly amongst those pupils not entitled post-intervention.

Table 5.2.43: Whether pupils think there are not many vegetarian options. FSM pupils by individual secondary school

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	13	16	47	42	43	32	32	32	37	20
Not sure	30	44	44	37	33	25	26	29	47	56
Disagree	57	40	9	21	24	43	42	39	17	24

SS1 has the most positive responses with less than 1 in 5 pupils agreeing that there were not enough vegetarian options. SS2 has the most negative responses with nearly half of pupils agreeing that vegetarian options are limited whilst in SS3 and SS4 nearly a third do. The situation worsened post-intervention in SS2, SS3 and SS5. It remained relatively static in SS1 and SS4.

Question 25: There are not enough options for my special diet requirements (e.g. dairy free, gluten free)
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.44 and for individual schools in 5.2.45.

Table 5.2.44: Whether pupils think that there are not enough options for their special diet requirements (e.g. dairy free, gluten free) All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	28	23	23	24
Not sure	51	60	49	57
Disagree	22	17	28	18

The most common response for both groups of pupils was that they were not sure whether there were enough options for their special dietary requirements. Approximately a quarter agreed that there were not enough options but a similar number also disagreed.

Table 5.2.45: Whether pupils think that there are not enough options for their special diet requirements (e.g. dairy free, gluten free). FSM pupils by individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	44	16	35	31	26	18	23	25	13	24
Not sure	35	52	50	54	57	46	45	46	60	44
Disagree	22	32	15	15	17	36	32	29	27	32

In each of the individual schools the most common response was that pupils were not sure. There is some variation with a third of pupils agreeing that there are not enough options in SS2 whilst only 18% and 16% do in SS3 and SS1 respectively. The situation improved in SS1, SS2 and SS3 whilst it worsened in SS5.

Question 26: I get a chance to say what I think about the food.
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.46 and for individual schools in 5.2.47.

Table 5.2.46: Whether pupils think that they get a chance to say what they think about the food . All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
Agree	16	9	14	12
Not sure	24	26	35	32
Disagree	60	66	51	56

The majority of pupils disagreed with this statement – saying that they did not get a chance to say what they thought about the food. The situation worsened for both groups of pupils post-intervention.

Table 5.2.47: Whether pupils think that they get a chance to say what they think about the food. By individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	9	4	12	15	12	14	31	14	13	20
Not sure	17	32	24	33	33	28	19	54	23	28
Disagree	74	64	65	51	55	59	50	32	63	52

Responses were fairly similar across all the schools – SS5 had the most positive responses (and had improved the most post-intervention) whilst SS1 had the worst response.

Question 27: Any other comments about the food served.
The majority of comments were negative. The most common was that there was too little choice (36) or the food was not nice (18). Nine pupils asked for more "unhealthy" options with only 1 asking for more healthy food. Five pupils said the food was poor quality and five mentioned it being contaminated (e.g. hairs and glass in the food). Other comments relating to food was that it was cold (3) or smelt unpleasant (1).

Once again the sighting of rats was mentioned (1) comments regarding the staff stated staff being rude (3), needing more staff (2) and a rearrangement of the serving area, to speed up the service. Another comment referred to wanting metal cutlery rather than plastic (1).

Main findings from section 3 (the food served)
Many issues with the food were highlighted. Most pupils agreed that portion sizes were too small, that there was not enough choice, the school did not serve what they liked, the food cost too much and they did not get a chance to say what they thought about the food.

A third of pupils said that the food tasted good (a quarter disagreed) whilst pupils were generally not sure whether it looked nice. Approximately a third of pupils thought that there were not enough vegetarian options.

Section 4: Factors affecting meal choice
The following section aimed to ascertain how critical each of the factors rated above were to the pupils. They were also asked what would encourage them to choose a school meal more often. The aim was to identify which factors were most likely to affect the pupils' choice of school meal.

Results are given for all schools. Individual school results are not given due to space constraints and the fact that it was felt these were general comments common to all pupils – rather than commenting on a particular school.

Question 28: How important are each of the following to you?
Pupils were asked whether each of the following 15 factors were very, quite or not important.

Table 5.2.48: What aspects of the school meals service pupils feel are important. All secondary school pupils by FSM status.

		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
a. Being served quickly		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	50	57	Pre	39	11	Pre	11	5
	Post	62	64	Post	31	3	Post	7	4
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
b. Having somewhere to sit		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	80	85	Pre	16	12	Pre	4	3
	Post	81	85	Post	15	13	Post	4	2
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
c. A clean dining room		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	94	92	Pre	5	8	Pre	2	0
	Post	92	88	Post	6	9	Post	1	2
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
d. Helpful staff		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	72	60	Pre	24	36	Pre	5	4
	Post	66	56	Post	30	38	Post	3	6
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
e. Having enough time to eat		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	80	83	Pre	17	16	Pre	23	1
	Post	85	85	Post	14	15	Post	1	0
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
f. Being able to sit with my friends		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	65	63	Pre	31	29	Pre	4	9
	Post	58	62	Post	34	28	Post	8	10
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
g. The food tasting good		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	79	83	Pre	18	17	Pre	3	0
	Post	79	85	Post	19	13	Post	1	2
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
h. Portion sizes being big enough		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	57	58	Pre	37	37	Pre	7	5
	Post	61	61	Post	32	31	Post	7	7
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
i. The food looking nice		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	57	51	Pre	37	42	Pre	6	7
	Post	57	52	Post	37	37	Post	6	11
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
j. Having plenty of choice		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	74	71	Pre	24	27	Pre	2	2
	Post	77	72	Post	24	26	Post	2	2
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
k. Having the type of food I like to eat		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	75	71	Pre	23	26	Pre	1	3
	Post	70	70	Post	28	25	Post	2	6
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
l. Being a price I can afford		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	69	81	Pre	22	18	Pre	8	2
	Post	75	84	Post	17	13	Post	8	3
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
m. Having vegetarian options *(contains no meat or fish)*		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	35	36	Pre	39	39	Pre	26	25
	Post	34	36	Post	41	39	Post	26	25
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
n. Having halal options *(This is food that Muslims are allowed to eat)*		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	44	34	Pre	25	26	Pre	31	40
	Post	45	35	Post	27	27	Post	27	39
		Very important			Quite important			Not important	
o. Having kosher options *(This is food that Jewish people can eat)*		Free	Paying		Free	Paying		Free	Paying
	Pre	25	28	Pre	36	30	Pre	39	42
	Post	24	27	Post	38	31	Post	38	42

The factor most pupils categorised as very important was having a clean dining room (post-intervention 92% of pupils entitled to a free school meal and 88% of those who paid ranked it as very important). Having somewhere to sit, enough time to eat and the food tasting good were the next most important factors (generally more than 80% of pupils ranked these as very important). Following these were having plenty of choice, having the type of food I like to eat and being a price I can afford.

By entitlement status
Factors rated as more important for pupils entitled to a free school meal are as follows:
▪ Helpful staff, the food looking nice and having halal options

Factors rated as more important for pupils not entitled to a free school meal are as follows:
▪ Being served quickly, having somewhere to sit, the food tasting good and being a price I can afford

Factors where similar results were attained are as follows:
▪ A clean dining room, having enough time to eat, being able to sit with friend, portion sizes being big enough, having plenty of choice, having the type of food I like to eat, having vegetarian options and having kosher options.

Pre vs. post intervention
Three factors increased in importance post-intervention. These were being served quickly, portion sizes being big enough and being a price I can afford.

Two factors decreased slightly in importance. These were helpful staff and having the type of food I like to eat. The rest of the factors remained approximately the same pre and post intervention.

Question 29: Which of the things listed below would make you choose a school meal more often?

Table 5.2.49: What factors would make pupils choose a school meal more often. All pupils by FSM status. All secondary schools.

	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)	FSM entitled (%)	Not entitled (%)
A wider range of food	84	81	79	86
Healthier food	62	57	53	51
Less queuing time	83	82	82	89
Cheaper prices	85	84	76	85
More helpful staff	65	59	61	53
A nicer dining room	86	86	74	82
More seating	86	88	83	85
Food being more clearly labelled	75	63	64	70
Bigger portions	63	64	60	65
Being able to taste the food before buying it	49	47	54	48
Chance to win prizes	61	55	62	57
Theme days	60	58	60	63
Other answers given outside seating (3), 'unhealthy food' (6), nicer food (5) more options (2) more culturally or medically required food (6) , to know the prices and not to have to ask (1)				

Pre-intervention the top five factors that would make pupils choose a school meal more often were as follows; more seating, a nicer dining room, cheaper prices, a wider range of food and less queuing time. The same ranking applied to both groups of pupils (those entitled to a free school meal and those not). Post-intervention "less queuing time" had risen up the rankings in terms of importance as had a "wider range of food".

Question 30: Is there anything else that would improve the school meals in your school?
The majority of answers given related to topics already covered (particularly in the previous question). These included; better food (8), a wider range of food (3), theme days (6), less queues (2), more unhealthy options (13), cleaner surroundings (2), a quieter dining room (2) eating outside (4), halal food (3) less expensive food (2).

New comments received included 'not having to scribble your name out for free school meals' (1), involve students in making and serving the food (1), staff not charging different prices (1), a cashless payment system (2), better signage (1) staggered lunch (1) , a chef (1) , take outs (2) more salt and pepper (1)

Main findings from section 4 (factors affecting meal choice)
The factors identified by pupils as most important to them and most likely to make them choose a school meal related to dining room improvements – namely cleanliness, having somewhere to sit and less queuing time. This was the case both for pupils entitled to a free school meal and those who were not. Price also emerged as of importance – particularly to those not entitled to a free school meal.

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─Section 5: Free School Meals

This section was only answered by those pupils entitled to a free school meal. It attempts to ascertain how they feel about claiming for a free school meal and identity possible improvements to the process whereby they obtain their meal in school. It is these areas of enquiry that are most likely to have been affected by the interventions undertaken by the pilot schools.

The first six questions are statements that pupils are asked to agree or disagree with.

Cash or cashless?
SS1, SS3 and SS5 all utilised cash based cafeterias. Pupils claiming for a free school meal therefore either showed a ticket or a voucher at the till to prove their status. They are therefore readily identifiable.

SS2 operates a cashless system but there are extensive problems with its operation meaning that pupils claiming for a free school meal are still identifiable (see section 6 for more information). SS4 operates a well-run cashless system whereby pupils' status is not generally visible.

Question 32: I feel comfortable having a Free School Meal
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.50 and for individual schools in 5.2.51.

Table 5.2.50: Whether pupils feel comfortable having a free school meal. All secondary schools.

	Pre-intervention (%)	Post-intervention (%)
Agree	75	78
Not sure	15	13
Disagree	10	9

Three-quarters of pupils who are FSM registered said that they felt comfortable having a free school meal. There was a slight increase following the intervention period.

Table 5.2.51: Whether pupils feel comfortable having a free school meal. By individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	91	76	73	69	69	79	78	96	65	73
Not sure	9	20	9	21	19	14	16	0	22	8
Disagree	0	4	18	10	12	7	6	4	13	19

SS1 and SS4 have the most pupils agreeing that they feel comfortable having a free school meal. The latter had a large increase post-intervention.

Question 33: The Free School Meal allowance is enough for me to get plenty to eat
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.52 and for individual schools in 5.2.53.

Table 5.2.52: Whether pupils think the free school meal allowance is enough for them to get plenty to eat. All secondary schools.

	Pre-intervention (%)	Post-intervention (%)
Agree	39	33
Not sure	25	28
Disagree	36	39

Pre-intervention the most common response is that the free school meal allowance does give them enough to eat. Post-intervention the responses have changed so that the most common response is that it does not.

Table 5.2.53: Whether pupils think the free school meal allowance is enough for them to get plenty to eat. By individual school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	45	40	36	26	34	28	19	24	58	52
Not sure	23	28	18	23	27	28	34	36	24	28
Disagree	32	32	45	51	39	45	47	40	18	20

SS5 and SS1 have the most pupils agreeing that they get plenty to eat – 52% and 40% post-intervention respectively. SS4 has the least number of pupils agreeing. The situation worsened in all schools except for SS4 over the intervention period.

Question 34: I feel embarrassed claiming for my Free School Meal
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.54 and for individual schools in 5.2.55.

Table 5.2.54: Whether pupils feel embarrassed claiming for their free school meal. All secondary schools.

	Pre-intervention (%)	Post-intervention (%)
Agree	12	17
Not sure	22	13
Disagree	66	70

Most pupils were not embarrassed to claim their free school meal. A small number were however embarrassed and this rose slightly over the intervention period (12% pre, 17% post).

Table 5.2.55: Whether pupils feel embarrassed claiming for their free school meal. By individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	5	20	12	18	10	14	16	4	20	27
Not sure	14	20	18	15	24	7	25	15	30	8
Disagree	82	60	70	67	67	79	59	81	50	65

There are large differences between schools and between pre and post intervention. Post-intervention over a quarter of pupils in SS5 said they felt embarrassed and approximately 1 in 5 of the pupils in SS1 and SS2 did. In SS4

however only 4% of pupils said they felt embarrassed – this was down from 16% pre-intervention.

Question 35: The school encourages me to take my Free School Meal
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.56 and for individual schools in 5.2.57.

Table 5.2.56: Whether pupils feel the school encourages them to take a free school meal. All secondary schools.

	Pre-intervention (%)	Post-intervention (%)
Agree	28	26
Not sure	38	37
Disagree	34	37

The most common response – both pre and post intervention – is that pupils are not sure whether the school encourages them to take a free school meal.

Table 5.2.57: Whether pupils feel the school encourages them to take a free school meal. By individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	43	43	22	18	22	18	34	31	23	27
Not sure	26	33	41	38	37	32	38	38	53	42
Disagree	30	25	38	44	41	50	28	31	23	31

In SS1 nearly half the pupils said they felt the school encouraged them to take a free school meal. SS3 and SS2 had the least favourable results with nearly half of pupils saying the school did not encourage them. Most schools showed little or no change during the intervention period although in SS5 the situation improved slightly.

Question 36: I worry other pupils might tease me about having a Free School Meal
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.58 and for individual schools in 5.2.59.

Table 5.2.58: Whether pupils worry that they might be teased about having a free school meal. All secondary schools.

	Pre-intervention (%)	Post-intervention (%)
Agree	8	10
Not sure	9	16
Disagree	83	74

The vast majority of pupils stated that they were not worried about being teased about having a Fee School Meal. However a small number (8% pre, 10% post) are concerned about this possibility.

Table 5.2.59: Whether pupils worry that they might be teased about having a free school meal. By individual secondary school.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	4	4	9	18	5	4	3	4	20	15
Not sure	0	20	6	10	10	15	22	15	16	23
Disagree	96	76	85	72	85	81	75	81	64	62

In three schools (SS1, SS3 and SS4) only a very small proportion of pupils (less than 5%) say they are worried about being teased. In SS2 and SS5 a far larger number (18% and 15% respectively) say that they are worried about teasing. In SS2 this has risen substantially over the intervention period.

Question 37: Claiming for a Free School Meal is easy.
Results for all schools are shown in table 5.2.60 and for individual schools in 5.2.61.

Table 5.2.60: Whether pupils think that claiming for a free school meal is easy. All secondary schools.

	Pre-intervention (%)	Post-intervention (%)
Agree	52	54
Not sure	36	31
Disagree	11	15

Over half of pupils agreed that claiming for their free school meal was easy, whilst another third are not sure.

Table 5.2.61: Whether pupils think that claiming for a free school meal is easy. All secondary schools.

	SS1		SS2		SS3		SS4		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Agree	61	50	45	54	40	57	62	46	55	58
Not sure	30	38	33	26	50	32	34	35	34	31
Disagree	9	12	21	21	10	11	3	19	11	12

There is less variation between schools. Post-intervention, in all schools, the most common response was that claiming for a free school meal was easy. This had improved in SS2, SS3 and SS5 but worsened in SS1 and SS4.

Question 38 varied depending on whether or not the school had a cashless system. Pupils were asked if this system encouraged them to take their free school meal.

For schools with a cashless system (SS2 & SS4)

Question 38: In your school you have a cashless system; do you think this encourages you to have a free school meal?

Table 5.2.62: Whether pupils think that a cashless system encourages them to take their free school meal. Each school with a cashless system.

	SS2		SS4	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Yes	12	24	29	13
I'm not sure	66	54	45	70
No	22	22	26	17

The majority of the pupils answering this question were 'not sure' if it encouraged them to take the meal they are entitled to.

Question 38a: If YES please could you explain why?
Answers given were that people don't have to pay (2) and it is faster (2). There were single statements of "it helps me to buy my FSM", "you don't have to shout out free meal", "you top up like everyone else", "you can put extra money on", "it looks like you have money on your card", "you know you can eat" and "I can check how much money I have".

Question 38b. If NO please could you explain why?
Answers given were that "I don't like the food anyway", "we don't use cards we just say our numbers", "its better with the card so no one can take your money" and "because none of my family work."

For schools without a cashless system (SS1, SS3 and SS5)
Pupils were given a short explanation of how a cashless system worked and then asked whether or not it would encourage them to take up their entitlement.

Question 38: If your school had such a system, would it encourage you to take your Free School Meal?

Table 5.2.63: Whether pupils think that a cashless system would encourage them to take their free school meal. Each secondary school without a cashless system.

	SS1		SS3		SS5	
	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)	Pre (%)	Post (%)
Yes– definitely	53	38	51	30	31	53
I'm not sure	21	33	27	39	46	26
No– I still wouldn't take one	0	8	5	4	15	0
I already take mine so it wouldn't make any difference	26	21	17	18	8	21

Pupils tended to either agree that a cashless system would encourage them to take a free school meal or not be sure. Pre-intervention pupils in SS1 and SS3 agreed that it would, post-intervention pupils in SS1 and SS5 agreed. Only a few pupils responded that it would not encourage them.

Question 39: Is there anything else that would encourage you to take your free school meal more often?
Comments included better food quality, choice or acceptability (7),more money (5), outside dining (1), cashless card system (1) and more hygienic staff. New single comments made included "if my friends had one", "I think all school meals should be free", "people cant claim even if their parents only earn a little bit", "not having my photo on meal card", "if it says FSM on my card instead of me having to say it" and "being able to spend it at break not just lunch".

Question 40: How much money is your free school meal allowance?
Pupils were asked how much money the free school meal allowance was. The mean answer given was £1.83 with answers ranging from £0 to £5.

Question 41: When do you spend your free school meal allowance?

Table 5.2.64: When secondary school pupils spend their free school meal allowance.

Morning break (%)	Lunchtime (%)	Both morning break and lunchtime (%)	No answer given (%)
8	66	4	22

Two thirds of pupils spent their free school meal allowance at lunch-time. Just less than 1 in 10 spent it at morning break whilst a very small number split it between break and lunch-time. Six pupils volunteered the information that their school only allows them to use it at lunchtime.

Main findings from section 5 (claiming for a free school meal)
Approximately three-quarters of pupils said they felt comfortable claiming for a free school meal, whilst approximately 10% did not. Between 66% and 70% of pupils said they did not feel embarrassed claiming, whilst between 12% and 17% did. In three schools less than 5% of pupils were worried about being teased – in the other two 18% and 15% were. It would therefore appear that whilst the majority do not experience stigma, a minority do.

The school with the well operated cashless system performed particularly well in the questions relating to feeling comfortable or embarrassed (having the best results in one question and joint best in the other). They were one of the three best in relation to being teased.

Approximately a third of pupils said they did get plenty to eat with their free school meal allowance, but another third disagreed. Less than a third of pupils said the school encouraged them to take up their free school meal – this varied from 43% in one school and 18% in two others. More than half of pupils said that claiming their free school meal was easy.

Attitudes to cashless systems were slightly ambiguous. In the schools with cashless systems many pupils were not sure whether it encouraged them to have their free school meal. In those without cashless systems currently pupils either thought it would encourage them to have a meal or they were not sure. These ambiguous results may relate to the fact that we are asking them to comment on systems they have not experienced.

Conclusion of secondary school pupil questionnaires
Over 500 secondary school pupils completed the pre and post-intervention questionnaires. There were slightly more female than male responses and a diverse ethnic mix. The largest special dietary requirement was halal, then those with allergies, then vegetarian. Nearly a third were entitled to free school meals.

The most common lunch choice was a packed lunch. Pupils entitled to a free school meal were more than twice as likely to have a school lunch than those who were not entitled. Over a third of those entitled ate a school lunch every day, but another third never ate one. Uptake varied greatly between schools.

Responses to statements about the school dining room were very negative. The overwhelming majority said that there were long queues and it was overcrowded. Most pupils said it was messy and very noisy. Nearly half said there was not enough time to eat their lunch. A third said it was not clear what was on offer every day. On a positive note, they said they got to sit with their friends and they did not agree that the staff were unhelpful.

A third thought the food tasted okay but most were not sure. Over half (56%) of pupils entitled to a free school meal thought the portion sizes were too small (41% of those not entitled agreed). Nearly half of all pupils thought there was not enough choice and that "they don't serve what I like". Over half thought the food cost too much and that they did not get a chance to give feedback.

When pupils were asked what would encourage them to have a school meal they tended to focus on aspects of the dining room i.e. it being clean, having somewhere to sit and enough time to eat their lunch. The food tasting good also featured in the top 5 factors.

Most pupils entitled to a free school meals signified that stigma did not affect them – a large majority said they felt comfortable claiming, they were not

embarrassed and they did not worry about being teased. However a minority responded negatively saying they weren't comfortable, they were embarrassed and they did worry about getting teased (9%, 17% and 10% respectively). The school with the best results had a well operated cashless system which minimised the chances of being identified as a claimant. However having a cashless system was not a guarantee of minimising stigma. One school with a poorly operated one had negative results whilst other schools without one had fair results. The school with the well operated cashless system had improved their results over the intervention period despite having had one for a number of years.

Section 5.3: Parent Questionnaire Results

- **Demographic Data for primary schools**

In 2008, 78 parents of Year 5 pupils from across the 5 pilot primary schools completed the pre-intervention questionnaire. In September and October 2008, the same parents were re-surveyed, with 52 (67%) completing the post – intervention version. Whilst allowing for some pupil movement these should, by and large, be the same parents that were sent a questionnaire however we cannot say if the returned questionnaires were the exactly same parents. Table 5.3.1 shows the responses by school

Table 5.3.1: Number of primary pupil parent questionnaires per school

School	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	frequency	%	Frequency	%
PS1	19	24	15	29
PS2	17	22	8	15
PS3	16	21	13	25
PS4	19	24	11	21
PS5	7	9	5	10

- **Demographic Data for secondary schools**

In 2008, 124 parents of Year 8 pupils from across the 5 pilot secondary schools completed the pre-intervention questionnaire. In September and October 2008, the same parents were resurveyed, with 79 (64%) completing the post – intervention version. As with the primary schools these should, by and large, the same parents were sent a questionnaire but we cannot say if the returned questionnaires were the exactly same parents. Table 5.3.2 shows the responses by school

Table 5.3.2: Number of secondary pupil questionnaires per school

School	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
	frequency	%	Frequency	%
SS1	12	10	19	24
SS2	14	11	0	0
SS3	35	28	16	20
SS4	17	14	10	13
SS5	46	37	33	43

5.3.1 Parents Pre-intervention questionnaire results

Question 1 – School lunches or not? Results for primary schools are shown in Table 5.3.3 and the results for secondary schools are shown in Table 5.3.4

Table 5.3.3 Number (%) of primary pupils eating school lunch (paid and free)

	Free school meals		Paid meals		Don't Know	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Pre-Intervention	35	46	35	46	6	8
Post-Intervention	28	54	23	44	1	2

Table 5.3.4 Number (%) of secondary pupils eating school lunch (paid and free)

	Free school meals		Paid meals		Don't Know	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Pre-Intervention	40	32	76	61	8	7
Post-Intervention	19	24	53	66	8	10

Question 3: Does your child take a packed lunch? Results are shown in Table 5.3.5

Table 5.3.5: Number of parents stating that their children take a packed lunch

	Pre-Intervention	
	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	39	47
No	53	38
Sometimes	8	15

Question 4: If your child takes a packed lunch, please could you explain why?

Three of the most common responses related to the actual meals served with comments that stated that they were too expensive (8 primary parents, 21 secondary parents); that their child did not like school dinners (11 primary parents, 19 secondary parents); that the parents had more control over what the children were eating and knowing it was a balanced meal (6 primary parents, 13 secondary parents). Further comments included that parents felt more able to provide a healthy meal for their child (2), my child is a fussy eater (2), the portions being too small (2), the children preferred a hot meal at home (2). Comments relating to the school meal service were that the queues are too long (1 primary parents, 13 secondary parents). Other comments from the primary pupils parents included there is little choice left when they go in; the school meals were "rubbish"; the school cannot cater for a child's allergies; one parent stated that as a punishment for not eating packed lunches the children were put back on school meals. Comments made by parents of secondary school pupils included

that they wanted to eat with friends, they didn't like going into the dinner hall, there was too little time to eat and the poor quality and availability of food on offer.

About the school food

Question 8: **The quality of the food served IS**.........**?** Results are shown in Table 5.3.6

Table 5.3.6 The quality of the food served

	Pre-Intervention	
	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Good	21	27
Satisfactory	38	33
Poor	15	20
Don't know	26	19

The comments from parents included that the choice was limited (2 primary, 1 secondary) and that the food is cold (2).

From primary school parents comments included 'food is not always cooked properly', 'a list of menus should be sent home to parents', 'sometimes its not a balanced meal', 'I know children need to be healthier but they are not all obese,' 'sometimes the food is too spicy, my child has never complained'.

Comments from the secondary school parents included 'there could be more options for healthy dinners', 'The quality and availability of food differs depending upon what time my child goes for dinner'. 'Early lunch equals good choice and quality. Later lunch equals less choice and poor quality', 'I think it is not healthy', 'Children come home starving, sometimes they would find hair in their food'

Question 9: **The choice of food served is**.........**?** Results are shown in Table 5.3.7

Table 5.3.7 The choice of food served

	Pre-Intervention	
	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Good	18	28
Satisfactory	32	28
Poor	27	28
Don't know	23	16

Comments by parents included that there was a lack of choice on the menu (6 primary, 1 secondary) and If their child was at the back of the queue the choices ran out by the time he arrived at the counter (2 primary, 1 secondary). Furthermore there was lack of choice depending on when their child could take their lunch (primary 2, secondary 1) i.e. the choice available was dependent on the lunchtime rota for separate year group.

From primary parents answers given included "if on free meals and you choose a sandwich you can't choose many other things as well", "universal food for everyone to enjoy", "some I like but mostly its awful", "please provide more halal food", "my children say they have had pizza, quiche- the meals not as healthy as meant to be".

From secondary parents answers included "It is good because you can choose different meals", "Not enough healthy options" and "Sandwiches without salad".

Question 10: The portion sizes are.........? Results are shown in Table 5.3.8

Table 5.3.8 The Portion sizes of food served

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Too small	32	23
About right	48	48
Too big	0	1
Don't know	20	28

Comments from parents included "My children are hungry after school when on dinners" (4 primary, 1 secondary). Other comments were that portion sizes were too small (1 primary and 2 secondary) or inappropriate for the individual child. Some parents reported that 'my child says they are about right' (1 primary, secondary 2).

Question 11: The price of a school meal is.........? Results are shown in Table 5.3.9

Table 5.3.9 The Price of School Meals

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Good	6	13
Satisfactory	32	30
Poor	30	35
Don't know	32	21

Parents commented that school lunches were too expensive (primary 4, secondary 3). Further comments from primary parents included " the price is too expensive for people with multiple children" "people who do not work", "I wouldn't be able to afford them if I had to pay for them", "for the price I think it is good value".

From secondary school parents additional comments included "Some extras - e.g. cheese, are over-priced", 'If the price goes down they will have more options", "Some meals don't allow pupils on free school meals to get a full meal", "Not too expensive, the school has a breakfast club where breakfast is free before 8.30 - it seems very popular but I think this is because it is free".

Question 12: The dining room facilities are........? Results are shown in Table 5.3.10

Table 5.3.10 **The dining room facilities**

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Good	30	20
Satisfactory	41	32
Poor	13	30
Don't know	16	18

Comments regarding the dining room facilities included poor hygiene (primary parents 4, secondary 1), more hall space needed/dining room is too small (primary parents 1, secondary parents 1). Further comments from primary parents include "too noisy", "need better cooking equipment", and "cannot keep food hot during service".

From secondary school parents, comments included "that they have seen, or heard that there are rats in the dining room", "Lots of queuing", "You need to split dinner time up to allow the children to be able to sit down".

Question 13: My child likes the type of food served: Results are shown in Table 5.3.11

Table 5.3.11 **My child likes the type of food served**

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Strongly agree	3	2
Agree	41	46
Disagree	35	26
Strongly disagree	11	12
Don't know	10	14

Parents commented that there needed to be more choice (Primary 3, secondary 1). From the primary school parents comments included "the children report the food quality is poor" (2), "there is not enough food" (2), "'the food sometimes makes my child ill", "they always complain", "I have never had any complaints from him", "the school gives him healthy food", and "children would like juice not just water".

Secondary school parents gave more specific comments about food items including "my child usually does not like the food", "'My daughter does not eat meat or cheese or like mayonnaise and most sandwiches contain these", "She does not like the type of English food put out, and by the time she has finally found a seat the food has gone cold", "Food smells nice", "No salt" - too much salt is not good. However they do not put in any at all", "My daughter likes pastas", "My child chooses sandwiches and pasta", "Only some options are likeable and too pricey", "There should be fresh new portions of e.g. fruit, milk, sandwiches", "She would prefer to spend her dinner money on pasties and rolls", "She likes school dinner as long as it is halal, Jamaican food".

Question 14: Is there is any food item or meals you would like on the menu at your child's school?

Primary comments:-
Pizza if it is healthy (5), pasta dishes (5) More fresh fruit and vegetables (8), more meat and fish (6), Healthier desserts (3) (e.g. Fresh fruit and yogurts and less cake and custard) Better choice of sandwiches (3) Meat and two veg (2) Less fried food and more healthy cooking (2) I do not mind as long as it is healthy (2) Burgers (2) Rice and curry (2) More choice on the menu (2) Chips is okay once or twice a week (1) Low salt and low fat options of children's favourites (e.g. Burgers)(1) Larger portions (1) Healthy halal food(1) Meals with food that go together like meat and two veg, not pizza and rice (1)

Secondary comments:-
More salads, Burgers (including those made with proper beef), More pasta dishes (including spaghetti Bolognaise), More fish dishes, More vegetarian options, Pizza, More fruit and vegetables, Jacket potatoes More meat Chips Rice and curry More healthy puddings (including fresh fruit) More choice on the menu More chicken dishes (e.g. Chicken breast in breadcrumbs/ chicken in black bean sauce) More sandwiches, cheese, Halal food, fish and chips, more healthy food, more chinese food (e.g. noodles), mashed potato, hot dogs, more proper meals, e.g. Vegetables, potatoes, meat, instead of just pasta, being allowed to have pudding. Only if meal of the day can you have pudding. Chips only once a week Quiche with salad

Question 15: What would improve the school meal service at your child's school?
Primary comments:-
More choice/variety, more availability of food so all children get equal portions and the food does not run out too soon, healthy foods (e.g. no chips, pizza, fatty foods; less stodgy food), lengthier dinner time so children have time to eat their meal, bigger portions better quality food, cleanliness, warmer food, squash to drink, a choice of pudding, better facilities where the food was prepared and cooked on site not just warmed up, to include drinks in the school meal, making sure the salad bar is well stocked up, by not giving them mainly vegetarian food, do away with those silly plastic plates with sections in them, pleasanter dinner ladies, if they catered for my son i.e. non-dairy and non fish products, ask the kids the week before what meals they would like the following week.

Secondary comments:-
More choice/variety on the menu, less queuing/faster service, more freshly prepared and well cooked food, not pre-prepared food, cheaper prices, make enough food to feed all the children including those who come into the dining room last, longer duration of lunch so enough time to eat, stagger/rotate lunch times to minimize queues, ensure all children properly fed, friendlier and more helpful staff, larger dining hall with more seating, cleaner dining hall, fresher ingredients, employ more catering staff to improve efficiency at lunch time, more sandwiches to choose from, more supervision, larger allowance for children on FSM, more salads and fruit, serve what the children like, a take away section where food could be bought but taken away too.

Question16: What would encourage more children to take a school meal?
Primary comments:-
More choice on the menu/more variation, cheaper prices so all families can afford them, offer them food they enjoy and recognize but healthier options (e.g.

burgers. nuggets. pizza), healthier meals, better quality food (2), make them more appetizing and tastier, more information for parents on what is available each day, e.g. provide weekly menus, bigger portions, more fruit and decent dessert, extra portions, if the child could select the menu, if they ordered like hospitals do, probably doing a survey of the type of foods children at the school will eat and try putting this into the menu, hiding vegetables in sauces.

Secondary comments
More choice on the menu/more variation, less time queuing/faster service, better quality food, reduce the cost of the meals, greater variety of healthy options (e.g. salads), give them food they enjoy and recognize (e.g. beans on toast, spaghetti bolognaise, oven chips, fish fingers), better hygiene (e.g. clean trays/cutlery), warmer food, longer duration of dinner and more time to eat meals, more spacious dining room, improve dining room facilities, better pricing system, labelling of food with prices, staggered service to minimize queuing, education in healthy eating, allow children to take food out in disposable boxes during the summer, something free with it, letting the children have input into what they are eating (e.g. design posters/trying to cook some of the menus in food technology class).

Question 17: Have you heard about any of the changes in school meals taking place at your child's schools? Results are shown in Table 5.3.?

Table 5.3.12 Have Parents heard about changes in school Meals

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	16	15
No	74	78
Don't know	10	7

More than 80% of parents of both primary and secondary pupils had not heard or stated that they did not know about the recent changes in school meals at their child's school. Only 15% stated that they had heard about the changes.

Question 18: Would you like to know more about the meals served at your child's school? Results are shown in Table 5.3.13

Table 5.3.13 Do parents want to know more about school meals

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	76	67
No	20	24
Don't know	4	9

More than ¾ of primary parents and 2/3 of secondary parents indicated that they would like to know more about the meals served at their child's school. Only 1/5th of parents stated that they would not.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Question 19: Is your child or children entitled to free school meals?
Results are shown in Table 5.3.14

Table 5.3.14 Entitlement to Free School Meals

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	46	32
No	46	61
Don't know	8	7

Question 20: Does your child or children eat their free school meals?
Results are shown in Table 5.3.15

Table 5.3.15 The number of children eating their Free School Meal

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Always	73	55
Sometimes	16	30
Never	11	15

Almost ¾ of primary parents and more than ½ of secondary parents reported that their child always ate their free school meal. However ¼ of primary parents and almost ½ of secondary parents indicated that their child sometimes or never ate their free school meal.

Question 21: Why do they not eat their free school meals?
From parents of Primary school pupils comments included:- children dislike the meals (6), lack of choice (30), portions too small (2), food is poor quality (1), not a choice of food left (1), not enough healthy food (1), fussy eaters (1), I like them to have home cooked food and to see what they have eaten (1).

Secondary school
Long queues (2), dinner time not long enough in duration (2), poor quality food which my child doesn't like, if a long time in queue, there is not much food left to choose from, poor hygiene, the meals are cold, because she prefers to bring a packed lunch, because we can't get FSM my child is on packed lunch and I get what I can afford, the meals do not fill my child, the food is out of date, we applied for child benefit and child tax credit but we did not hear about it.

Question 22: What would encourage your child/children to eat their Free School Meals more often?
Primary school comments:- More choice on menu (3), better quality food (1), larger portions (1), explain why the food is healthy (1), if the children could help select the menu (1), make sure there is enough food for all the children (1).

Secondary school comments:- More choice on menu, less queues, longer time for dinner, if the food was warm, more salad and fruit salad, I think all children should get a free school meal.

Question 23: Is the free school meal allowance enough?
Results are shown in Table 5.3.16

Table 5.3.16 Is the free school meal allowance enough?

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	74	33
No	26	67

¼ of primary parents and more than 2/3 of secondary parents stated that they did not think that the free school meal allowance was sufficient.

On being asked what the allowance for free school meals should be Primary school parents answers ranged from £2.20- £7.50, and secondary parents ranged from £2.50- £10.00.

Question 24: Do you and your child/children feel comfortable claiming for free school meals? Results are shown in Table 5.3.17

Table 5.3.17 Do parents and their children feel comfortable claiming for free school meals?

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	88	89
No	12	11

Whilst the majority of parents thought that they and their child felt comfortable claiming their free school meal, around 12% of parents did not agree.

Primary parents comments made as to why they did not feel comfortable claiming included:- 'My son thinks people would pick on him if they knew he was on school dinners' ' He always asks me if he can go on packed lunch, but I like him to have a hot meal when at school'

Secondary parents comments made as to why they did not feel comfortable included, 'yes - if we could get free school meal' and 'my daughter says that she does not like to eat school meals'.

Question 25: Does your child know that they have a free School Meal?
Results are shown in Table 5.3.18

Table 5.3.18 Does your child know that they have a free school meal?

	Primary Parents %
Yes	97.1
No	2.9

An additional comment made was 'they have never asked whether or not they eat FSM'

Parents' Post-intervention questionnaire results

Question 2: What do your children currently do for lunch?
Primary schools
School meals (1)
Secondary schools
school meals, sandwiches, fruit, yogurt, biscuit, he doesn't have lunch but he does take money for it, bring packed lunch and sometimes buys a school lunch

Question 3: What did your children do for lunch last term?
Primary school
School meals (1)
Secondary school comments
school meals, he doesn't have lunch but he does take money for it, she brought a packed lunch for a while and then went on school meals, any food.

Question 4: If there has been a change in what your children do for lunch, please say what change.

Primary school comments:-
there is more clean plates and cups, more healthy food, cut the chips out, was having dinners but he wasn't getting enough so decided to put him back on packed lunch, I put my children on packed lunch as I wanted to know what they were eating, my son wanted to go on school meals to be with friends, my daughter changed from a school lunch to a packed lunch as she did not like the school lunch and I found it expensive, 2 youngest wanted packed lunches, now on free school meals.

Secondary school comments:-
elder child fussy about food so didn't like school dinners much, school lunch looks more appealing this year, they liked what their friends were having for lunch (some DAYS!!) so decided to buy them, she said it wasn't good so then she came home saying how awful and how it has gone, less and less people coming because of how it is, she wanted to eat outside because her friends have made her start eating because she didn't like eating at school, my daughter sometimes brings packed lunch because she said that she doesn't like the school lunch, my children don't eat meat therefore there isn't enough vegetarian food so they went from free school meals to packed lunch - cost! the younger child didn't like school meals, sometimes they like to have a school dinner, older ones come home for lunch, sometimes goes without if food runs out (which is not acceptable), my daughter wants to have school lunch during colder weather, he has packed lunch for summer time hot meal for winter, she went on packed lunch for a couple of days as she wasn't satisfied by the choice of menu that was left over when she got to eat her lunch, my eldest daughter occasionally goes on packed ups because the school meals get too expensive and they don't give big enough portions.

Changes since January 2008

Question 5: Since January 2008 have you received a letter or a postcard you're your child's school about school meals? Results are shown in Table 5.3.19

Table 5.3.19 The number of parents that received a letter or postcard about school meals

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	21	18
No	40	53
Not sure	35	28
No answer	4	1

Only about 1/5th of parents stated that they received a letter or postcard about school meals and more than ¾ said no or not sure.

If yes, did this change what you thought about school meals?
Primary school comments:- no my sons don't like them (school meals), no I always knew school meals have more variety and are more nutritious than they used to be, healthier food on offer now.

Secondary schools comments:- more healthier choices, children might like to try school meals but queues are very busy and would spend all their time just waiting for food, more choice and healthy, I know that school meals have improved but my budget hasn't, they're good but my children prefer to take their own, yes - more vegetables in the school meals and it's healthier, yes because they changed to healthy meals.

Question 6: Since January 2008 have you seen an example of the meals served at your child's school? Results are shown in Table 5.3.20

Table 5.3.20 Examples of meals seen by parents

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	14	13
No	73	77
Not sure	10	9
No answer	3	1

Whilst a minority of parents had seen examples of school meals served, more than ¾ of parents said that they had not seen examples of meals served at their child's school.

If yes, did this change what you thought about school meals?
Primary comments:- they looked quite appealing but I suppose adults and children have different options

Secondary comments:- no, very good choice, no, there is a variety of meal selection to suit all tastes which I think is very good and lets children try different dishes if wanted to, no (2) I don't because take some food from home, I have seen different type of food, I would like to, more healthy and appetising, yes because they look healthy and they look like what lots of children would have for lunch.

Question 7: Since January 2008 have you tasted the food served at your child's school? Results are shown in Table 5.3.21

Table 5.3.21 The number of parents that have tasted a school meal.

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	8	0
No	88	96
Not sure	0	1
No answer	4	3

If yes, did this change what you thought about school meals?
Primary:- I've never tasted my children's school dinners I presume there still the same tastes as when I was at primary school 20 years ago, the dinners did change, children don't always enjoy the same as adults, school meals are fine for adults but some of the foods are not suitable for children i.e. fish in tomato sauce, no this is because no changes have been made and they don't look very appealing and generally are cold as they are served from a table not a hot plate! When I was at school we had good tasty hot meals and they should be brought back again and we were able to go back for 2nd and 3rd's to prevent wastage.

Secondary
No (1)

Question 8; Since January 2008 have your children told you about any changes in school meals? Results are shown in Table 5.3.22

Table 5.3.22 Children informing their parents about changes in school meals.

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	14	19
No	76	73
Not sure	8	7
No answer	2	1

Whilst a minority of children have informed their parents, almost ¾ of parents stated that their children had not informed them of any changes in school meals.

If yes, did this change what you thought about school meals?
Primary comments:- my children didn't go on school dinners till 22/9/08 plus I think school meals need to be cheaper as I've got 2 children eating them, yes smaller portions, yes more fruit and vegetables plus less salt, yes better food, there have been no changes and the meals are only luke-warm and small portions, the food is really nice.

Secondary comments
Yes they are getting dearer (expensive) and there are not bigger portion, always running out, better choice, the prices have gone up, again healthier options, said they looked more appetising and he was more willing to try them, my eldest has stated that sometimes depending on when his year is arranged to enter dinner hall e.g. (1st or 2nd) there hasn't been much to choose from so he has either gone without or got a sandwich, I thought she was enjoying it but said the dinner

ladies aren't clean and there's not a lot left by the time it gets to you, they brought one of those post card/ letter home! I was prepared to hear about attempts to make school meals healthier and more nutritious unsure of whether this has been achieved though, healthy and tasting better, not really, no

Question 9: Have you received information about your child's school meals from any other sources since January 2008? Results are shown in Table 5.3.23

Table 5.3.23 Information received about school meals from other sources.

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	4	3
No	83	76
Not sure	13	17
No answer	0	4

If yes, what was the information?
Primary comments:- leaflets brought home once by my children, the Council to tell me that we are entitled to free school meals.

Secondary comments:- a letter from school saying that she wasn't entitled to free school meals.

Question 10: Have there been any other changes to your child's school meals or lunchtime in general since January 2008? Results are shown in Table 5.3.24

Table 5.3.24 Other changes to school meals noticed by parents

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	8	2
No	75	70
Not sure	17	23
No answer	0	5

More than 90% of parents stated that they had not noticed or were not sure of any changes to school meals.

If yes, what were these changes?
Primary comments:- more fruit than there used to be, because the staff tell them to be quick, more healthier, golden table for being good for the whole week and teachers choose the pupils.

Secondary comments:- in primary not allowed any sugar free drinks/ fizzy or drinking yogurts. Only allowed water, my eldest child has said that they are now doing themes and they are encouraging and introducing more variety of foods, I have been told by my child that the meals are healthier.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Question 11: Is your child or children entitled to Free School Meals?
Results are shown in Table 5.3.25

Table 5.3.25 Children entitled to free school meals

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	54	24
No	44	66
Not sure	2	10

2% of Primary and 10% of secondary parents stated that they were not sure whether their child was entitled to free school meals.

Question 12: If you had a question about free school meals would you know who to ask at your child's school? Results are shown in Table 5.3.26

Table 5.3.26 Do parents know who to ask at school about free school meals?

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	75	47
No	21	53
Not sure	0	0
No answer	4	0

Although ¾ of and almost ½ of secondary school parents knew who to ask, around 1/5th of primary parents and more than ½ of secondary school parents stated that they did not know who to ask about free school meals at their child's school.

Question 13: Do you know how to claim for Free School Meals?
Results are shown in Table 5.3.27

Table 5.3.27 Do parents know how to claim for free school meals?

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	89	84
No	7	11
Not sure	0	0
No answer	4	5

Although the majority of parents indicated that they knew how to claim free school meals, 7% of primary and 11% of secondary parents did not know how to claim. 4% of primary and 5% secondary parents gave no answer.

If no, what would help you?
Primary comments:- no relevant answers were given.

Secondary school comments:- told how to claim, details of how to claim, being able to ask the front office how to claim, a form sent to us to re-claim.

Question14: Does your child or children eat their free school meals?
Results are shown in Table 5.3.28

Table 5.3.28 Does your child or children eat their free school meals?

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Always	57	47
Sometimes	25	42
Never	18	6
No answer	O	5

Just over 40% of primary and secondary parents indicated that their child sometimes or never ate their free school meal.

Question 15: Why do they not eat their free school meals?

Primary school comments:-
Dislike of the school meal (7), too little choice (1), not enough left on later sittings (1), too small portions (1), fussy eaters (1), they prefer packed lunch (2), food is not tasty and is cold (1), 'we don't know how to get free school meals', 'my children eat their meals because there is nothing else to eat, They and I believe that the school meals are not any better than years ago, my children are not in prison why the plastic tray?

Secondary school comments:-
Lack of entitlement (3), Dislike of the meals (2), not enough left on later sittings (2), prefer packed lunch (2), Lack of choice (1), Bullying (1), because I didn't know about that, they have deadlines at school and sometimes do not have time for food because of extra curriculum/researching.

Question 16: What would encourage your child/children to eat their Free School Meals more often?

Primary school comments
more choices (3), more variety (3), cheaper prices (1), Larger portions (2), Chips (1), Tastier food (1), Hot food (1), try giving them something they enjoy and something that would make them look forward to school meals, seasoning on the food and also my daughter has told me that she has found hair in her food.

Secondary school comments:-
More variety e.g. sandwiches, fresh vegetables (3), Sandwiches, Don't know (2), more time to eat (1), if it was arranged so that all food available was sorted with same amounts for each arranged sittings, instead of all or majority choice foods run out after 2nd sittings, if there was more choice when my daughter goes to get her lunch and if the allowance was increased slightly as at the present moment I have to give her £1 extra per day to make sure she has enough.

Question 17: Is the free school meal allowance enough?
Results are shown in Table 5.3.29

Table 5.3.29 Is the free school meal allowance enough?

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	71	42
No	18	42
Don't know	11	0
No answer	0	16

If no, **how much you think it should be per day?**

Five primary parents answered ranging from £2 - £5. Mean price suggested was £3.30. One Primary school Parent added 'I don't know how much free school meals cost'
Seven secondary parents suggested a range from £1- £3. The mean allowance was £1.99.

Question 18: Do your and your child/children feel comfortable claiming for Free School Meals? Results are shown in Table 5.3.30

Table 5.3.? Do parents and their children feel comfortable claiming for free school meals?

	Primary Parents %	Secondary Parents %
Yes	63	78
No	21	11
No answer	16	11

If no, why is this?
Primary School comments:-
Because they do not have free school meals and I want them to, we are low income on benefits, I am a student at Thomas Danby so it's a case of having to or she won't have sandwiches, they are told to eat separately from friends, because people will think you are poor and you don't afford the money to pay for the meal, son says not enough money if only certain food left, selection is more expensive, I hope he can have free meals.

Secondary School comments:-
Because they would rather be on packed lunches, but unable to provide until I get a job which is when my youngest child starts nursery another year or so then my children will be on packed lunches, my daughter says yes but I would rather be working and paying for school meals, I think there is a stigma attached - shame there is no way of all other children knowing, I don't need to claim they don't eat them anyway, I am in between she says it doesn't feel really good the way they make you feel at school but she doesn't care.

Question 19: For Primary schools only -Does your child know that he/she has free school meals? Results are shown in Table 5.3.?

Table 5.3.? Does your child know that he/she has free school meals?

	Primary Parents %
Yes	64
No	36
No answer	0

If no, why is this?
Three answers were given: - I didn't tell her, they are on packed lunches, because they're no longer on school meals.

Conclusion of parent questionnaires

Of the initial 78 parents of Yr 5 primary school children, 52 (67%) completed a questionnaire post intervention; of the initial 128 parents of Yr 8 secondary school pupils, 79 (64%) completed a questionnaire post intervention. 1/3 of all parents stated that their child was entitled to free school meals. The following is a summary of the main findings from the parents' questionnaires for parents of children entitled to free school meals and those paying. The responses have been pooled for the questions relating to general school meal provision as there were no differences; however specific questions relating to free school meals are summarised as are the parents views on the interventions targeted at increasing free school meal uptake.

The reasons given by parents why almost 40% primary and 50% secondary school children chose packed lunches were that school meals were too expensive, the children did not like them and that packed lunches allowed control over what was eaten and that they could ensure that lunch was balanced.

When asked their views about the quality, choice and portion sizes offered, around half of the parents said that they were satisfied however 25% stated that they were dissatisfied and 25% did not know. Dining room facilities were considered good or satisfactory by 70% of parents of primary school children and 50% of parents of secondary schoolchildren, however the rest stated that they did not know.

Parents suggested at both pre and post-intervention, that in order to encourage school meal uptake, more choice, maintenance of choice through-out the lunch break, greater variety, cheaper prices, food that was enjoyed but also healthy should be offered. A longer lunch-break and shorter queues were highlighted particularly by parents of secondary school pupils.

Regarding the recent changes in school meal standards, at pre-intervention more than 80% of parents of both primary and secondary pupils had not heard or stated that they did not know about the recent changes at their child's school. Only 15% stated that they had heard and over ¾ of primary parents and 2/3 of secondary parents expressed that they would like to know more about the meals served at their child's school. These finding were sustained at post intervention with parents also stating that they had not been given an opportunity to see or taste examples of school meals.

Parents' views on free school meals were also sought and are summarised. Whilst the majority of parents at pre-intervention thought that they felt comfortable claiming for free school meals, around 12% of parents did feel comfortable. Post intervention the numbers stating that did not feel comfortable increased to 21% in primary parents and this may be due to the project unintentionally raising the issue of free school meals where perhaps it may have been viewed as a normal process prior to the project. In contrast there was an increase in parents of Secondary school pupils stating that they felt comfortable however 11% still reported not feeling comfortable. The main reasons centred on that parents felt that they should be able to provide for their children.

Whilst almost ¾ of primary parents and more than ½ of secondary parents reported that their child always ate their free school meal, ¼ of primary parents and almost ½ of secondary parents indicated that their child sometimes or never ate their meal. Post intervention the proportion reported as sometimes or never eating their meal increased in primary schools but decreased in secondary schools. The main reasons given for not eating their meal included that meals were disliked, lack of choice, poor quality and long queues.

Additionally ¼ of primary parents and more than 2/3 of secondary parents stated that they did not think that the free school meal allowance was sufficient. Post intervention this proportion increased to 1/3 of primary parents and decreased to 40% of secondary parents stating that the fsm allowance was insufficient. Parents of secondary school pupils commented that the current allowance was insufficient to buy a complete meal. Suggestions for encouraging their child to eat their meal included more choice on menu, better quality food and larger portions. In addition to shorter queues and longer lunch break was suggested by parents of secondary pupils.

Parents views on the range of interventions introduced since January 2008, aimed at increasing free school meal uptake were sought. By September 2008 only about 1/5th of parents stated that they received a letter or postcard about school meals and more than ¾ said that they had not or were not sure that they had received any communication. Furthermore whilst a minority of children had informed their parents, almost ¾ of parents stated that their children had not informed them of any changes in school meals nor had they received information from any other sources.

Regarding claiming for fsm's, post-intervention, 21% of parents of primary pupils and almost half of the parents of secondary school pupils stated that they did not know who to ask about fsm's. Although the majority stated that they knew how to claim, 7% of primary and 11% of secondary parents did not know. Secondary school parents' suggestions included being told how to claim, being able to ask in the office and being sent a form to re-claim.

In summary, the results indicate that many parents generally rate the quality and provision of school meals as poor with more parents of secondary school pupils having this perception. The responses indicate that knowledge of the recent changes in school meal standards is poor and parents report not being informed by the school, their children or any other sources. The majority have not had the opportunity to see or taste samples of meals offered and consequently have expressed a need for more information. Parents generally feel that to improve uptake of paid or free school meals, the meals need to offer a greater choice, maintain the choice through the lunch break, more variety, food that is enjoyed and is also healthy and larger portion sizes. In addition the need for a longer lunch break and shorter queues was suggested by parents of secondary school pupils. With regards to claiming for free school meals whilst the majority of

parents felt comfortable claiming, knew the process, there were parents who felt uncomfortable and did not know how to claim. In addition 1/5th of primary and a half of secondary parents were not aware of who to ask about fsm's in school and the perception amongst parents of secondary pupils was that the fsm allowance was insufficient to purchase a complete meal.

Section 6: Focus Group Findings

This section presents the findings from the focus groups. These were held with the pilot schools' working parties towards the end of the intervention period. A profile of participants is given first, then key themes are discussed as follows; how the project team worked, administration processes within the school, the claiming of free school meals within the school and the issue of stigma. This is followed by a discussion of the interventions trialled within schools – first those targeting parents, then those targeting pupils. Finally perceptions of the factors affecting uptake of free school meals are discussed.

6.1: The participants

The aim was to hold a focus group with each school's working party. Due to time constraints and staff changes it was not always possible for every team member to attend. In these cases, interviews with the lead person were conducted instead.

Table 6.1: Focus group participants

School	Number / position of attendees	Who was unable to attend and why
Primary		
PS1	3 – project lead (deputy head-teacher), catering manager and administration representative	N/A
PS2	2 – administration and teaching representatives	Project lead unable to attend
PS3	1 – administration representative	Project lead unable to attend
PS4	3 – project lead (deputy head-teacher), catering manager and administration representative	N/A
PS5	1 – new project lead. Telephone interview with catering manager.	Previous project lead on maternity leave.
Secondary		
SS1	5 – project lead (administration representative), facilities manager, catering manager, teaching representative plus administration.	N/A
SS2	2 – project lead (healthy school co-ordinator) and school health practitioner. Telephone interview with catering manager.	N/A
SS3	3 – project lead (deputy head-teacher), catering manager and year group representatives.	N/A
SS4	3 – project lead (previously healthy school co-ordinator), catering manager and administration representative.	N/A
SS5	3 – project lead (deputy head-teacher), teaching and administration representatives	New catering manager so felt not appropriate to attend

6.2: The project team

▪ *Who was in the project team?*
At the start of the intervention period each school was asked to include representatives from the following areas in their project team; a project lead (it was suggested that this could be the Healthy School Co-ordinator), catering, administration, pupils plus any other party the school felt would be relevant.

In three of the primary schools the project leads were deputy head-teachers. In one it was the head-teacher and in another a parent support worker. In secondary schools the project lead tended to be the Healthy School Co-ordinator (in four cases out of five), two of these were also deputy head-teachers. The only exception was in one school where the lead was the administration manager.

In two schools parent support workers or learning mentors were involved. In cases where the lead person was not a member of the teaching staff, there was also input from teachers.

With the exception of pupil involvement (this is discussed below) every project team included all the representatives requested.

▪ *Group dynamics*
The style of leadership and team structure varied greatly. In some schools the project lead saw their role as that of a co-ordinator:

> *"well I did the least really. I pulled it all together … I was the line of communication I suppose"* (Deputy Head-teacher, PS1)

In these schools a more inclusive decision making process tended to be evident. Team members were listened to and their ideas considered. In SS4, for example, the project lead frequently asked for suggestions from the catering manager and the administration representatives. In PS4 the deputy head regularly asked for the administrator's opinion.

Being able to criticise, albeit gently, was also evident. In SS4 for example the project lead carefully pointed out to the catering manager that their hot meal tended to be luke-warm by the time the pupils got to eat them. In PS1 the administrator and catering manager expressed negativity about the change in seating arrangements. Their project leader tactfully pointed out that the questionnaire results showed pupils preferred the new arrangement and therefore any administration difficulties had to be dealt with.

These more inclusive teams tended to be characterised by open and frank conversations. It was clear that the opinions of all members were valued and their roles respected - although the project lead was willing to provide leadership and direction where necessary. Such teams tended to have less inter-department barriers – ideas for improvements came from across the team rather than necessarily being linked to an individual's department.

Many members were willing to go beyond their defined remit. In one school the catering manager explained how she had cooked for a parents evening but did not expect to receive extra pay. She compared the ethos in her current school to previous ones she had worked in where *"that's your department, that's my department; it's just not like that here at all"* (catering manager, PS4). The project lead agreed:

> *"there's an attitude we all have … it's a team thing, there's an expectation that you expect your team to work for you and if there's a bit extra to give sometimes you do that. But equally there's the other side to, if we could do something to ease your life, you know we'd do it".*

Similarly in PS1 the head chef had painted a mural on the dining room wall in her own time and in SS3 the chef offered to come to future assemblies to promote the school food.

A more hierarchical team structure was evident in other schools. In these cases the team leader assumed a more "top-down" role with tasks clearly defined;

> *"I basically have just been overseeing the admin, making sure the information required by the kitchen was available. Apart from that I haven't been very involved."* (Administrator, SS5)

> *"I was responsible for making sure that all pupils did the questionnaire and had the information to go home."* (Teaching staff SS5)

In another example the project lead was both dynamic, with an ability to "get things done" and innovative. However a more hierarchical structure was evident when it was explained that catering manager had *"taken recommendations from us"* (PS5). This lack of real involvement had frustrated the catering manager who spoke about only finding out about interventions after they had occurred and her own ideas not being taken into account.

This hierarchical model appeared therefore to be associated with more demarcated roles, with departments undertaking the interventions specific to them. Compared to the more inclusive model there was less evidence of considering school meal provision holistically or taking on board suggestions from across departments.

▪ ***Attitudes to change***
A key theme that emerged during the focus groups was how some teams (generally related to the attitude of the project leader) appeared more willing to reflect on the current processes and organisation within their school. This process of reflection meant that they were more likely to consider making changes if appropriate.

In one primary school the project leader initiated a pupil questionnaire on the issue of name-calling and bullying. She was surprised to find that there was a potential issue *"I thought, no there won't be, but I was wrong. … I didn't think we had an issue, I wasn't aware of it"*. Based on the findings she had then made changes to the claiming process. In SS1 the team had worked together to minimise visibility of claiming at their till-points. They acknowledged that it was not yet perfect but saw it as an *"ongoing process"* to find the best way.

This process of reflection and being willing to change was less evident in other schools. In such schools negative findings from questionnaires were dismissed or seen as not a concern; *"it didn't make me concerned no"* (project leader, SS5). Instead their experience of the school and own observations were seen as more relevant. Such schools tended to be less receptive to exploring opportunities for improvement.

Figure 6.1: School team dynamics
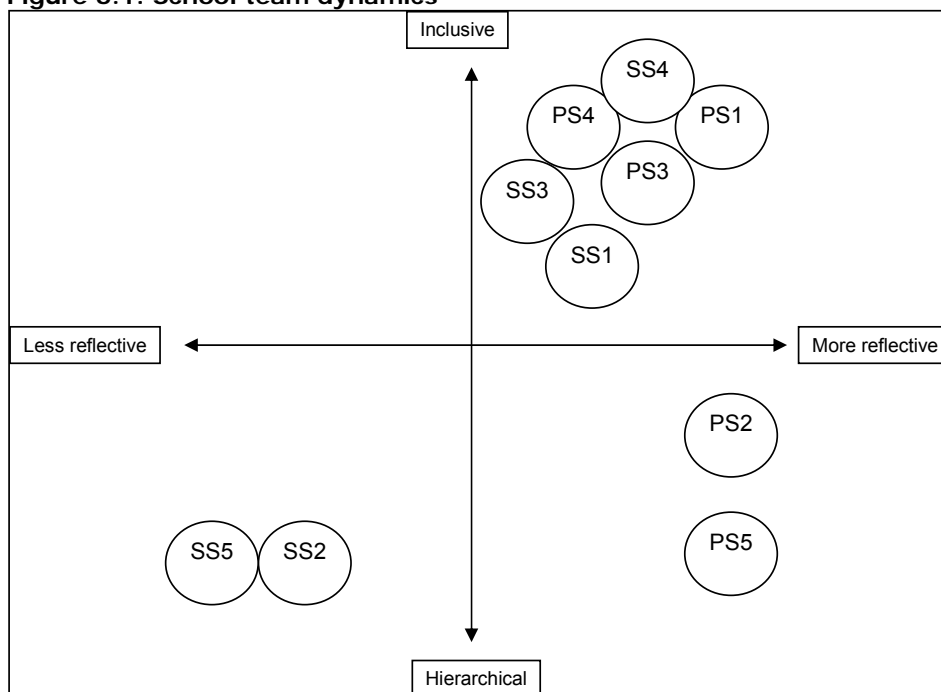
- *Pupil involvement in the project team*

Levels of formal pupil involvement in the project team were limited – particularly in primary schools. One primary school had recruited pupils to act as School Dinner Inspectors (see section 6.6) whilst another had involved pupils at the start of the project but not subsequently. In secondary schools levels were slightly higher. One school (SS1) had presented to the school council to *"inform them"* about the project, another (SS5) had involved one of their pupil feedback bodies. However in terms of actively engaging with the running of the project, levels of involvement were low. This was acknowledged by SS4 who expressed a desire to involve their pupils more in the future.

- *The optimum school team*

Participants were asked whether there was anyone else they felt should have been involved in the project team. In general most felt that the teams contained all the representatives necessary – and if not, there were no problems bringing them in when needed. Most emphasised the importance of having a senior member of the school involved – for example a deputy head-teacher. The need for administrative support was also mentioned.

Having the Healthy School Co-ordinator as the project lead was felt to make sense as there were "good links" to that role. It was suggested by some schools that all members of staff should be made aware of the initiative, potentially by a briefing session from the project lead.

- *Constraints to working effectively*

The main constraint to working effectively (especially putting ideas into practice) was a lack of time, particularly for the lead person. This was exacerbated by having multiple roles within the school, for example being an Assistant Head-teacher, Head of KS3 and the Healthy School Co-ordinator.

> *"A major sticking point with me is the time issue and time management and work-load issues. That is what has prevented me getting my teeth into it as much as I would have liked"* (project team leader, PS1)

The addition of the Healthy School Co-ordinator role into existing work-loads was evident in all schools and seemed to provide a particular challenge.

Another factor was that of staff movements. During the course of the project two of the project leads retired or left, making continuity difficult.

A less obvious but potentially significant constraint was defensiveness about the reputation of the school. A couple of schools appeared concerned that their reputation may be adversely affected by being involved. As such they found it more difficult to critique their current processes and change where possible.

- *Awareness of free school meal uptake rates*

Participants were asked whether, prior to the project starting, they were aware of the issue of low free school meal uptake. It was evident that most team members were very aware of entitlement figures. However awareness of uptake levels was far lower. A number of project leads were unaware that they had a low uptake, *"it was complete news to me"* (SS4). There had been an assumption amongst many that all those entitled to free school meals took them. Some of the primary school administrators were exceptions to this; they knew which children were entitled and whether they were bringing packed lunches or not, as such they knew whether uptake was high or low. This is discussed in more detail in section 6.3.

- *Getting schools to take notice*

The school teams were asked how the issue of free school meal uptake could be moved up the agenda within schools. Potential motivating factors mentioned included:
  - o emphasising the links between behaviour / attainment and food
  - o tying into the Every Child Matters agenda
  - o emphasising that being a centre for advice and information in the community was now assessed by Ofsted
  - o communication from a senior person within Education Leeds

Overall however it was felt that what mattered most was the personal interest of a senior member of staff, potentially the head-teacher. It was noted that most were well aware of the importance of healthy eating and school meals, being personally interested meant they were more likely to translate that into action.

- *Positive outcomes from project*

Participants freely mentioned various positive outcomes that had arisen from taking part in the project.

Improved communication between the catering team and teaching staff was a common theme. One deputy head-teacher talked about how previously they had not had a lot to do with the catering team but "*the project had provided a meeting point*" (SS3). Similarly SS2 said how "*as a result of this project*" they were now *"communicating all the time"* with the catering team. Another school said *"the ball has started and this is something that needs to continue"* (PS1).

The issue of healthy eating and free school meals had been raised in many of the pilot schools. It has *"got people talking about food which they weren't before"* (SS3). One primary school talked about how it had opened them up to thinking how some children were not getting a decent meal (PS5). Only one school

thought the project had not affected their operations or attitudes –this was because they did not feel there was much that needed to be done (despite not having completed all the interventions).

As such the project had served, in the majority of schools, as a catalyst for action. All the schools were aware of healthy eating before but being recruited into the project ensured they did something about it.

6.3: Free school meal administration processes in school

In order for a school to know their uptake figures two key pieces of information are required; which pupils are entitled to a free school meal and how many are then eating that meal. During the project it became evident that how this data is collated varies significantly between primary and secondary schools.
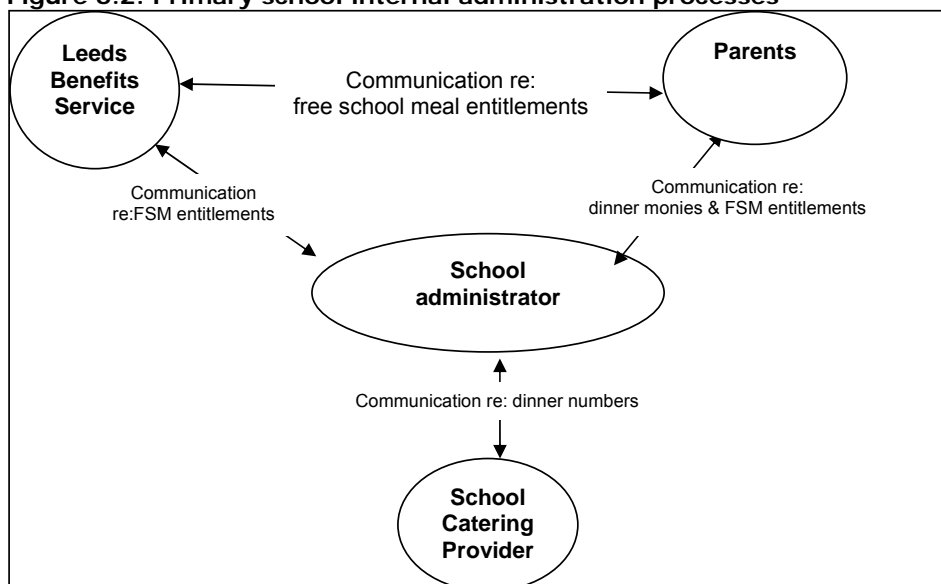
- ***Primary schools***

All the primary schools had one central administration contact. This person was sent the free school meal entitlement figures from Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service on a weekly basis. The administrator would check these for any changes (new pupils entitled or pupils no longer entitled) and communicate with Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service and parents as required. Critically they also collated which pupils were having a school lunch (free or paid) and who was bringing a packed lunch. They collected dinner monies from pupils or parents and informed the catering manager as to how many meals to cook on a daily basis.

This system means that there is one central contact in the school that should be aware of free school meal uptake levels. They are also able to know, on an individual basis, which pupils are entitled to a free school meal and whether or not they are taking them.

Such knowledge means administrators are able to communicate with parents about potential entitlement to free school meals or why their child may not be taking the meals they were entitled to. Having good personal skills was emphasised as critical - parents needed to feel comfortable discussing their personal circumstances. One administrator pointed out that it was personal contact that was important - not figures - *"it's names you need"*. The need to tailor their approach to different families was also emphasised as what might work with one individual could be seen as interfering by another. One potential barrier to this communication is the issue of language – in some schools there was a multitude of parental languages spoken limiting communication options for the administrator.

It was emphasised by all the administrators that this role was very time consuming. Time needed to be set aside each week in order to ensure the system ran smoothly. Having a manager who appreciated that was very important.

Figure 6.2: Primary school internal administration processes

▪ **Secondary schools**

In secondary schools the system operated differently. The administration contact still performed the same role as regards free school meal entitlement figures (provided by Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service). However, they did not collect school meal numbers. This is because pupils pay (either with cash or cashless cards) in the dining hall. As such there is no one person in the school who collects both entitlement figures and meal figures. Knowledge of uptake levels is therefore often lower than in primary schools.

This lack of knowledge frustrated one administration department in particular. Whilst they were able to personally contact each child added to the free school meal entitlement list they could not see how many pupils took their free meals or which pupils they were. They therefore found it difficult to target their interventions.

> *"We're interested in who are the children who are not taking their FSM. It's the named children that we would need in order to be able to do something about it, that's what we can get better with."* (administration manager, SS1)

In schools where there was more knowledge of uptake levels, two factors emerged as important. One was the relationship between the administrator and the catering department. In some schools there was close contact and as such some knowledge of who was / was not taking their school meal. In other schools this did not appear to take place – indeed in one the school office were not aware that the catering manager had left and been replaced by another. The second factor was how school meal numbers were collated. In schools with cashless systems a list of who had eaten that day could easily be generated. In cash based cafeterias however this was a more manual, time consuming task.

In secondary schools there was also less informal contact between the administration department and parents (as they don't drop their children off at

school). There was therefore less opportunity to discuss entitlements or build up a relationship. This administrative system is depicted in figure 6.x.

Figure 6.3: Secondary school internal administration processes
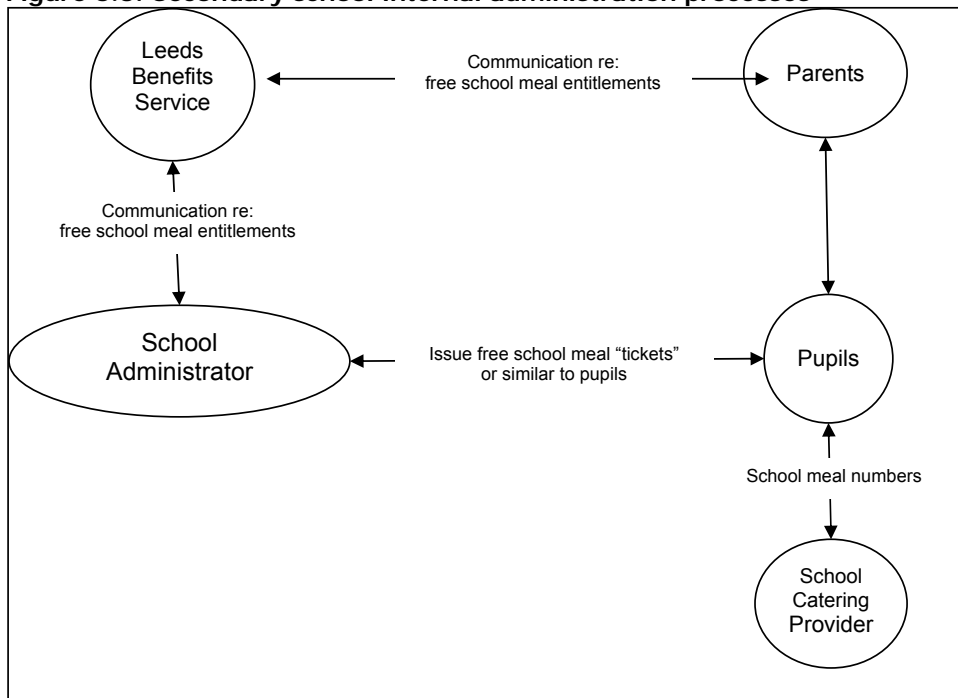
▪ **Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service**
A good relationship with Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service was evident amongst all the administrators. They were freely able to query the entitlement listings and liaise with them regarding potential claimants.

To conclude, being able to act on free school meal uptake requires information on both entitlement and meal uptake data. In primary schools the system of one central administrator aided being able to access this information – although it was not always necessarily passed on. In secondary schools the disparate system means information is not available in one place. Collating uptake data required extra work and communication between departments.

6.4: Obtaining a free school meal: processes and the possibility of stigma
The importance of claiming for free school meals being as inconspicuous as possible was discussed in the phase 1 report. This section will detail how pupils claim for their free meals within the pilot schools and where minimal visibility is threatened. It will also discuss the issue of stigma and whether the project teams feel it exists or not. Finally anti-bullying policies and initiatives will be examined.

▪ *Primary schools*
In all the primary pilot schools it was felt that, in the main, pupils were not aware of who received a free school meal. The critical factor in this anonymity was that no money (or free "tickets") exchanged hands within the dining hall. Instead parents handed dinner money into the school office (in three of the five cases). In one school dinner money boxes were positioned around the school. There was only one school where teachers asked pupils for money in front of others – meaning others could work out who was receiving a free meal. Subsequent to this

project the school were encouraging parents to pay at the office and asking teachers to be discreet when collecting any money. Also in this school a list was kept in the dining hall which pupils names were ticked off against. Against each name was an "F" for free or a "P" for paid. Dining hall staff had been instructed to keep this as discreet as possible.

- ***School Trips***

School trips had the potential to expose those receiving a free school meal. This was because the pupils claiming for free school meals were provided with a free packed lunch, sometimes in a distinctive brown bag. A number of schools highlighted this as a potential issue. Schools chose to deal with this in a number of different ways. One school asked pupils to bring in their own lunch bag; their free lunch was then placed within this. Another school brought some branded pack lunch boxes to make recipients less obvious. It was noted that one potential solution was to offer all pupils (paying and free) a school packed lunch. However schools felt that on special days (for example trips) those paying for their school lunch preferred to bring a packed lunch from home. One school acknowledged that this was potentially a vulnerable area but had not yet tackled it. This issue was raised principally by primary schools – only one secondary school mentioned it.

- ***Secondary schools – cash and cashless systems***

There was more variation within secondary schools as to how pupils claimed their free school meal. Some schools had cashless systems, whilst others were cash based.

Schools with a cash cafeteria used a variety of methods to identify pupils entitled to a free school meal and audit how many were taken. In SS4 a list of entitled pupils was kept at the till. Pupils would say their name (or the lady behind the till would know it) and this would get ticked off the list. One school (SS1) had noted that in their school this system maximised visibility, particularly in a loud dining room with unusual surnames as pupils may have to say their name a number of times. They had therefore changed their system to issuing pupils claiming free school meals with a photo-card. They showed this at the till (therefore not having to say their name) and their name was ticked off a list. In SS3 those entitled to a free school meal picked up a ticket at the school office. This was then handed in at the check-out – again this system made those obtaining their free school meal clearly visible as other pupils would pay with cash.

It was necessary to have a system whereby names were ticked off against a master list as otherwise it was felt that pupils could claim more than one lunch a day. Many schools reiterated that this was a common problem – pupils liked to *"try it on"*.

Cashless systems operated in two schools. In SS2 the system was poorly maintained and many pupils did not have their cards. Pupils instead said their card number which was then input by cashiers. Those new to the school (for example all year 7's) did not even have a number so they had to tell the cashiers whether or not they were entitled to a free school meal. The cashiers then had to decide whether or not they were telling the truth. Whose responsibility it was to maintain the system was unclear – the project lead felt it was not theirs and the catering manager had been unable to discover whose it was.

In the other cashless school (SS4) the system worked very well. The catering manager described it as *"brilliant"* saying it decreased queuing, meant those on free school meals could not be identified and provided her with much needed information. The only negative was that of lost cards – she recycled cards from

pupils who were leaving so the replacement fee of £2 could be waived. It was felt necessary to be flexible and allow pupils to use cash if they got to the end of the queue and did not have enough credit on their card to pay. This particular catering manager had previously worked in a cash cafeteria, she felt it was "not nice" that pupils receiving a free school meal were so easily identifiable.

One school currently operating a cash based system was planning to install a cashless system imminently. The main motivation was queuing speed but in addition it was felt it would provide more information on uptake, menu choices etc. Another cash based school were more sceptical about cashless systems worrying about lost cards and disliking the idea of using a biometric "fingerprint" system.

It is clear that all the cash based methods freely identify to others which pupils are claiming a free school meal. A cashless system, correctly maintained, results in far less visibility of those entitled to free school meals.

▪ *Is claiming for free schools meals stigmatised?*
The issue of stigma proved controversial with some pilot schools. All schools except one felt strongly that there was no stigma in their schools, they're "*not bothered, not bothered at all*" (SS4). It was felt by some that the project had focused too strongly on this particular aspect

> "*We don't think there is an issue in this school regarding free school meals, certainly in relation to stigma. We don't see that as being an issue at all.*" (project lead, SS5)

> "*It's not an issue here, most of them will tell you, I'm on free school meals*" (project lead, SS2)

One reason mentioned by all the schools was the fact that they had a high percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals *"it's not out of the norm"* (SS1). It was felt that in schools with a lower number of pupils entitled it may be more of an issue.

> "*The children who pay are the minority, they're the odd ones out it's not the free dinners that…. I've heard children say why do you pay, I don't pay*" (teacher, PS2)

In primary schools it was felt that stigma was not an issue as entitlement was not visible. Similarly in SS4 where a cashless system operated successfully, *"if they choose to keep it a secret then they can, some kids are happy to say, some aren't".*

The belief that there was no stigma attached to claiming for free school meals was often justified by saying that some pupils would try and claim dishonestly for them *"people actually lie to pretend they are on free school meals"* (SS2). Many also talked about how no bullying incidents had ever come to their attention; *"I don't ever remember dealing with an issue in terms of a pupil who was getting stick for being a free school meal kid"* (project lead, SS5).

One primary school was the exception to this. They had conducted a pupil questionnaire asking whether "any unkind comments" had been made to them for any reason. Various potential reasons were cited including claiming for free school meals. Whilst body size and not being good at sport had been the most prevalent reasons for name calling, claiming for free school meals had featured for several

children. This has surprised the project team and inspired them to act on making claiming less conspicuous. They recommended other schools should do the same;

> *"I'd ask them to find out whether there was any, not bullying, but whether there was an issue with comments being made because I think a lot of schools make the assumption that there isn't , because I thought, no there won't be, but I was wrong. So I'd find out."* (project lead, PS1)

- ▪ *Anti-bullying policies and initiatives*

Some schools had amended their anti-bullying policies to include a reference to affluence or claiming for free school meals as a potential reason for bullying. Most felt this just "ticked a box" as what really mattered was how each incident was dealt with, rather than the reason for it. Other schools had not changed their policies – either because it did not focus on individual reasons or because they did not feel it was an issue that needed addressing. All schools emphasised that bullying was taken seriously and systems were in place to minimise it. One school cited a pupil led group that others could access with any personal problems. This was in addition to being able to access pastoral care via their heads of year.

6.5: Parent targeting interventions

This section describes the project teams' perceptions of the parental interventions trialled in their schools. Participants were asked what they did to target parents, whether they felt it worked or not and how it could potentially be improved.

Other relevant sections in this report are section 3, where the interventions are described in more detail and section 5 where parental questionnaire results are presented – this includes their awareness of the various interventions.

- ▪ *Postcards (see example in appendices 2.8 and 2.9)*

All schools utilised the postcards. Primary schools sent them directly to parents. Secondary school used them in more varied ways; they were handed out at parents' evenings, sent out with prospectuses, sent to parents with an accompanying letter, given to pupils at / after assemblies or left around school for pupils to pick up.

Primary schools reported limited feedback from parents. Two secondary schools reported subsequent queries from pupils or parents. Most schools were fairly neutral about the postcards. One school felt positively about them, saying they preferred them to flyers or letters although they would have preferred them to feature their actual food. Another school was more negative saying they felt the photography quality was poor. This same school reported many pupils throwing them away – in contrast to another school that reported hardly any doing this.

- ▪ *Letters (see example in appendices 2.10 and 2.11)*

All schools reported sending the parental letter out. Most sent it out to all parents but some of the secondary schools sent it out to only certain year groups.

Similar to the postcard, parental feedback was limited. One school however reported an almost immediate query from a parent. One school with a high percentage of non-English speaking parents raised the issue of language – the letter was only produced in English.

- ▪ *A targeted letter (see example in appendix 2.12)*

Letters targeting just those parents entitled to free schools meals had some success. On their own initiative PS4 sent a letter to parents whose children were entitled to free school meals but brought a packed lunch. This asked parents to respond as to whether they wanted their child to try free school meals for a week.

If they did not want to take up the offer they were asked why. A number of pupils subsequently tried having a school meal – others were not prepared to change from a packed lunch.

This approach was then tried in three more schools (two primary, one secondary). The principle message of the letter was how much a years free school meals was worth monetarily; *"Save more than £330 a year!"* A positive message about the school meal service was also included that had been taken from the results of their pupil questionnaire, for example; "*In a recent survey, half the pupils said the food was "delicious" or "good" and that there was lots of choice".* The school menu was printed onto the back. Again results were encouraging. PS3, against expectations, received six parental queries whilst PS1 also received a number of enquiries. The secondary school results were not received by the end of the project.

One secondary school (SS1) amended how they communicated with those entitled to free school meals. Previously they had written to parents if their entitlement stopped. They changed this to regular termly letters to entitled parents reminding them of their entitlement and emphasising the importance of a healthy nutritional meal.

- **Texts**

Some of the secondary schools had the facility to send text messages to parents. This tended to be used to remind parents about forthcoming events or chase up absenteeism. SS5 texted parents entitled to free school meals using a similar message to the postcards. Two other secondary schools had this facility and would consider using it for this purpose – others did not have this option. Texting was seen as a very immediate way of communicating with parents and could be used, for example, if a pupil had not taken a meal on a particular day.

- **Demonstrating the school meal offering to parents**

The majority of project teams felt parents had misconceptions about school meals "*they don't know how good the food is now*" (SS1). It was felt this stemmed from their own experience of school food "*they may think it is like it was when they were kids*" (PS3) or from their children misinforming them *"it's not like what Johnny says*" (PS4). Giving them a chance to try the food was therefore seen as particularly important.

Inviting parents in for a meal was tried by two primary schools. In one school (PS1) between ten and fifteen parents attended. The school council had then used a questionnaire to see what they thought of the school meals offered. In another school parents were invited but had not attended – it was not known why this was. Two other schools were keen to try this approach in the future, although one was concerned that they would be overrun by parents!

Three secondary schools and one primary school provided food (either for free or it could be bought) at events that parents came to. Generally this was at parents' evenings or during prospective / new intake evenings. The project teams felt this had gone very well "*it was lovely*" (SS2) and were planning to repeat the exercise. Information about free school meals was handed out at the same time, in some schools using the postcards.

One constraint to this opportunity is that of the catering team's contracted hours. In one school this had prevented them being able to cook the food – the schools had provided information and menus instead. In other schools the catering team had done it but it was acknowledged that it was a long day for them and that it had been done as a favour.

- ***Other parent targeted interventions***

Providing parents with menu information was perceived positively. In one primary school large menu boards had been positioned where parents could see them when they were dropping off their children. Another planned to do this in the near future. Sending menus out to parents was also seen as a potentially useful strategy.

Secondary schools were more likely to discuss using their websites and / or newsletters to communicate with parents. A couple of schools had done this - others were willing but had not yet executed it.

A further method discussed was that of using learning mentors or parent support workers. Their remit is to work closely with parents and their children in regard to their social needs. It was therefore felt appropriate that these staff members should be provided with information and / or training regarding free school meals so any potential entitlements could be picked up.

A suggestion from one primary school was that Education Leeds should write directly to parents who were entitled in order to encourage them to take up their free school meal option. It was felt this would free up school administration time.

- ***General points***

A number of general themes emerged in regard to parental communication about free school meals.

The importance of personal contact with parents was emphasised by a couple of schools. It was felt this was preferable to, for example, texting. One feature of personal contact is that you could adjust the tone of your communication to who you were speaking to and receive immediate feedback.

One limitation was the issue of language - this was mentioned by all the schools with a high percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities. Translation services were not used; instead they relied on pupils translating, some language skills amongst their staff and basic sign language. It was recognised that this was often inadequate.

Some schools did not feel comfortable being "too pushy". They felt that meal choice was the parent's decision and that all they could do was make them aware of their potential entitlement and what was offered;

> *"you can't force them, make them aware of the options, give them the chance to experience it and that's all you can do" (project lead, PS4).*

It was felt by these schools that there were a hard core of parents who did not want their children to have a school lunch and there was little the school could do to affect this.

One school felt that the most motivational message for parents was that of how much money they would save - rather than emphasising the meal offering *"whether they served peas or carrots"* (SS1).

Other schools emphasised that in most cases, the lunch decision rested with the pupils. The quality of the meal and whether the pupils wanted to eat it was therefore the critical factor.

6.6: Pupil targeted interventions

This section will discuss the project teams' perceptions of the pupil facing interventions. First, those aimed specifically to increase the uptake of free school meals are discussed. Following that, interventions that aim to improve school meals in general are covered.

Other relevant sections of this report include section 3 where the interventions are described. Also, results of pupil questionnaires are given in section 5.

- *Assemblies*

Assemblies relating to school meals were held in all pilot primary schools. The aim of these was to attempt to de-stigmatise poverty and the claiming of free school meals. PS1 used the material provided and built it into forthcoming rotas. For their younger children they had changed the format and read them a story relating to school meals. PS5 had researched the history of school meals and discovered local stories of interest. Children had held up placards illustrating key historical landmarks.

Four secondary schools held assemblies. There was much variation of subject matter. SS3 had done individual year assemblies focusing on the history of school meals – the pupils had re-enacted the various eras and dressed up accordingly. SS4 had also done individual year assemblies focusing on their new lunch-time policy of closed gates (see below) and their school meal provision. SS1 had presented to one year group on what was / was not allowed to be eaten in school, using the School Food Trust presentation. Finally SS5 had focused on the benefits of school meals. The assembly was not held in one secondary school as their schedules are decided a year in advance.

All the assemblies had focused on schools meals in general. They had then brought up the fact that some pupils may be entitled to receive them for free. The project teams were generally positive about them – particularly those who had used more interactive formats.

- *Lessons*

All primary schools included the topic of school meals into their curriculum during the intervention period. It varied where this was positioned; ranging from a healthy eating lesson, science, Design Technology, PHSE and in one school it had been incorporated into their Victorian era topic (this focused on why free school meals were necessary).

All but one secondary school included lessons on school meals into their curriculum. SS3 had included different spots about school meals (and them being available for free) within existing lessons e.g. policy studies. See appendix 2.5. They felt that if they were provided with material they could hold regular 10 minute slots about food and school meals within their curriculum. SS1 had followed the assembly with a PHSE lesson on school meals. They had decided not to hold a debate (as suggested) as their students were not used to this style of lesson. The teacher concerned felt the pupils had responded well and maturely. She felt it was a good topic to cover with all year groups. Another school (SS2) had run the lessons but did not like being given an overly structured lesson plan.

What emerged from these discussions was that the teachers were willing to teach this topic. Some preferred to do this within PHSE or Food Technology whilst others were willing to absorb it within a wide variety of lessons and formats. Creative ways of presenting the topic were evident. Being provided with materials was popular with some, but others preferred to be given pointers so they could develop their own material.

- *Posters (see appendices 2.5 to 2.7) / displays*

All schools used the posters provided. Feedback was limited but where available, positive. Some schools were planning to further enhance their displays. Two secondary schools were using posters provided by their provider, showing what was available for £1.80. Another had, following feedback from their pupil council, developed a "meal of the day" board positioned by the queue. Another will soon have LED and digital displays showing the meal of the day. One primary school with a high percentage of non-English speaking pupils was planning to photograph food to display on their menu board so those unable to read could make their choice before arriving at the counter.

- *Other free school meal pupil interventions*

"School Dinner Inspectors" were recruited from pupils in one primary school (PS5). Their role was to eat a school meal every day and provide feedback to the school and the catering team. This was done across year groups. Pupils asked to take part were those entitled to free school meals but bringing a packed lunch. The project lead felt this had been a great success; pupils had enjoyed taking part, they'd provided useful feedback (leading to at least one change) and three out of the ten had switched to school meals.

Next, pupil facing interventions designed to increase school meal uptake in general (rather than just free school meals) are discussed.

- *Dining room improvements*

Improvements to dining rooms had been made in a number of schools. This included installing a big screen (SS4), installing a music system (PS5), re-decorating (SS4), general improvements such as buying tablecloths, cupboards and trolleys (PS3) painting a mural, buying curtains, installing a music system and putting up healthy eating posters (PS1). The latter dining room was now described as *"lovely, much brighter"*.

- *Seating*

Seating arrangements had been altered in two primary schools (PS1 & 2). Rather than making pupils having packed lunches and those having school meals sit apart, they were now able to sit together. There were some concerns about this in one school as it was felt noise had increased and pupils were wandering about more. However, it was felt that this was the minority. One school (PS5) still had separate seating arrangements but they were considering how to change this whilst still keeping the reception pupils safe from the older children.

- *Changing food served*

Pasta King had been installed in SS4. It was felt that this had been a very positive development. In another school (SS3) it was felt the food has improved since their staff had attended a training course. Their sandwiches were now said to be *"as good as what you'd buy in a shop"*.

- *Meal Deals*

The number of secondary schools now offering meal deals had increased. In SS4 pupils could buy a Pasta King meal deal for the free school meal allowance; this included a tub of Pasta King, water or fruit juice, a slice of cake and a yoghurt or piece of fruit. They also offered three sandwich meal deals – standard, premium and deluxe; including a sandwich, drink, biscuit and yoghurt. The more expensive options had more premium bread whilst the standard option was the same price as the free school meal allowance. All these were felt to be very good value and were proving very popular. SS3 offered a similar sandwich deal whilst SS2 had offered a grab bag trial.

▪ *Closed gate policy*

A major change in one school (SS4) was that the younger pupils (from year 7 – 9) were no longer allowed off site at lunch-time. This was implemented largely because of concerns about the impact of large numbers of pupils off premises and safety issues. There had been concerns that pupils would react negatively to this change but they had been very accepting *"they've not murmured".* The impact on school meal uptake was felt to be considerable.

Another secondary school was considering tightening their lunch-time policy as a large number of pupils tended to leave at lunch-time with parental notes. All the other schools did not allow pupils off site at lunch-time.

▪ *Pupil feedback*

In section 6.1 it was stated that levels of pupil involvement in the working party was low. However, there was evidence of pupils being involved in some interventions and effecting change.

The School Dinner Inspectors have been mentioned above. They were instrumental in pointing out that pupils felt rushed when making their choices so younger pupils were now accompanied by teaching assistants and helped with their meal selection. Catering staff had also been briefed to not rush them where possible. In the same school the council had been involved in ordering dining room resources to change the look of school lunch. PS1 used pupils to survey visiting parents. PS4 pointed out that their pupils were *"very communicative"* and fedback regularly on the choices available.

School councils were regularly mentioned in secondary schools. Two said that school meals were regularly discussed in that forum – in SS3 this had led to improved signage and more chairs in the dining hall. SS4 had a school council but were concerned as to how representative its members were they were therefore considering using on-line feedback as well. SS5 have a school council but school meals had never been raised as an issue.

Two schools (PS4 and SS4) felt inhibited asking pupils for feedback on the food offering. They explained that because they were provided with set menus to meet the nutritional guidelines they could not respond to pupil requests. They felt the result of this was serving food that pupils did not like. PS5 also mentioned this as an issue but said they were able to change their menu if they contacted their head office and received confirmation that the proposed changes still met the nutritional standards.

▪ *Other interventions*

Captain's (or Golden) Tables had been installed in two primary schools (PS1 & 3). Pupils who had behaved particularly well were allowed to sit on these tables as a special treat. They featured table-cloths, flowers and sometimes the head-teacher ate with them. Both schools said how much the children loved the special tables and aspired to sit on them. They felt it was a good opportunity to get pupils who normally ate a packed lunch to try a school lunch.

Health events had been planned in two schools (PS3 & SS2). PS1 allowed pupils to eat outside on particular days and PS5 had started a system of teaching assistants queuing with pupils to help them make their choices.

The use of websites to publish menus was evident in a number of the secondary schools. One secondary school was also contacting newly entitled pupils to explain how the system worked.

▪ *Recommendations*
The project teams were asked which interventions they would most strongly recommend to other schools. These were:

Parent facing:
- o Sending menus to parents
- o Inviting parents in more often
- o A prominent board showing how to claim free school meals
- o Writing to parents whose children were entitled but not taking a free school meal

Engaging pupils:
- o Holding a pupil questionnaire to find out whether unkind comments are made about having a free school meal
- o School Dinner Inspectors
- o A structure whereby pupils can express their opinion
- o Engaging pupils with a questionnaire

Whole school approach:
- o Interventions need to be made across the whole school as part of PHSE. Need to be wider than just one lesson / assembly.
- o Need to promote catering throughout the whole school – for example having visits to the kitchen and within cooking lessons
- o Fun quizzes about food that can be slotted into lessons

Improved information:
- o There is a need to be able to identify those pupils not having their free school meals

6.7: Factors affecting uptake of free school meals
This section briefly notes what the project teams felt the main factors affecting the uptake of free school meals were. For more detail on this topic please see the phase 1 report where this subject is explored in more detail and using a wider variety of perspectives (pupils, parents, catering managers, teachers etc.).

▪ *Factors affecting the uptake of <u>free</u> school meals specifically*
Parents being unable or unwilling to follow the claiming process was a common theme. This could be because their lives were *"too chaotic",* they couldn't read or they were *"outside the system"* in some way. One example cited was a father being "*on the run*". It was also noted that some parents were put off by bureaucracy or form filling. Being unable to speak English was seen as a particular barrier – as the majority of benefits communication was in English. It was noted that having benefits stopped was "*mortifying*" for parents.

The ease of claiming for free school meals was discussed. In Leeds parents who claim housing benefit are automatically given their entitlement to free school meals from the Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service. This was seen as a sensible and easy method of claiming. For those not claiming housing benefit (for example parents living with their own parents) it was less straight-forward. Some schools felt claiming was perceived to be more difficult than it actually was – showing them how to do it helped as did using Parent Support Workers or referring them to one-stop shops.

Schools were unclear whether there was a link between free school meal entitlement and poor attendance but felt this was an area that could be explored.

Finally, the lack of information on who was or was not taking up their entitlement served as a barrier in some secondary schools.

▪ *Should everyone get a free school meal?*
The cost of schools meals was emphasised by a number of schools. Due to the school selection procedure (see section 2.1) all were situated in deprived areas of Leeds. As such, even those families "not poor enough" to claim their meals for free tended to be struggling financially – this was often evident to the administrators in primary schools who collected dinner money and chased arrears. There seemed little to separate these families from those able to claim their meals for free. The cost of school meals, especially if they had 2 or 3 children was therefore seen as prohibitive. It was emphasised that it was not that the meals were not good value – it was simply that they could not afford them, *"if they have two children it's £16/17 – that's a lot of money to pay out. It's a big chunk out of your wages"*. (PS4)

The issue of universal entitlement to free school meals was raised by a number of participating schools (both primary and secondary). It was felt that this would be both easier to administer and morally justifiable. One school passionately felt that they should *"just give kids food"* (SS2). In schools with particularly high entitlement figures this was felt to be a sensible way of proceeding.

▪ *Factors affecting the uptake of all school meals*

Food taste and cultural appropriateness
Pupils being *"finicky eaters"* and unwilling to try new food featured strongly. In particular it was noted that unfamiliar food that *"doesn't look like it does at home"* was off-putting. It was pointed out that children were often unwilling to eat a *"proper dinner"* and preferred sandwiches or their own choice of food. The new standards were seen as constrictive by some who felt unable to cook the food that pupils liked. They also stated that there was still a strong demand for banned items. It was noted however that pupils who had been exposed to the new standards for longer tended to be more willing to try and eat the school meals served. One secondary school (SS3) had attempted to get pupils to try new foods by offering them trial sizes – their once unpopular fish pie was now a favourite! Pasta King was also popular – perhaps because of its "convenience style" packaging. Misperceptions over the quality of food however were still felt to be prevalent amongst parents.

A lack of food choice, particularly by the end of service featured strongly. In one school it was the *"biggest source of complaints"* (SS3). This was attributed to drives to reduce wastage.

Confusing food choices also emerged. In one primary school pupils not on a halal diet were not allowed the halal option. This caused great confusion and upset amongst the younger pupils;

> *"For a very young child it's very difficult to understand that – so if there's pizza or meatballs – I can't have the pizza because that's for the vegetarian children or the halal children. So they can't have whatever they like, they have to have the category that they fall into."* (PS2)

Meal deals (in secondary schools) were appraised positively – partly because they were good value but also because they were easy to understand for the pupils.

The issue of limited budgets featured. In one school they still had to serve an unpopular rice pudding because they could not afford other "milk-based" pudding

alternatives. Other issues included the fact that portion sizes were too small and that meals needed to be hotter.

In one school an issue over a Muslim pupil being mistakenly given non-halal food had created bad feeling and distrust. It was felt the situation had arisen due to staff not being adequately briefed (what was thought to be a cheese roll was in fact sausage).

The school meal experience
Long queues, overly small dining rooms and short lunch breaks dominated this discussion. The situation was particularly acute in secondary schools; one described their lunch-break as *"an absolute stampede."*

Queuing was said to be the *"major"* or "*real*" problem in four out of the five secondary schools. This was the *"main thing that pupils moan about"*. Exacerbating this is short lunch-times – for some this was only 30 minutes. Two schools had recently shortened their lunch-break because of "time-tabling". In general there were too few seats to allow pupils to sit down. A number of secondary schools commented that the pupils wanted to socialise over lunch but were unable to because of the inadequate facilities.

In primary schools this issue was discussed less - although it was felt that pupils could feel rushed and the dining rooms were both noisy and quite physical. One primary school noted that the pupils liked having an adult to sit with when they ate their dinner – they tended to take longer but eat better (PS4).

Letting pupils out at lunch-time negatively affected school meal uptake. The school that had changed this policy now had higher uptake – albeit this had impacted on queuing time and seating availability.

- ***Interaction between free school meal and school meal uptake***
Focusing just on those factors affecting free school meals was felt to be both difficult to do and limiting. This was because many of the factors affecting uptake impacted on both free and paid alike (for example queuing or food quality).

Many schools were adamant that the two issues were inevitably linked; *"It's all about the food, you can't separate school meals and free school meals"* (SS1). Similarly SS3 stated; *"The most important thing is the quality of food and the surroundings. … You can't increase free school meal uptake on its own."* SS4 pointed out how closely the data on paid and free uptake reflected each other.

Efforts to ensure parents and pupils were aware of their entitlement and that pupils were not stigmatised were seen as worthwhile. However the impact of this was seen to be limited if other issues within the school meal service were not addressed.

Conclusion
Project teams worked across departments and were well represented although pupil involvement was low. Having a senior staff member on-board was important. Team dynamics varied but an inclusive ethos tended to be associated with operating more effectively across departments. Being willing to reflect on current processes and change them if necessary was also important. Project leads (often Healthy School Co-ordinators) generally had multiple roles to fulfil and often lacked the time to drive initiatives forward. Positive project outcomes included improved communication between departments and healthy eating now having a higher profile.

Taking a free school meal was far less visible in primary schools than secondary (with the exception of school trips). In secondary schools with cash cafeterias having a free school meal was visible to both staff and other pupils. Well maintained cashless systems offer the opportunity for minimum visibility. Stigma was not seen as an issue – either because pupils could not be identified or because it was seen as normal, considering the majority of pupils were entitled. Conducting a pupil questionnaire asking about name calling was shown to raise the issue of stigma in one school and had encouraged them to take action.

It was not possible to assess the effectiveness of individual communication devices to parents. Targeted communication emphasising the value of a free school meal appeared to have an impact on encouraging trial of school meals. Providing standard templates was clearly helpful but allowing some personalisation was seen as desirable. Demonstrating school meals to parents in order to overcome possible misconceptions was seen as important.

A wide variety of pupil targeted interventions were trialled. The topic of school meals was incorporated into assemblies and the curriculum. Many schools found creative ways to do this. Focusing on school meals in general and then mentioning the availability of free school meals was the most common approach. Focusing too strongly on free school meals was seen as undesirable; partly as it was felt it could exacerbate any issues and partly because factors affecting uptake were the same for both free and paid school meals. Other popular interventions included meal deals, dining room improvements and "Captain's Tables". School councils existed but utilising them to make effective changes was not always maximised. Some schools were unwilling to ask pupils for feedback on the food due to the perceived rigidity of the new standards.

Factors affecting uptake were discussed. Those specific to free school meals included parents being unable or unwilling to deal with the bureaucracy involved – although it was felt the system in Leeds was straightforward for the majority. Some schools felt strongly that all pupils should get a free school meal. The most dominant factors affecting uptake however were common to pupils whether or not they were receiving their meals for free or paying for them. In primary schools this often related to food choices. In secondary it was the, often anti-social, lunch-time experience – most importantly the issue of long queues and short lunch-breaks.

Section 7: The Introduction of a Cashless System in a Secondary School

This section presents the findings in one secondary school (SS6) from the evaluation of the installation of a cashless system, and the effect of this in isolation of any other interventions. First the results of the pupil questionnaires are presented and then the findings from focus groups held with pupils who were registered for free school meals. The questionnaires and focus groups were held 2 months after the introduction of the cashless system and then at the end of the first school year of implementation (11 months post introduction). Parent involvement is then briefly discussed.

7.1 Pupil Questionnaire

Demographic Data
In November 2007, 2 months after the introduction of a cashless payment system in the school 75 year 8 pupils completed a questionnaire aimed at assessing their views of the new payment system. In July 2008, the same pupils were resurveyed, with 62 year 8 pupils completing the questionnaire. Whilst allowing for some pupils movements these should, by and large be the same pupils.

- ▪ *By Gender*
2 months post introduction there were 34 female responses and 32 male (9 missing)
11 months post- introduction there were 36 female responses and 25 male (1 missing)

- ▪ *By Ethnicity*
Table 7.1 below indicates the children's ethnicity by category as given on the questionnaire.

Table 7.1 Ethnicity of Pupils

Ethnic Origin	2 months post-introduction (n=75)		11 months post-introduction (n=62)	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
White British	56	74.7	56	90.3
White Irish	2	2.7	0	0
White Black Caribbean	3	4.0	0	0
Asian British Indian	0	0	1	1.6
Asian British Pakistani	1	1.3	1	1.6
Asian British Bangladeshi	0	0	1	1.6
Black British Caribbean	1	1.3	1	1.6
Chinese	0	0	1	1.6
Any other	1	1.3	0	0
Total	64	85.3	61	98.4
Missing answer	11	14..7	1	1.6

- ***By Free School Meal Status***

Table 7.2: Free school meal entitlement

2 months post-introduction			11 months post-introduction		
Entitled to FSM	**Not entitled**	**Not known***	**Entitled to FSM**	**Not entitled**	**Not known***
14 (19%)	46 (61%)	15 (20%)	13 (21%)	47 (76%)	2 (3%)

*Did not indicate if they were entitled to FSM

Question1-5: What do you do for your lunch at school?

Table 7.3 Pupil responses to each question about lunchtime

	2 months post-introduction	11 months post-introduction
Lunch time action	**Number of pupils N=75**	**Number of pupils N=62**
Buys school lunch	73	62
Brings packed lunch	72	62
Goes out of school for lunch	73	59
Goes home for lunch	72	58
Has nothing for lunch	71	62

The number of FSM registered pupils who reported to never bring a packed lunch 2 months post introduction was 62% and 11 months post introduction 69%.

Question 6: If you do anything else for lunch at school please comment below. Responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11 months post introduction)
Eat at break (6, 2) Buy food at the shop (2, 1) Eat in the covered area or hall (6, 0) Don't have lunch (2 -11 months post introduction,) don't eat at school (2 - 11 months post introduction) bring sweets (1 – 11 months post introduction)

Question 7: What do you think of the school meal service at your school in general? Results are shown in Table 7.4

Table 7.4: Whether pupils liked the school dinners served at their school. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	**Paying (%)**	**Free (%)**	**Paying (%)**
I like them a lot	15.4	18.4	18.2	0
I quite like them	61.5	47.4	45.5	48.8
I don't like them very much	23.1	26.3	27.3	31.7
I don't like them at all	0	7.9	9.1	19.5

The majority of the pupils whether FSM registered or pupils who paid for their lunch, commented that they liked a lot /quite liked their school meals. However,

the number of pupils stating not liking them very much or not at all rose in both groups 11 months post introduction of the cashless system.

The Cashless System

Question 18: The queues are shorter at the till?
Results are shown in Table 7.5

Table 7.5: Whether pupils think that the queues are shorter at the till. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	Paying (%)	Free (%)	Paying (%)
Agree	7.1	2.2	0	21.3
Not sure	21.4	30.4	15.4	21.3
Disagree	71.4	67.4	84.6	57.4

2 months post introduction of the cashless system the majority of pupils disagreed that the queues at the till had become shorter, with more of the FSM registered pupils stating so than pupils who paid for their lunch. 11 months post introduction there was a further increase with disagreeing that queues were shorter and the highest increase in those disagreeing was seen amongst FSM registered pupils.

Can you please give us more information about your answer? The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
Longer queues (36,39) People push in the line (8,0) System breaks (11,3) Don't buy food (12) Queues aren't as long (1,0) Not a lot of difference (0,4) Bit faster and easier (0,4) Takes to long (0,2)

Question 19: It is easier to pay for my food. Results are shown in Table 7.6

Table 7.6: Whether pupils think that it is easier to pay for food. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	Paying (%)	Free (%)	Paying (%)
Agree	42.9	40.9	66.7	40.4
Not sure	14.3	22.7	0	23.4
Disagree	42.9	36.4	33.3	36.2

For the FSM registered pupils the figures show that more pupils agreed that at 11 months post introduction stage it was easier to pay for their food. The increase seems to have been accounted for by the shift in those who initially responded as not sure. There was an overall increase of 24% for FSM registered pupils whilst for paying pupils there was little change in opinion from 2 months post introduction to the 11 months post intervention stage.

Reasons to explain the above responses of whether it is easier to pay for food. The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)

Can't lose dinner money (**10, 22)** System breaks (**20, 19)** New system is good (**3, 0)** Don't know how much money I am spending (**2, 0)** Slow service(**1, 0)**

Queues (**3**, **3)** crowded (**0**, **2)** Rather use money(**5**, **0)** Faster service(**1**, **0)**
Doesn't help(**1**, **0)** Can forget to pay (**1**, **0)** safer(**4**, **0)**

Question 20: It is easier to choose my food. Results are shown in Table 7.1.7

Table 7.7: Whether pupils think that it is easier to choose their food. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	**Paying (%)**	**Free (%)**	**Paying (%)**
Agree	25.0	19.6	23.1	19.1
Not sure	41.7	54.3	23.1	57.4
Disagree	33.3	26.1	53.8	23.4

Overall there was less than ¼ of pupils that agreed that it was easier to choose their food at 2 and 11 months post introduction of the cashless system. There were more FSM registered pupils disagreeing that it is easier to choose their food than paying pupils at both time points. Amongst the FSM registered pupils there was an increase of 21% disagreeing with the statement between 2 and 11 months introduction period and a reduction in those not sure of 18.6%.

Further reasons to explain the above responses of whether it is easier to choose their food. The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
No information (8,0), Not displayed well (6,18) Only one meal of the day (1,0),
Don't know prices (2,2), No food left (1,2), Same food (5,5), People push in (1,1)
Dinner ladies tell you (0,1) tells you how much money you have (1,0)

Question 21: It is quicker to choose my food Results are shown in Table 7.8

Table 7.1.8: Whether pupils think that it is quicker to choose their food. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	**Paying (%)**	**Free (%)**	**Paying (%)**
Agree	**15.4**	**15.2**	**23.1**	**17.0**
Not sure	**46.2**	**50.0**	**15.4**	**44.7**
Disagree	**38.5**	**34.8**	**61.5**	**38.3**

Whilst the answers from the pupils who paid for their lunch were similar at 2 and 11 months post-introduction, the figures for those pupils who were FSM registered showed a large difference between the two time points, particularly for those stating 'not sure' decreasing by 30.8%, and an increase in those disagreeing of 23%.

Further comments to explain the above responses of whether it is quicker to choose their food. The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
It depends (1, 0) Crowded areas (1,0) system breaks (1,2) have to check balance (0,1) higher cost (0,1) may have allergies (0,2) pushing (0,3) cannot see choices (1,2)

Question 22: I now buy a school meal more often than before. Results are shown in Table 7.9

Table 7.9: Whether pupils buy a school meal more often than before. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	Paying (%)	Free (%)	Paying (%)
Agree	14.3	19.6	30.8	17.0
Not sure	21.4	13.0	23.1	12.8
Disagree	64.3	67.4	46.2	70.2

Whilst the answers from the pupils who paid for their lunch were similar at 2 months and 11 months post introduction of the cashless system, the FSM registered pupils showed a large difference, particularly for those agreeing increasing by 16.5%, and an decrease in those disagreeing of 18.1%,

Further comments to explain the above responses of whether they bought a school meal more often than before. The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
Further comments included long queues (3, 0) Not enough food (3, 0) Not a lot of choice (0, 4) Dislike the food (0,7)

Question 23: You cannot tell who has free school meals. Results are shown in Table 7.10

Table 7.10: Whether pupils think that you cannot tell who has free school meals. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	Paying (%)	Free (%)	Paying (%)
Agree	46.2	41.3	46.2	76.6
Not sure	38.5	39.1	23.1	14.9
Disagree	15.4	19.6	30.8	8.5

The largest change at 2 months and 11 months post introduction of the cashless system was for the pupils who paid for their lunch with an increase in those agreeing of 35 % and for those stating not sure decreasing by 24.2%. There was no difference in the FSM registered pupils agreeing with the statement however at 11 months those not sure had decreased and those disagreeing had doubled implying that despite the cashless system FSM recipients could still be identified.

Further comments to explain the above responses of whether pupils think that you cannot tell who has free school meals. The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
Its unfair (5,0) Still have passes (4,0) Dinner ladies get it wrong (1,0) People rub it in (0,1) Read the machine (0,1)

Question 24: I now spend more money on school meals
Results are shown in Table 7.11

Table 7.11: Whether pupils now spend more money on school meals. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	Paying (%)	Free (%)	Paying (%)
Agree	21.4	32.6	46.2	46.8
Not sure	7.1	15.2	0	8.5
Disagree	71.4	52.2	53.8	44.7

Both groups of pupils stated that they spent more money on school meals since the introduction of the cashless payment system. For those pupils who were FSM registered this was a 25% increase.

Further comments to explain the above responses of whether pupils spend more money on school meals since the introduction of the cashless system. The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
I put more money on my account (1,0) Yes because they are healthy (1,0) No because prices are higher (25,23)

Question 25: The lunchtime is now much better organised
Results are shown in Table 7.12

Table 7.12: Whether pupils think that the lunchtime is now much better organised. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	Paying (%)	Free (%)	Paying (%)
Agree	15.4	23.9	7.7	21.3
Not sure	23.1	28.3	30.8	29.8
Disagree	61.5	47.8	61.5	48.9

The figures remained the same for the number of all pupils who did not feel that the lunchtime was better organised at 2 months and 11 months post introduction of the cashless system. The largest change was amongst those pupils who are FSM registered with more of them being 'unsure' and fewer agreeing with the statement at 11 months compared to at 2 months following the introduction.

Further comments to explain the above responses of whether pupils think that the lunchtime is now much better organised since the introduction of the cashless system. The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
Its more hectic (17,0) Its easier (5,0) Easier for people to push in (1,0) Negative comments relating to system (6,1) Its quicker (0,4) No Food left (0,1) big queues (0,8) Not enough teachers (0,1) Worse when system fails (0,20)

Question 26: I understand how the cashless system works. Results are shown in Table 7.13

Table 7.13: Whether pupils understand how the cashless system works. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction		11 months post introduction	
	Free (%)	Paying (%)	Free (%)	Paying (%)
Agree	78.6	66.7	76.9	89.1
Not sure	7.1	22.2	15.4	6.5
Disagree	14.3	11.1	7.7	4.3

Over 2/3 of all pupils declared an understanding of the cashless system at 2 months post introduction of the cashless system however, more of the FSM pupils disagreed with this statement. At 11 months more FSM registered pupils stated that they were 'not sure' or disagreed with this statement compared to paying pupils.

Further comments to explain the above responses of whether pupils understand how the cashless system works. The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
Its rubbish (6,0) They don't work (5,0) They should have asked before doing it (1,0) always breaks down (0,3) Nobody told us (0,2) Its easy (0,16)

Question 27: The new cashless system has really improved our school meal times. Results are shown in Table 7.14

Table 7.14: Whether pupils think that the new cashless system has really improved their school meal times. All pupils by FSM status.

	2 months post introduction (%)		11 months post introduction (%)	
	Free (%)	Paying (%)	Free (%)	Paying (%)
Agree	28.6	15.6	15.4	28.3
Not sure	28.6	40.0	38.5	28.3
Disagree	42.9	44.4	46.2	43.5

The answers given to this question showed that more of the pupils who are FSM registered did not feel that the system had improved the meal times with more of them being unsure at 11 months post-introduction. Amongst those who paid more of them felt things had improved after the introduction.

Further comments to explain the above responses of whether pupils think that the new cashless system has really improved their school meal times. The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
It takes longer to pay (19, 11), its quicker (6,0)

Question 28: Have you any other comments to make about the cashless system at your school? The responses are shown as (2 months post introduction, 11months post introduction)
Its rubbish (6,3) Takes too long (3,1) More stations (5,15) Go back to using money (1, 0) The cashless system is a waste of money (1,0) We don't lose money (1,0) Doesn't give change (0,1), Its made bigger queues (3,0)

Free School Meals
The following questions were directed only at those pupils registered for FSM's.

Question 43: I feel comfortable having a Free School Meal? Results are shown in Table 7.15

Table 7.15: Whether pupils feel comfortable having a Free School Meal. All FSM pupils.

	2 months post introduction (%)	11 months post introduction (%)
Agree	61.5	58.3
Not sure	7.7	33.3
Disagree	30.8	7.4

Amongst FSM registered pupils there were almost 1/3 of pupils that did not feel comfortable having their FSM at 2 months post introduction of the cashless system, however this decreased to 7.4% at 11 months post introduction. At 11 months there were 26% more who were not sure how comfortable they were about having a free school meal.

Question 44: The Free School Meal allowance is enough for me to get plenty to eat? Results are shown in Table 7.16

Table 7.16: Whether pupils feel that the Free School Meal allowance is enough to get plenty to eat. All FSM pupils.

	2 months post introduction (%)	11 months post introduction (%)
Agree	41.7	16.7
Not sure	0	16.7
Disagree	58.3	66.7

More than half of FSM registered pupils at 2 months post introduction of the cashless system did not agree that the free school meal allowance was enough to get plenty to eat. At 11 months post introduction this had increased to 2/3rd of FSM registered pupils.

Question 45: I feel embarrassed claiming for my Free School Meal? Results are shown in Table 7.17

Table 7.17: Whether pupils feel embarrassed claiming for their Free School Meal. All FSM pupils.

	2 months post introduction (%)	11 months post introduction (%)
Agree	23.1	8.3
Not sure	23.1	8.3
Disagree	53.8	83.3

The answers given show that there was a substantial reduction in the percentage of FSM pupils who felt embarrassed obtaining their free school meal with fewer responding as "not sure" 11 months post introduction of the cashless system.

Question 46 – The school encourages me to take my Free School Meal?
Results are shown in Table 7.18

Table 7.18: Whether pupils feel that the school encourages them to take their Free School Meal. All FSM pupils.

	2 months post introduction (%)	11 months post introduction (%)
Agree	23.1	9.1
Not sure	15.4	27.3
Disagree	61.5	63.6

Over 60% of the pupils stated that the school did not encourage the taking of the free school meal at 2 months and 11 months post introduction of the cashless system. There was a 10% reduction in those pupils who had agreed at 2 months but by 11 months there was a 10% increase in those responding as unsure.

Question 47: I worry other pupils might tease me about having a Free School Meal. Results are shown in Table 7.19

Table 7.19: Whether pupils worry other pupils might tease them about having a Free School Meal. All FSM pupils.

	2 months post introduction (%)	11 months post introduction (%)
Agree	38.5	27.3
Not sure	0	9.1
Disagree	61.5	63.6

Almost 2/3 FSM registered pupils at both time points stated they did not worry about being teased about having a free school meal, however almost 1/3 did worry that other pupils might tease them.

Question 48: Claiming for a Free School Meal is easy?
Results are shown in Table 7.20

Table 7.20: Whether pupils feel that claiming for a Free School Meal is easy. All FSM pupils.

	2 months post introduction (%)	11 months post introduction (%)
Agree	15.4	54.5
Not sure	30.8	27.3
Disagree	53.8	18.2

38% more FSM registered pupils agreed that claiming for their free school meal was easy 11 months following the introduction of the cashless system.

Question 49: Now that the school has a cashless system I feel more comfortable taking my Free School Meal.
Results are shown in Table 7.21

Table 7.21Whether pupils feel more comfortable taking their Free School Meal now that the school has a cashless system. All FSM pupils.

	2 months post introduction (%)	11 months post introduction (%)
Agree	38.5	27.3
Not sure	7.7	63.6
Disagree	53.8	9.1

At 11 months post introduction of the cashless system less than 1/3 of FSM registered pupils agreed that they were more comfortable taking their free school meal. Although more than half disagreed with the statement at 2 months post introduction, at 11 months almost 2/3rds were unsure and 9% disagreed that the cashless system made them feel more comfortable in taking their free school meal.

Additional comments included (2 months post introduction, 11 months post introduction): I don't like the cashless system (1, 0) Go back to passes (0, 2) Its unfair (0,1)

Question 50: Now that your school has a cashless payment system, does it encourage you to take your Free School Meal?
Results are shown in Table 7.22

Table 7.22: Whether pupils feel more encouraged to take their Free School Meal now that the school has a cashless system. All FSM pupils.

	2 months post introduction (%)	11 months post introduction (%)
Yes– definitely	44.4	33.3
I'm not sure	22.2	44.4
No– I still wouldn't take one	0	0
I already take mine so it wouldn't make any difference	33.3	22.2

More pupils, 44%, stated they were unsure as to whether the cashless system encouraged them to take their free school meal 11 months following its introduction. Also at 11 months fewer pupils agreed with the statement and fewer said that they already took theirs and it would not make any difference.

Question 51: Is there anything that you would like to say about the cashless system in relation to free school meals? (2 months post introduction, 11 months post introduction): Teachers not pushing in the queues (0, 1) the cashless system is rubbish (0,2)

Question 52: Is there anything else that would encourage you to take your Free School Meal more often? (2 months post introduction, 11 months post introduction);Shorter Queue's (1,0) More money (0,1) Nicer food (0,1), Less Fuss (0.2,0)

In summary the results highlight that the cashless system has not been a resounding success in terms of improving general efficiency and the atmosphere during lunch-times. There has been no positive impact on the level of queuing with reasons such as system-breakdown or system shut-down by staff as a method of behaviour control being cited. Consequently pupils did not feel that there had been an improvement in mealtimes. Additionally pupils felt that it was not easier or quicker to choose their meals due to inadequate information and prices not displayed.

As a result of the introduction of the cashless system, pupils entitled to free school meals indicated that they were more likely to purchase a school meal and a 17% increase was observed over the intervention period. Just over ½ said that they felt that it was easier however the rest of those entitled felt unsure or disagreed. Although the numbers that stated they were embarrassed reduced over the intervention period, 8% still felt embarrassed. The number of free school meal entitled pupils stating that they could be identified at the till increased over the intervention period. The reasons being that they still had to show their passes and that sometimes the dinner ladies made mistakes when checking, thereby identifying that they were in receipt of a free school meal. Consequently the cashless system failed to make free school meal entitled pupils feel entirely comfortable about claiming and 2/3 pupils stated that they were unsure. They were also unsure whether the system encouraged them to take their free meals. 1/3rd of free school meal entitled pupils also stated that they were worried that they might be teased. They also stated that the free school meal allowance was insufficient and that the school did not encourage them to take their free school meal.

In conclusion, the introduction of the cashless system in this school has not achieved shorter queuing times, better organisation in general within the dining room. Furthermore it has not made pupils entitled to free school meal's entirely comfortable about claiming and further actions are required by the school to address these issues.

7.2: Pupil Focus Groups

- **Demographic Data**

Two focus groups of one hour duration were held at the school. The first in December 2007, 2 months after the introduction of a cashless payment system with 10 pupils entitled to Free School Meals. The second focus group was held in July 2008, 11 months after the introduction of the cashless system with 11 pupils entitled to Free School Meals. All pupils were informed of the aims of the focus group and confidentiality rules. All had signed consent forms previously sent to parents and children. Pupils were recruited through the deputy head teacher.

- **Where, when, what, and with whom do you eat at lunch time?**

Pupils took meals in the dining room or a covered outside area for years 7, 8 and 9, where they could buy sandwiches and snack items such as slices of pizza, buns and biscuits. The outside area was indicated by the December group to be used as an 'overflow' outlet when the dining room became busy. Litter was reported as a problem with pupils saying "here is no recycling and the bins smell".

In both focus groups all pupils reported to eat with their friends. The majority of pupils ate in the dining room and a few of them ate in the covered outside area or both in December. In July the majority ate in the dining room and a minority ate in the covered outside area or both.

Most of the pupils ate at lunchtime. The reported foods they took were a hot dinner, sandwiches or a panini bought from school, with a couple bringing sandwiches from home. Pizza or sandwiches were eaten when attending a club and 'Meal of the Day' on the other days. Other items bought occasionally included Yorkshire pudding and fruit.

- **Quality of the school meals**

During both focus groups there was only one pupil who was positive about the meals "I like the dinner- I don't see why others don't like them- except the rice is damp, dry or soggy".

All other statements regarding food quality were negative. During the December focus group all pupils agreed that "the look of food puts you off". The smell, taste, temperature and apparent freshness of the food were mentioned as discouraging factors. Hygiene and food safety issues were mentioned "found a hair in my sandwich" and "sandwich cartons are not sealed properly". Confusion over what sort of meat was being served was mentioned by a few pupils "its rank – looks like its not cooked - can't tell which is beef or turkey", "The food is mouldy (the carrots), the bread is dry, its mystery meat".

One pupil mentioned a lack of information regarding the 'Meal of the Day' and a subsequent lack of awareness of the meal ingredients in case you were allergic to a food.

A lack of variety and poor availability were also highlighted "If you are the last in - there is non left- you just get a sarnie shoved in your face" and 'It's the same food every day – it gets boring".

At the second focus group in July the pupils were asked what they felt looked nice. The pupils answers included paninis, Bread rolls in a bowl, Sausage sandwiches.

- **The Lunch time and dining room**

The pupils who ate at break-time did so because they played football at lunchtime or because the dining room was overcrowded at lunchtime. In the December focus group the pupils expressed a desire for longer lunch and break times. However over the course of the year the July focus group reported that it been announced that lunchtime was to be reduced by a further 10mins, the morning break time extended by an additional 5 minutes and that school was to finish 5 minutes earlier. Only one child preferred this as break was longer and you get home earlier, but all others were not in favour of the new timetable.

Comments about the dining room echoed those expressed in the questionnaires. Pupils from both focus groups reported that they found the dining room messy; there was a shortage of seating; a lack of space and long queues, particularly for the 'Meal of the Day' option and the sandwiches. There was feeling that others were able to "push-in" the queues which made them longer. "Queues are worse 'cause teachers and others push in". There was some feeling that the teachers received a better service and that "The teachers get better food- they get cakes and things taken to the staff room"

There were reports that pupils were told to hurry their lunch and made to clear up other peoples mess. "If it is your wrapper you have to go round the whole dining room- even if it's not yours you still have to".

- **Lack of understanding of healthy meals and the school food standards**

Some answers clearly highlighted the lack of understanding through statements such as "you cannot just buy a pudding2", ''we used to get fizzy drinks- they were nice", "They (meals) are supposed to be healthier but they are not – they give buns, fairy cakes or flapjack". Some pupils mentioned that free school meals would be better if chocolate was allowed.

Pupil participation in school meal decisions appeared to be lacking since pupils reported that the School Council had not looked at school food and one pupil stated that "Teachers would pick cheap and nasty food- children don't get to decide".

- **The Free School Meal**

All pupils felt that they received no encouragement from the school to take their Free School Meal however one pupil did comment that "one dinner lady asks you what's in your packed lunch and why don't you go on school meals".

In the July focus group the majority of pupils declared that they "like nothing" about the free school meals and a few pupils stated that they liked the fact that "they are free". One pupil liked the sandwiches but another stated that ''4 times a week I bring a sandwich''. When asked why they did not take a school sandwich the pupil reported to not like them. When further questioned about what sandwiches the student brought from home, the response was ''crisp sandwiches or bread and butter''. Another stated the best thing was that the pizza and the fact that "you get it every day".

In the July focus group an extra question was asked to see if the pupils knew how they were entitled to a free school meal. One pupil stated that "f you get it in year 7, you get it for eve" and another said that "we get a letter at our house".

- **Stigma surrounding taking a free school meal**

In the December focus group a minority of pupils stated that they had been called names because they took free school meals *"they call me 'scratters' 'cause you get a fee school meal"*, and the cashless system had not eradicated this concern. Some pupils felt that *"I think they can still tell you are on free school meal 'cause £1.80 comes up on the till"* – (the cost of a free school meal at the time of the study). In the July focus group one pupil declared that she was teased "I didn't like it one day so I didn't eat it and my friend said I was wasting food".

- **The cost of the free school meal**

Six pupils in the July focus group felt that £1.80 was insufficient, with many of the pupils spending 40-50pence on a drink, and one buying a bun at break time. One child felt they should get cash back if you have your free school meal but did not spend the whole allowance. One comment referred to the increasing food prices - 'Prices have gone up this year. You have to pay for bread. The portions are smaller"

In the December focus group the comment was made that pupils would like to be able to spend their free school meal allowance at break time. It was also commented that the situation would be improved if the money was enough for you to buy a main meal, drink and a pudding at lunch-time.

- **The cashless system**

The point was made in the December focus group that despite the installation of the cashless system there were still queues however these were now at the charge machines instead. This was not mentioned in the July focus group but it was noted at this time that if there were problems then these took even longer

than before to rectify. And it was also stated that 'I think that the finger print takes longer as you have to hold your finger in.' In the December focus group the question "is the finger print illegal" was asked of the researchers and one pupil felt that a swipe card would have been better than the finger print system.

Sometimes the cashless system resulted in problems which affected the smooth running of the operation. In the December focus group there were more reported problems such as "mistakes happen with the fingerprint", "sometimes 'no match found' comes up and they have to type your name and address in" and "putting your finger on and it comes up as different people". Another statement involved not trusting that the staff did not make mistakes "we don't know if they taking the right money off at the counter". In the July focus group there were noticeably less problems reported with just one comment that "sometimes it freezes or stops working".

There were reports of the cashless system being used for behaviour control "In the quad if the queue is pushing she turns the machine off until people get in line". There were also reports of occasions where the system could still result in pupils being identified as taking a free school meal - "Sometimes you have to give stuff back (cause you have gone over £1.80)". Pupils commonly commented that it was not clear what they could buy for their £1.80 free school meal allowance.

7.3: Parent telephone interviews
It was planned to undertake ten telephone interviews with parents however despite efforts by the school, an adequate number of parents were unable or unwilling to take part and therefore this action was not carried out.

Conclusion
The results of the focus groups reflected the findings of the questionnaires. Generally the pupils were discontented about the quality and variety of the school meals provided and consistently reported that if school food improved, then they would be more likely to have a school meal - *"If food was warmer and nicer I would have a Free school meal"*. Furthermore the dining room environment including the long queues, over-crowding and the lack of cleanliness were factors that also discouraged take-up of free school lunches. One important factor that influenced take-up was the insufficient free school meal allowance and the fact that there was also poor signage which resulted in pupils being unclear about which items they could buy for their allowance. On occasions pupils were instructed by the dining room staff to return food items outside their allowance.

It was apparent that the pupils demonstrated a lack of understanding about healthy eating and therefore it is suggested that the school could benefit from the whole school approach by providing classroom-based education on this aspect thereby encouraging pupils to make informed choices at lunch-times.

The installation of the cashless system did not automatically lead to the pupils feeling comfortable about claiming their free school meal and many reasons were cited. Mainly the system was required to operate efficiently however breakdowns or staff stopping the system as a behaviour-control aid resulted in the pupils entitled to free school meals being identified at the till. The fact that the cost of the free school meal was displayed at the till also made the pupil entitled to free school meals feel visible. Additionally breakdowns of the system occurred regularly and generally the issue of queuing was not improved. Finally pupils were sensitive about the use of finger-prints (bio-metrics) and the swipe-card system was mentioned as a viable alternative.

Section 8: Discussion

Phase 2 of the Leeds free school meal research project sought to "*develop, implement and evaluate interventions that aimed to increase take-up of free school meals".* The primary outcome was an increase in uptake of free school meals. This was measured by school meal uptake data and supported by focus groups within the schools and questionnaires with both pupils and parents to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions.

This section of the report will discuss the main findings from phase 2 and identify key learnings and recommendations. The project will first be critically evaluated. How changes can be made within schools and the issue of stigma will then be discussed. Finally the impact of the interventions and the key issues relating to school meal uptake will be debated.

- ▪ *A critical evaluation of phase 2*

One strength of the project was the active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. A learning event in the form of a workshop was held at the end of phase 1 where 22 people from a range of local organisations attended. At this event the findings from the exploratory research (Phase 1) were presented and issues relating to free school meal uptake were discussed. Delegates then suggested ideas for potential interventions which were trialled and evaluated in phase 2. Throughout the project operational and strategic groups helped guide the project and assist with networking – in particular Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service, Education Leeds, Leeds PCT and The Catering Agency.

Schools were very positive about being involved in phase 2. Ten pilot schools with a mix of pupils and catering provision participated throughout the study period whilst an additional secondary school was opportunistically included to monitor the effect of a cashless system being installed. Similarly, there were good response rates to the parent and pupil questionnaires indicating willingness to engage.

One limitation of the study was the limited time available for interventions to take place and affect behaviour change. The original aim was for the interventions to be implemented and evaluated over a whole academic year (September 2007 to July 2008). However the intervention phase did not start until early 2008. This was partly because the recruitment process took longer than expected and partly because schools tended to wait for the results of the pre-intervention questionnaires before progressing with the interventions. Another source of delay was that the project leaders in schools were often unable to action interventions as quickly as desired due to a lack of time or resources within their team. The end of the intervention phase was extended until October (2008) half term however it was not possible to extend it further. This limited extension still did not leave enough time for changes to be made and their effects to be felt. Due to curriculum planning which usually occurs during the previous academic year, some schools had planned to implement the interventions in the following (September 2008-2009) academic year. The research study would therefore have benefited if the interventions had been scheduled into the curriculum and school calendar during the preceding academic year when such planning was undertaken.

An active decision was made by the operational group to split the interventions into free school meal specific ones (foundation level) and general school meal improvements (building blocks). It was felt this was necessary so specific interventions targeting free school meal uptake could be implemented and

evaluated in the required time-scales. Undertaking school meal improvements as a whole was felt to have too broad a scope and be too ambitious in terms of timings. In addition, the Leeds School Meal Strategy aimed to tackle some of these other issues and the catering providers were still developing and implementing the new nutrient standards. This focus on free school meals specifically did however limit the effectiveness of the interventions as it is clear from the findings that many factors not specific to free school meals but applicable to school meals more generally (both food and environment) do affect their uptake.

Pilot schools were selected based on having a high number of pupils *entitled* to free school meals *but not taking them*. The fact that there were a high number of pupils entitled to free school meals possibly affected whether or not stigma was an issue in the schools. When the topic was discussed a common response was that pupils did not feel embarrassed or uncomfortable as claiming for a free school meal was seen as "normal" in their schools. This might not be the case in schools with low numbers of pupils entitled to free school meals and therefore stigma could potentially be a greater issue. Further studies could focus on schools with average or low entitlement to free school meals to determine whether stigma was perceived as an issue.

Finally, throughout the project there were concerns that the school meal uptake data was not accurate. Everyone involved went to great efforts to ensure that the data used for this phase was collected as consistently and reliably as possible. This involved designing a specific data collection template for the schools to complete, training them in how to do so and providing support when necessary. It is felt that the results from this method are more accurate than previously supplied data but potential for inaccuracies remain. This is due to nursery places, school leavers, manual counting of school meals and staff movements (see section 2.4). In addition, having a specific data collection template for the project meant that the ensuing data could not be reliably compared to other schools in the area or versus historical data as it could not be gauged how accurate this previously supplied data was. The data on free school meal uptake therefore represents trends in uptake within the schools however a longer intervention period would have allowed a better assessment of overall trends in fsm uptake.

- ***Affecting change in schools***
The issue of free school meal uptake had not been addressed in any of the pilot schools before the project. During phase 2 barriers to making changes and factors facilitating this emerged, many relating to the organisational structure within schools.

Awareness and information
At the start of the project very few project leads were aware that there was an issue of low free school meal uptake. It was often assumed that pupils just took the meals they were entitled to. Perhaps this is not surprising as it is not an area that is monitored on a regular basis. In addition, the information is not in a readily available format – see below. In the majority of schools once the information on free school meal uptake had been provided from data from Education Leeds and Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service they were willing to accept that there was an issue regarding low free school meal uptake, although some waited until the results of the pupil and parent questionnaires before agreeing to take action.

In primary schools, the administrators knew which pupils were entitled and which ones took their free school meal. As such, reporting on uptake and on individuals was relatively straight-forward. However senior staff rarely requested information

on uptake levels and it was consequently not monitored. In secondary schools the information was less readily available. No central point of information existed - the administrators held entitlement information and the catering team held school meal uptake information. In order to provide the information the two departments had to work together - whilst this happened in some of the pilot schools it was rare in the majority.

Uptake information from all schools is sent to Education Leeds. However, during the course of the project it became evident that this centrally collated data often did not correspond with the schools own information. In order for schools to act on the information provided they need be confident that the figures are accurate. The life cycle of free and paid school meal data is attached as appendix 8.1.

Making it a priority
Once the issue of free school meal uptake had been raised/recognised most of the project leads were interested in the issue and willing to address it in their schools. However, it cannot be assumed this will be the case in all schools. A number of ways of encouraging schools to be interested were identified; emphasising the links between behaviour / attainment and food, the Every Child Matters agenda, the Ofsted criteria and communication from a senior level at Education Leeds. In addition, identifying a key person, ideally within senior management within the school who has a particular interest in healthy food and or inequalities was seen as important.

A structure for change
The role of the project lead within each school was critical. They drove the project forward, ensured it was paid attention and co-ordinated the activities. Having a certain amount of authority within the school was vital as they needed to change often long-standing processes and other people's roles and attitudes. Deputy head-teachers seemed to be particularly successful at this. Using the Healthy School Co-ordinators (often the deputy head-teachers) was felt to be appropriate as there was a natural fit with their remit and they were aware of available systems and support.

The project leads needed to have the capacity to give the project sufficient attention. This meant having enough time away from teaching and other day to day responsibilities. Often this was not the case for Healthy School Co-ordinators who had to fit it in within their existing roles. Having adequate support from administrators and catering providers could assist them in this.

The project leads also needed to be willing to accept that the situation in their school may not be optimal and changes may need to be made. One successful method of helping such reflectivity is undertaking pupil surveys so any results are self-evident. Providing them with information on how other schools tackle similar issues may also help.

All the pilot schools set up a working party including representatives from catering, administration and teaching. Some teams had a very inclusive approach to decision making with real involvement from all members of the team. Others had a more hierarchical approach with only tokenistic involvement from some members of the team. The former tended to be associated with more collaborative decision making and interventions across school departments. It was clear that having a formal working party involving both catering and school staff was new for all the schools (although in some informal communication existed). The Whole School Food Approach, as recommended by the Healthy Schools Programme, was not widely employed.

Supporting the schools

The research team provided guidance and support to the pilot schools. This involved holding regular meetings with the working party and providing ideas and "templates" for interventions. Encouraging schools to take ownership of the project was however also important – this allowed them to tailor the interventions or come up with their own individual solutions where appropriate. It also increased the possibility of embedding the interventions within the schools. This had the positive affect of inspiring a number of the pilot schools to explore the situation in their school in more detail and design and implement their own interventions.

Providing such intense support to all schools in the area is however not possible. How schools could be assisted in a sustainable way therefore needed to be considered. To that end Education Leeds produced a "toolkit" that was informed by this project. The toolkit stemmed partly from the recognition that school staff wished to be empowered to implement their own interventions. It was informed by this research project with the aim of providing guidance and strategies on how to increase free school meal uptake in schools. It includes the survey tools and the interventions developed and evaluated by this research project.

Signposting schools to this resource has been achieved by dissemination from the School Meals Strategy team and working with partners to ensure maximum awareness (for example with PCTs, early years, extended service). It has also been endorsed by the Chief Executive of Education Leeds. Supporting schools in using it is part of the role of the Healthy Schools consultants currently employed by Education Leeds as part of The Healthy Schools and Well Being team. It could also potentially include Leeds Benefit Agency in terms of training and supporting the schools.

▪ *The issue of stigma*

The Child Poverty Action Group identified stigma as a significant factor affecting the uptake of free school meals (Storey and Chamberlain, 2001). Phase 1 findings and other similar projects (Morrison and Clarke, 2006) found some evidence of stigma but other issues were felt to be of more significance. Phase 2 probed this issue in more detail. Schools were asked to audit how pupils obtained their free school meals to see whether those claiming were identifiable and if so, whether the process could be improved. Secondary school pupils and the parents of both secondary and primary pupils were asked about their feelings towards claiming free school meals in the questionnaires.

The system of obtaining a free school meal in school is critical as it is this process that has the most potential for revealing to others who is claiming for a free school meal. In primary schools entitlement is less visible as pupils are not involved in monetary transactions – parents normally pay in the school office. Some exceptions to this invisibility were identified - namely school trips and if money was collected in class by the school office. Pilot schools introduced new processes to overcome this by encouraging parents to pay at the school office and providing school trip packed lunches in lunch boxes instead of in easily identifiable bags.

In secondary schools the situation varied. The main influencing factor was whether or not the cafeteria used a cash system or a cashless one (i.e. a card that can be topped up). Three of the pilot schools had a cash based system and in all of these, those obtaining a free school meal were easily identifiable. Pupils had to either show a card or give their name to be crossed off a list at the till. Two of the pilot schools had a cashless system. In one this worked well and it was felt anonymity was preserved. In the other administrative faults meant the system

did not work well and cash was therefore used as a default - pupils were therefore identifiable at the point of payment.

The majority of the school project teams felt stigma was not an issue in their school – either because of the atmosphere in their school whereby bullying was said to not be tolerated or because it was felt pupils did not regard claiming for a free school meal as stigmatising. One primary school had felt similarly but changed their opinion when a pupil survey, designed by themselves, revealed that claiming for a free school meal had resulted in name calling. Another point of view expressed by the staff of one school was that stigma was not an issue for most pupils but if individuals wanted to keep their entitlement status secret, they had the right to do so.

In the secondary school questionnaire the majority of pupils entitled to a free school meal supported the position that stigma did not affect them. Over three quarters agreed that they felt comfortable claiming for a free school meal (75% pre, 78% post) and did not worry that other pupils might tease them (80% pre and 74% post). Over two-thirds disagreed with the statement that they felt embarrassed claiming (66% pre, 70% post). However, this also revealed that a minority of pupils did have negative feelings about claiming; post-intervention 9% said they did not feel comfortable claiming, 17% felt embarrassed and 10% worried that others might tease them. Variations between schools were evident – in one school (post-intervention) 18% of claiming pupils were worried about being teased, in three others only 4% were.

Whilst the majority of parents at pre-intervention agreed that they felt comfortable for their children to have free school meals, around 12% of parents did not feel comfortable. Post intervention the numbers stating that did not feel comfortable increased to 21% in primary parents and this may be due to the project unintentionally raising the issue of free school meals where perhaps it may have been viewed as a "normal" process prior to the project. In contrast there was an increase in parents of secondary school pupils stating that they felt comfortable however 11% still reported not feeling comfortable. The main reasons centred on that parents felt that they should be able to provide for their children.

The impact of the cashless system appears to be positive but not definitive. The school with the lowest levels of embarrassment and the highest levels of feeling comfortable had a well operated cashless system. The school with the worst results had the poorly operated cashless system. Being teased did not appear to correlate with the systems employed. The three schools with the best results (less than 5% of pupils saying teasing was a concern) included both cash and cashless systems.

In the school with the best results overall the cashless system had been in operation for a couple of years. Yet the figures improved substantially over the intervention period; pre-intervention 78% of pupils felt comfortable, post-intervention 96% did. Having a cashless system on its own would therefore appear not to be enough. Possibly the other interventions undertaken by the school (for example assemblies, posters making clear what was available), or the atmosphere within the school in addition to a cashless system allowing for anonymity improved the situation for pupils. Ensuring the system is maintained and operated well is crucial – as evidenced by the other cashless system studied where this was not the case. In schools with a cash based system it would appear that teasing can be minimised but pupils may still feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

The above results were supported by the findings from the secondary school in which the recently installed cashless system was being evaluated. In this school pupils entitled to free school meals indicated that they were more likely to purchase a school meal and a 17% increase was observed over the intervention period. Just over ½ said that they felt that it was easier however the rest of those entitled felt unsure or disagreed. Although the numbers that stated they were embarrassed reduced over the intervention period, 8% still felt embarrassed. The number of free school meal entitled pupils stating that they could be identified at the till increased over the intervention period. The reasons being that they still had to show their passes and that sometimes the dinner ladies made mistakes when checking, thereby identifying that they were in receipt of a free school meal. Consequently the cashless system failed to make free school meal entitled pupils feel entirely comfortable about claiming and 2/3 pupils stated that they were unsure whether they felt comfortable. The majority also felt unsure whether the system encouraged them to take their free meals and also stated that they were worried that they might be teased. They also stated that the free school meal allowance was insufficient and that the school did not encourage them to take their free school meal.

In conclusion, the introduction of the cashless system in this school has not achieved shorter queuing times, better organisation in general within the dining room. Furthermore it had not made pupils entitled to free school meal's entirely comfortable about claiming and further actions are required by the school to address these issues.

The school meal uptake data further informs this picture. Nearly three quarters of free school meal pupils in the pilot primary schools, took up their entitlement whereas only 59% did so in the pilot secondary schools. Therefore approximately 25% of primary school pupils and around 40% of secondary school pupils entitled to free school meals did not eat them. Yet the trend amongst pupils who paid is the opposite with more eating a school meal in secondary school than in primary. Identifying what factor is making free school meal entitled pupils less likely to eat a school meal in secondary school is problematic and cannot be proved definitively from this study. One potential influence however is the fundamentally different system employed in secondary schools; pupils have to work out for themselves what they can afford for their allowance (unlike in primary where one price gets a meal) and they can be identified (unless there is a well-run cashless system). In the parental survey 78% of primary school parents said that they and their children felt comfortable claiming for a free school meal but only 63% of secondary school parents did. Whilst the situation is concerning in primary schools it is worse in secondary.

The pupil questionnaires results and school meal uptake figures therefore reveal that whilst stigma does not affect the majority of pupils it does affect some. This contradicts what some of the project teams felt about stigma in their schools i.e. that there was none. This emphasises the importance of not making assumptions about how pupils feel about claiming for a free school meal – instead they need to be asked for their feedback and systems need to be amended to ensure every pupil feels comfortable obtaining their meal. A cashless system may not automatically resolve this issue. However, if it is well operated and supported by interventions to maximise awareness and an ethos that encourages claiming for a free school meal, it offers the potential for minimum visibility and for pupils to feel more comfortable claiming. The research team and some of the pilot schools involved felt that the current system of identifying secondary school pupils at the till was not a fair one for those pupils who do not want their entitlement status (and hence their family finances) revealed to all. In addition, there are other benefits to cashless systems – they offer information on school meal uptake and

other dietary related issues e.g. the popularity of certain dishes, what individuals are eating and an assessment of current dietary habits of pupils.

- ***The intervention: implementation***

It was recognised in the exploratory phase of this project (phase 1) that factors affecting the uptake of free school meals were often very similar to those affecting take up of school meals in general. However, a decision was made to implement and evaluate interventions that addressed free school meals specifically. This would ensure they could be implemented during the intervention period and tested for appropriateness.

Schools were asked to address two key aims. The first was to make sure pupils felt comfortable claiming for their free school meals. The second was to communicate effectively with parents about their potential entitlement to free schools meals and what they could get for their allowance. A series of actions were suggested to meet each key aim – see sections 2.3 and 3 for more detail on each intervention.

The majority of interventions were implemented by all the schools. The assemblies and lessons were held in nearly all schools and felt to be a success. Most schools used the information provided by the research team but adapted them for their own particular circumstances. Postcards, letters and posters were used by all the schools to communicate with parents. These featured a named contact in the school for parents or pupils to approach with any queries. Both the postcards and the posters showed pictorially what could be bought for the free school meal allowance (e.g. sandwich + dessert + drink = £1.80). These communication devices were seen as useful but they had their limitations – personal contact was felt to be equally as important along with physically demonstrating the food to parents.

Parents views on the range of interventions introduced since January 2008, aimed at increasing free school meal uptake were sought. By September 2008 only about 1/5th of parents stated that they received a letter or postcard about school meals and more than ¾ said that they had not or were not sure that they had received any communication. Furthermore whilst a minority of children had informed their parents, almost ¾ of parents stated that their children had not informed them of any changes in school meals nor had they received information from any other sources.

Regarding claiming for free school meal's, post-intervention, 21% of parents of primary pupils and almost half of the parents of secondary school pupils stated that they did not know who to ask about free school meal's. Although the majority stated that they knew how to claim, 7% of primary and 11% of secondary parents did not know. Secondary school parents' suggestions included being told how to claim, being able to ask in the office and being sent a form to re-claim.

These findings highlight the importance of parental engagement. Parents should be viewed by schools and all relevant agencies along with the pupils as key stakeholders and therefore communication needs to be strengthened in terms of disseminating information on school meal provision, the recent changes with opportunities to sample and experience the dining room environment. With regards to increasing free school meal uptake, some parents still require information about the claiming process and contact details for assistance and in addition they need to be reassured that their child will not be identified as a recipient.

Adapting the school's anti-bullying policy to include the issue of claiming for free school meals met with resistance in some (but not all) schools. This tended to be because schools did not feel claiming for a free school meal was a bullying issue or because their policies did not specify reasons for bullying – it tackled ways to address it instead.

Auditing the process of obtaining a free school meal and then improving it was not always straightforward. Most schools did identify occasions when pupils claiming for a free school could be identified, for example during school trips or when paying for their meal. However providing solutions was not always possible – this was particularly the case for secondary schools with cash based systems.

Schools also undertook interventions to tackle free school meal uptake at their own instigation. One primary school conducted a bullying survey. This revealed that claiming for a free school meal sometimes led to name-calling and resulted in an attitude change within that school. Targeted communication (writing to parents whose children were entitled to free school meals but were not taking them) resulted in a number of children switching to school meals from packed lunches. The letters emphasised how much money free school meals were worth over a year and the recent positive changes in school meals provided to children.

Other interventions also evaluated well. This included the "School Meal Dinner Inspectors" whereby pupils having packed lunches were asked to test the school meals and report back. This resulted in some switching permanently to school meals and also provided useful feedback. Special tables (Captain's or Golden) were felt to be a positive initiative in two primary schools – this rewarded pupils for good behaviour by letting them sit at a special table and have a school lunch. Again this encouraged trial of school meals and was something the children aspired to. Actually demonstrating food to parents (generally at parents' evenings) was felt to be a particularly effective way of addressing misconceptions.

In general therefore the interventions were implemented successfully – albeit it took some schools a long time. The most successful approach seemed to be providing a basic framework for schools to use but then allowing them to personalise where appropriate. Key messages for parents seemed to be the value of the free school meal entitlement plus tackling any misconceptions about the food by allowing them to physically see and taste the actual school meals served.

▪ *The intervention: effectiveness*
The effect of the interventions in terms of increasing uptake was not consistent. Some schools did show positive improvements in uptake (e.g. PS2, PS4, SS3, SS4, SS5) but it tended not to be dramatic. In addition, some schools that implemented all the interventions did not have an increase in uptake. Two key reasons for this are suggested.

The first is that the interventions did not have sufficient time to fully take effect. In some of the pilot schools interventions were still taking place in the autumn 2008 term – leaving very limited time for any increase in awareness or change in attitude to be translated into behaviour change. In addition, in some schools the interventions were limited in scope, for example one lesson and assembly. Such a one off approach is likely to only have a limited impact – a "drip drip" approach with regular interventions over a period of time is known to be potentially more effective. The findings also indicated that parents need to be involved more intensely and only 1/5th of parents said that they had seen the letters and post-cards. In addition they had not received information on the recent changes in school meals via school or any other sources. The majority of parents had therefore requested this information. A minority of parents particularly of

secondary school pupils still required information about the free school meal claiming process.

The second major reason for the lack of a consistent uptake is that the interventions attempted to tackle free school meal uptake only. They did not address factors affecting the uptake of school meals in general – and it is these that are most often identified by pupils as their reason for not taking a school meal (either paid or free).

- *Perceptions of school meals in general*

When asked their views about the quality, choice and portion sizes offered, around half of the parents said that they were satisfied however 25% stated that they were dissatisfied and 25% did not know. Dining room facilities were considered good or satisfactory by 70% of parents of primary school children and 50% of parents of secondary schoolchildren, however the rest stated that they did not know.

Parents suggested at both pre and post-intervention, that in order to encourage school meal uptake, more choice, maintenance of choice through-out the lunch break, greater variety, cheaper prices, food that was enjoyed but also healthy should be offered. A longer lunch-break and shorter queues were highlighted particularly by parents of secondary school pupils.

Regarding the recent changes in school meal standards, at pre-intervention more than 80% of parents of both primary and secondary pupils had not heard or stated that they did not know about the recent changes at their child's school. Only 15% stated that they had heard and over ¾ of primary parents and 2/3 of secondary parents expressed that they would like to know more about the meals served at their child's school. These finding were sustained at post intervention with parents also stating that they had not been given an opportunity to see or taste examples of school meals.

It is evident from these findings that stronger parental engagement with school lunch provision is required. This engagement needs to be pro-active and led by the schools and relevant agencies rather than the current dependence of parent on their children for information. It is clear that existing channels of communication are failing. Parents have made it clear that they have had little information regarding school meal provision including the recent changes in school meal standards and the dining room environment. Therefore there is a timely opportunity to engage parents by offering displays and samples of school lunches on offer and for them to experience the dining room environment in order for them to encourage their children.

Pupil questionnaires revealed many perceived problems with the school meal experience. Pupils were asked to agree or disagree with statements regarding both the food and the dining experience. They were then asked to say what factors would make their school dinner / lunch better and what would make them change to having a school meal. Responses were taken both before and after the intervention period. However many of the factors measured were not expected to change as they had not been targeted by the free school meal interventions but provided a context within which to address free school meals.

In **primary schools** a key factor was the lack of food choice. Nearly ¾ of pupils said there was not enough choice – it was slightly more important for those pupils entitled to a free school meal, compared to those paying (79% of free school meal pupils said there was not enough choice compared to 72% of paying pupils).

Choice was the factor most often chosen as being able to improve school dinners - post-intervention 88% of all pupils (90% of those entitled to free school meals and 86% of those paying) said more choice of food would improve their school dinner.

The issue of small portion sizes was also evident with nearly 2/3 of pupils saying they did not get enough food (there was no difference between free and paying pupils). Over a third said they were still hungry after a school dinner and 77% said "bigger portions" would improve school dinners (again, no difference between free and paying pupils).

The school meal environment also featured with more than half of pupils saying there were long queues, half saying the dining room was messy and over 80% that it was noisy. More seats, a nicer dining room and being able to sit with friends were the 2nd, 3rd and 4th most commonly sited areas for improvement.

In **secondary schools** the issues that were most apparent related to aspects of the lunch-time experience.

- *Queuing*
  Over 90% of pupils said that there were long queues (93% of those entitled to a free school meal, 90% of those paying).
  Long queues were ranked as the most important factor for making pupils choose a school meal more often (82% of those entitled to a free school meal, 89% of paying pupils).

- *Being over-crowded*
  Having somewhere to sit was seen as "very important" by 81% of free school meal entitled pupils and 85% of paying pupils.
  Over 80% of pupils said the dining area was over-crowded (87% of those entitled to a free school meal, 83% of those paying)

- *Noise*
  Nearly 90% of free school meal pupils (87.8%) said the dining room was very noisy, 86% of paying pupils did.

- *A lack of time*
  Nearly half of pupils said there was not enough time to eat (48% of those entitled to a free school meal and 43% of those paying)
  85% of both free and paying pupils said having enough time was very important.

Approximately a third of pupils said the food tasted good. This was ranked as very important by 85% of paying pupils and 79% of those who receive their meals for free.

The statistics above reveal two key points. One is that there is little difference between pupils who pay for their lunch and those who receive it for free in terms of their requirements for school meals and their perceptions of them. The second is that there is a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst pupils – both regarding the food (how it tastes, the amount of choice and the portion sizes) and the lunch-time experience. This latter point concurs with the project team focus groups – one of whom described their schools lunch-time as "absolute mayhem".

It is clear that despite much attention being focused on school food both at a national and a regional level the reality in these pilot schools is often poor. Long queues, no-where to sit, a lack of appealing choices and often messy or noisy

environments mean pupils do not have a positive perception of school lunches. These negative aspects of school meals mean that pupils are encouraged to take up the only real alternative – that of a packed lunch. This can be eaten earlier if required and away from the dining hall therefore eliminating the need for queuing and sitting in a messy, noisy place. It also means they can choose their own food.

One of the Watch It programme's golden rules (a Leeds based NHS childhood obesity treatment programme) is that food should be eaten "slowly, sociably and sitting down." None of these are possible in many of the pilot secondary schools. Barriers include dining rooms being too small and lunch-times being too short leading to long queues and a lack of seats. In many of the secondary schools lunch-times had actually reduced during the intervention period to just 35 minutes. In this time over a thousand pupils could be trying to have a meal. An additional factor potentially encouraging packed lunch consumption is how late lunch-times are – in many schools they start at 1.15pm – nearly 5 hours after the school day starts. This is particularly significant when it is considered that nearly 54% of 13 year old girls and 38% of 13 year old boys do not have breakfast every day before they start school (WHO, 2004). In addition, those entitled to a free school meal can only redeem their allowance at lunch-time. However the research uncovered the practice of pupils eating lunch at break-time in secondary schools due to the lateness of the lunch-break or other lunch-time commitments. It was found that some schools allowed this practice however it is unknown whether these numbers were recorded as free school meal uptake figures.

It was generally felt that school lunch-times were so short and so late due to time-tabling pressures and discipline issues. However, such de-valuing of the lunch-time experience is not in keeping with the desire to improve children's eating habits or the Healthy Schools and Well Being agenda.

From discussions with pupils in phase 1 and their responses to the questionnaires in phase 2 it is clear that they have sophisticated tastes and high expectations of the dining environment. They are used to eating out in venues where fast service, cleanliness and a good choice of food are taken for granted. It is clear that school dinners, as currently provided in these pilot schools, are often not meeting their needs. Providers and significant adults responsible for the school meal provision often seemed out of touch with their perceptions of the school dining experience. They also often had low expectations – one school was surprised that the food now looked as good as you would get in a shop. It is clear that school meals need to make significant improvements to bridge the gap between provision and pupil expectations.

In one school a closed gate policy had been established. This has resulted in an increase in uptake and other benefits accrued (relating to behavioural and safety concerns). If however, this is implemented the school has an obligation to provide an acceptable school meal service within the school grounds with the capacity to serve all pupils.

One encouraging aspect of this research however is the variation between schools. This hopefully demonstrates that there is the capacity for improvements in many of the schools – and that pupils do respond to these improvements.

▪ *Pupil feedback*
In many of the schools there was little opportunity for pupils to feedback their experiences and perceptions of the school dining environment. In secondary schools 51% of those entitled to free school meals and 56% of paying pupils said they did not get a chance to say what they thought about the food. In some, there were school councils but how representative they were and how much

influence they had was debatable. There were a few exceptions to this where schools could demonstrate changes made as a response to pupils comments.

Without the ability to feedback and to affect change in the provision of school food dissatisfied pupils only option is to bring in a packed lunch or exit the school (if they are able to). The Whole School Food Approach emphasises the importance of engaging in constructive communication with pupils yet it is clear this is currently not taking place.

In order to improve feedback more education of teaching and catering staff is needed. Staff often cited the new school meal standards as a reason for not making changes. However these standards aim to improve the quality of meals provided – issues of food choice, portion size and the dining room and lunch-time experience can still be addressed and improved. Pupil questionnaires and feedback forums (with the results taken seriously) have an important role to play in opening up communication between pupils and staff.

The context
Since this project began government policies regarding free school meals have changed. In Scotland free school meals are being offered to all primary school children in the first three years of school. In England trials are planned in three areas (at the time of writing these areas have not yet been decided) whereby all primary school children will be offered a free school meal, whilst in another area alternative entitlement criteria are being tested. Such an approach has the potential to decrease the administration required in primary schools and to eliminate any potential stigma. However, this study has identified that the uptake levels are lowest and stigma potentially highest in secondary, rather than primary, schools. The planned trials will not impact on these schools at all.

In addition, whilst this project focused on those entitled to a free school meal it was found that affordability of school meals is a major issue for those parents who do not quite fit current criteria. In areas of high deprivation and for parents with a number of children having school meals is often not an option for their limited household budgets.

Section 9: Conclusion

This phase of the Leeds Free School Meals Research Project aimed to develop, implement and evaluate a series of interventions designed to increase the uptake of free school meals. The research team worked closely with ten pilot schools in the Leeds area – 5 primary and 5 secondary. These represented a range of pupil ethnicities, catering providers and payment systems (in the secondary schools). Outcome measures included school meal uptake data plus pupils and parent questionnaires and focus groups with the pilot school working parties.

The school working parties and the research team worked together to develop an individualised action plan. These focused initially on a series of foundation level interventions that sought to increase the uptake of free school meals specifically. Towards the end of the intervention period schools undertook initiatives to increase the uptake of all school meals.

One area of interventions aimed to ensure pupils felt comfortable taking their free school meal. Strategies included designating a member of staff to answer any queries, auditing the system by which pupils obtain their meal to minimise visibility of claiming, amending anti-bullying policies, holding an assembly and a lesson on free school meals. The second key area of interventions aimed to improve communication with parents about free school meals. Strategies included posters / displays in schools, letters and postcards to all parents and targeted letters to those entitled.

In the main these interventions were successfully trialled in the pilot schools. Another positive outcome was that the project improved communication between catering, administration and teaching departments. Nearly all the project teams commented upon this, saying that previously they had had little interaction. As such, the project had acted as a catalyst for many and varied interventions to take place. These included School Dinner Inspectors, demonstrating food to parents at various events, Captain's Tables, distributing menus, pupils' surveys etc. The only intervention that schools were reluctant to engage with was amending their anti-bullying policies as many did not feel they had a problem in this area.

The issue of stigma in regard to claiming for free school meals was explored. In most of the schools staff did not feel stigma was an issue. The only school that changed their opinion on this was one that held their own questionnaire revealing name calling as an issue. In primary schools some systems can be improved to minimise visibility of claiming (for example not collecting dinner money in class and not giving out packed lunches in distinctive brown bags on trip days). In secondary schools the pupil questionnaires revealed that whilst most pupils (approximately 75%) were comfortable claiming and not embarrassed to do so a minority did not feel comfortable, were embarrassed and were worried about getting teased. If every child really does matter this clearly needs to be addressed – one child feeling uncomfortable about having their school meal is one child too many. A well-run cashless system along with a supportive ethos and interventions designed to normalise claiming for a free school meal were felt to be appropriate ways of tackling stigma in secondary schools.

The school meal uptake data did not show a consistent increase over the intervention period although small increases were seen in two primary schools and three secondary schools. One reason for this was felt to be that there was not enough time for the interventions to take effect and for behaviour to change (some interventions were only implemented in the summer term of 2008 and the

project ended in October). Another major reason was that the initial interventions only focused on free school meals and not school meals generally. Yet the pupil questionnaires and the school focus groups clearly showed that many serious issues affecting the uptake of all school meals (both free and paid) are in existence and these were outside the scope of this particular intervention period.

In secondary schools serious problems with the lunch-time experience emerged including long queues and dining rooms that were over-crowded, messy and noisy. In addition lunch-times were too short and it was not clear what was on offer every day. Food portions were often too small, many thought there was not enough choice, that it cost too much and that they did not get a chance to give feedback. Primary school pupils felt that there was not enough choice of food and portions were too small. A lack of seating and messy dining rooms also emerged as issues. All these issues were of similar importance to both those pupils entitled to a free school meal and those that were paying.

It became clear that in order to increase the uptake of free school meals improvements in the school meal experience were required. A more civilised dining room (less queuing, more seats, less noise and mess), more time to eat, better choice and bigger quantities were key issues. It was felt that before extensive promotion of free school meals was justified improvements in pupil satisfaction was required. A vital element of this was ensuring pupils could feedback their views to the schools and the catering providers – and for these views to be acted upon. In addition the parent questionnaires clearly showed a lack of parental engagement – most were not aware of recent changes to school meals and had a low opinion of schools meals in general. Expectations of the school meal experience need to be higher amongst catering providers, school staff and pupils. Recent initiatives have focused on primary school meal uptake, yet this research clearly shows that there are more problems with secondary school free school meal uptake.

The school working parties undertook many innovative interventions and worked hard to make changes to long-standing practices. Examples of catering teams, administration staff and teaching staff working together far more closely were evident. However it is clear that in many schools the Whole School Food approach is currently not a reality – instead the catering provision was often seen as separate to the main running of the school. Importantly lunch time itself – both the experience and the food - needs to be valued more highly by senior members of the school.

Section 10: Recommendations

Local authority level
- Improve the accuracy of the school meal uptake data collected. The local authority needs to work with schools to agree a system of data collection that is consistent, accurate and not too time-consuming for schools. If possible, this should fit with the systems that schools already utilise, rather than adding to their administrative burden.

- Output private finance initiative contracts to set clear measurable parameters to promote free school meal uptake and data monitoring.

- Communicate with schools so they understand why free school meal uptake matters. Utilise Leeds School Meals Tool Kit.

- Provide training and guidance on eligibility criteria to schools (in partnership with benefits service). Utilise Leeds School Meals Tool Kit.

- Provide support to schools to help them increase their free school meal uptake. This should be in the format of templates that can be personalised by the school. Utilise Leeds Free School Meals Tool Kit.

- Continue to support schools in adopting a whole school food approach – potentially utilising the Healthy Schools and Well Being Team.

- To rigorously monitor and act upon the quality of the school meal experience within their schools. This needs to include an assessment of:
  - the quality of the food served
  - whether portion sizes are adequate
  - the amount of choice available (including halal and vegetarian options). Both at the beginning and end of service.
  - the dining room environment (including the size of the dining hall and its cleanliness)
  - how long pupils have to queue for
  - the length of time pupils have to eat their lunch in

- Promote structure of school day that considers and promotes a positive dining experience.

- Ensure school buildings are fit for purpose in terms of ensuring a positive dining experience

- Encourage secondary schools to install cashless systems and operate them effectively.

- Encourage schools to set up pupil feedback through arenas such as forums, school councils and satisfaction questionnaires.

- Encourage all partners to support free school meal entitled families e.g. early years, extended schools

School level

- Increasing the uptake of free school meals should be the responsibility of a senior member of the school. This should be included in the School Improvement plan and potentially as a standing item on governor's agenda.

- Senior members of staff in schools need to ensure they are aware of uptake levels. In primary schools the school meal administrator can report this information to senior staff. In secondary schools the administration and catering teams need to work together to provide this information.

- Healthy school co-ordinators need to be allocated time free of teaching and other duties to focus on improving the school meal service (including free school meal uptake)

- School meal administrators need to be allocated time to manage the free school meal figures and liaise with Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service and the catering team.

- Adopting a whole school food approach should be prioritised within schools rather than leaving school meals as the sole responsibility of the catering provider.

- Work with the catering provider to ensure that the lunch-time experience is a pleasurable and civilised one for pupils and catering staff.
  o Reduce queuing times by extra till points, longer lunch-times or split lunches
  o Ensure pupils have enough time to eat their lunch
  o Ensure they have a seat
  o Ensure they are not separated by choice of lunch (e.g. packed lunch eaters sitting separately)
  o Ensure the dining hall is clean and hygienic
  o Utilise Leeds Free School Meals Tool Kit

- Schedule the school lunch-time so pupils energy levels are maintained throughout the day i.e. at 12 / 12.30 if they have started at 8 / 8.30.

- Pupils and parents should be regularly encouraged to give feedback on the school meal service – either via questionnaires, discussion groups, the school council or suggestion boxes. Their suggestions / feedback to be reported to senior members of school staff and acted upon where possible. Utilise Leeds Free School Meals Tool Kit.

- To not assume stigma is not an issue in their school. To instead conduct a survey on name-calling and / or bullying to assess whether pupils are teased in school about claiming for a free school meal.

- To make every effort to maintain the anonymity of those pupils entitled to a free school meal. To conduct an audit of how pupils claim for their meal and identify when their identity is potentially revealed.

- In primary schools it is recommended that dinner money is not collected in class – instead parents should be asked to use the school office. In addition, free packed lunches for trips should not be in obvious packaging and handed out in a way that means other pupils can see.

- In secondary schools it is recommended that cashless systems be utilised. This needs to be well maintained and effectively operated.

- To ensure pupils entitled to a free school meal are aware of the monetary value available to them each day. Utilise Leeds Free School Meals Toolkit.

- Engage with parents more intensely about free school meal claiming process and also about school meal provision generally including changes. Invitation to sample meals and experience the dining experience.

- Schools need to communicate regularly (2 or 3 times a year) with pupils eligible for a free school meal – Parent Support Workers or similar could assist in this. Particular emphasis to be placed on identifying those pupils who are not taking up their entitlement to ascertain why this is and how they could be encouraged to take up their free school meal. Letter templates are available in the Leeds Free School Meals Toolkit.

- Communication methods could include letters, postcards, texts and items in newsletters. Message to emphasise how much money the free school meals are worth and what pupils can get for their allowance. Templates are available in the Leeds Free School Meals Toolkit.

- Demonstrate the school meals currently available to parents.

Catering Providers
- Adopt a whole school food approach by working closely with teaching staff and school pupils to promote the link between food and health including the role of school meals for all pupils

- Undertake pupil satisfaction surveys of school meals; comments/suggestion boxes, questionnaires and discussion groups. Allow pupils to give anonymous comments.

- Ensure adequate food choice and portion sizes are provided for pupils entitled to free school meals

- Ensure food choice is maintained through the lunch serving i.e. that the most popular choices do not run out early.

- Ensure that the pricing of meals is clear so that those entitled to free school meals can easily make selections within their allowance.

- Work with the school to ensure a pleasant dining room experience

- Ensure pupils claiming for a free school meal are not identified at the till (or elsewhere in the dining hall)

- Encourage catering teams to adapt their offering to fit with their pupils' requirements. Communicate with them so that they understand that conforming to the nutritional standards still allows for changes to be made in response to pupil feedback.

Leeds Revenues and Benefits Service
- Maintain a close working relationship with the school administrators in identifying and notifying schools of pupils entitlement status

- Work with the schools and local education authority to continue to improve data collection methods

Further study
- Investigate stigma in schools with low levels of free school meal entitlement

- Investigate food choices (and how the introduction of school meal standards) is affected by socio-economic status

- Ensure any future research into school meal uptake gives equal priority to both primary and secondary schools

The Pupils' Charter

We believe that all pupils have the right to a school meal service that provides adequate, healthy food in a pleasant, civilised setting.

This school and its catering service commits to:

- Serving *food that I recognise and like* (although I realise that sometimes I need to taste something new)

- Giving me *enough choice* – even if I turn up towards the eat of lunch-time

- Serving *enough food* so I don't feel hungry afterwards

- Providing food at *an appropriate time* (not so late that I have to eat at break-time)

- Providing a *place for me to sit* with my friends

- Ensuring the dining room is *clean, tidy and not too noisy*

- Providing enough tills and staff so I don't have to *queue for more than 5 minutes*

- Making sure lunch-time *is long enough* for me to sit and enjoy my food (at least 45 minutes)

- Making sure *no one knows* who receives a free school meal

- Asking me *what I think* about the school meal service – and where possible taking action on what I say

- Making sure I can easily see what food can be bought for my free school meal allowance

- Making sure everyone can see the menu – before we get to the counter

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Percentage contribution of free school meals total intake

% contribution of free school meals total intake
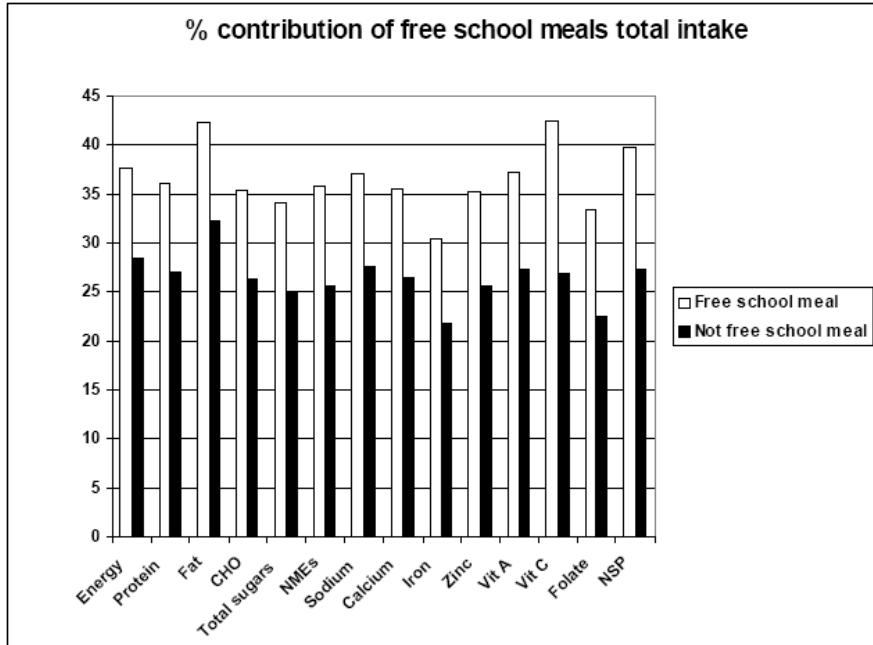
Reference: School Meals Review Panel, 2005

Appendix 2.1: School pack

Leeds School Meals Strategy

Transforming school food and drink in partnership

XXXXXXXXX

Date: 26th November 2007
Our ref: Leeds Free School Meals Research
Project - Pilots

Dear XXXXX,

Thank you for agreeing to discuss participating in phase 2 of the Free School Meal Research Project.

The project has been commissioned by Education Leeds to address why many pupils in the area who are entitled to free school meals do not take them. This has potential consequences both in terms of their own health and inequalities in general. The aim is that this project will help inform future policy regarding free school meals.

By working with a small number of selected schools in Leeds we aim to provide evidence of what interventions are most effective at increasing uptake. We also hope that your school benefits from taking part in this innovative project by:
• Increasing the uptake of free school meals
• Having access to experts in school meals and nutrition
• Contributing to the Healthy Schools agenda

The research project as a whole should lead to improved policy within the Leeds district and, we hope, at a national level.

Enclosed is an information sheet with more details about the project. We look forward to discussing the project in more detail with you.

Yours sincerely

Research Fellow

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│           Leeds Free School Meals Research Project         │
│                Information Sheet: Phase 2                   │
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Project Background

Low take-up of free school meals has been recognised at a national level as an area of concern that requires addressing (DfES, 2005[3]). Current uptake in Leeds is estimated at 70% - meaning nearly 6000 pupils do not take the free school meals they are entitled to. The target is to achieve 100% uptake (Leeds School Meals Strategy, 2007[4]).

Little specific research has been conducted into this issue. Education Leeds has therefore commissioned the Faculty of Health at Leeds Metropolitan University (Leeds Met) to undertake a research project investigating why the uptake of free school meals is low and what can be done about it. A project steering group has been established – see Appendix 1 for a list of members and its terms of reference.

First phase

The first phase of the research project was successfully completed in July 2007. Leeds Met worked with four primary and four secondary schools (including head-teachers, pupils, parents and catering staff) to explore the factors affecting the uptake of free school meals and identify examples of good practice. Top-line results were presented to key stakeholders at a workshop in July. Group sessions were held where attendees proposed strategies to increase uptake.

Second phase

The second phase of the research project aims to implement interventions to increase uptake and then evaluate their effectiveness. The aim is for five primary and five secondary schools to participate in this phase - lasting from September 2007 to June 2008.

What will the interventions consist of?

The research team will work with participating schools to agree upon an individualised plan of action aimed at increasing free school meal uptake. The aim is to implement actions that are sustainable by the schools.

It is proposed that first a series of "**foundation**" level interventions are undertaken. These have been designed to ensure basic "must-dos" in terms of free school meals are in place including; ensuring the system of claiming is as easy as possible, that parents are aware of their entitlement and that stigma is minimised. It is hoped that these will take place during the autumn term.

At the same time it is proposed that a **survey of pupils and parents** is conducted. This would identify the key issues affecting uptake of school meals in each school.

During the spring or summer term of 2008 it is proposed that a second category of interventions takes places - "**building block**" activities. The aim of these is to tackle the particular issues that parents and pupils have raised in the survey. It is likely that these will increase both paid and free school meal uptake.

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[3] Turning the Tables: Transforming School Meals (DfES, 2005)

[4] Leeds School Meals Strategy: Transforming school food and drink in partnership (Education Leeds 2007). Available at http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals/

Measuring success

Success will be measured by monitoring the weekly update data of school meals and free school meals. A secondary measure will be a follow up survey conducted in the summer term.

In order to realise which interventions are responsible for any increases in uptake it is necessary to phase their implementation over the academic year. In addition as any extraordinary activity relating to school meals could impact upon the data it is important that the research team are aware of any such activities so they can adjust the evaluation accordingly.

What does taking part involve?

Taking part would involve working with the research team at Leeds Met to agree and implement the foundation and relevant building block interventions.

The research team at Leeds Met undertake to provide as much support and advice as is possible. They will co-ordinate the action plan, facilitate implementation, provide resources where necessary and ensure any activity is measurable.

We would suggest that the schools participation involves:
- Identifying a named key contact and setting up a working party within the school to work with the research team - see box below for a suggested list of members. Their role would be to help implement the agreed interventions.
- Providing regular data on paid and free school meal uptake
- Assisting in distributing two surveys in the school year. The first baseline survey (of parents and pupils) will establish the key areas for action. The follow up survey (summer 2008) will measure the impact of any changes. Leeds Met would help distribute the survey and analyse the results for the school.

Roles and responsibilities are detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Free School Meal Project Working Party
Suggested members
- A key named school representative. To serve as the main project contact / driver (this could be the Healthy School link worker but does not need to be)
- The catering manager and / or midday supervisor
- Administration support (for provision of data / FSM entitlement information)
- Pupil representation
- If in existence- parent support worker
- Any other party the school would like to be involved
- Leeds Met Researcher

Why has this school been chosen?

The research team have worked with colleagues in the project's steering group to select schools that have the largest potential in terms of increasing their uptake of free school meals. In order to ensure that the findings are as generalisable as possible the aim is to recruit schools that represent a variety of areas, ethnicities and catering providers.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Taking part will give your school the opportunity to:
- Trial new interventions and increase uptake levels. The interventions have been designed by drawing on best practise and experts in the area - it is therefore anticipated that the effects will be beneficial to your school.
- Have access to specific expertise in the area of school meals and nutrition
- Help contribute towards your Healthy Schools agenda and pupil participation

Do I have to take part?
Taking part is voluntary for everyone concerned.

What are the possible risks and disadvantages of taking part?
It is not anticipated that there should be any risks from taking part. We recognise that claiming for free school meals can be a sensitive issue for some pupils and parents. For that reason our approach has been carefully developed.

What will happen to the information?
All information will be stored safely and **only** the researchers at the University will have access to it. Anything that is said during any interviews / in the questionnaires is strictly confidential. However the researcher is bounded to pass on any information relating to any illegal activities.

The results of the study will be used in a report for Education Leeds. Journal papers will be written and results shared with other education and health professionals. Please note however that when reporting the results any comments, quotes or experiences used will be anonymous - *names will not be used at any point.*

Who is doing the research?
The Faculty of Health at Leeds Metropolitan University is doing the research. All research staff have enhanced CRB clearance. The team includes an expert (Dr Pinki Sahota) in the issue of childhood obesity. Full contact details are given below

(Contact details removed from appendix)

A Memorandum of Understanding

between XXXXXX and

the Faculty of Health, Leeds Metropolitan University (Leeds Met)

Regarding:

Leeds Free School Meal Research Project - Phase 2

October 2007

<u>Purpose</u>

The purpose of this document is to help ensure an effective working relationship with clear roles and responsibilities is established between the above parties in regards to participating in phase 2 of the Leeds Free School Meal Research Project.

<u>Roles and responsibilities</u>

The research team at **Leeds Metropolitan University** undertakes to:
- Share the results of the exploratory research phase with participating schools
- Suggest an action plan of interventions for the schools to participate in
- Assist schools with the implementation of the agreed interventions
- Organise the agreed resources for the interventions to take place
- Evaluate the data provided
- Serve as a link between the school and the project's steering group (see appendix 2 for a membership list)
- Disseminate the results of the project at a regional and national level – subject to keeping participants anonymous (see information sheet)

The **participating school** undertakes to:
- Assist the research team in agreeing and implementing the agreed interventions
- Develop a working party within the school to work with the research team at Leeds Met. It is anticipated that the working party should meet on a regular (monthly?) basis – to be agreed with `all parties.
- Provide weekly uptake data for school meals and free school meals
- Share with the research team at Leeds Met any additional activity relating to school meals that could impact on uptake figures

Summary

By working together we hope to:
- o Increase the uptake of free school meals within XXXXXXX
- o Learn what interventions are the most effective so we can inform others

We agree to the content of this Memorandum of Understanding:

Signed	Signed	Signed
Jenny Woodward Research Fellow Leeds Met	Dr Pinki Sahota Reader Leeds Met	XXXXXXXXX

Foundation Level Action Plan & Check List *(edited version for appendix)*

Key Aim 1: Ensure pupils feel comfortable claiming for their Free School Meals
• The process of claiming needs to minimise the opportunities for others to know who is entitled
• Claiming for free school meals needs to be understood / treated as normal / "a good thing" by all pupils/ nothing to be ashamed of
• Supportive systems need to be in place so pupils know who to go to if they are teased / bullied

Current Practice	
A. How do pupils currently obtain their free school meal?	*Detail the process below*
B. Are there any ways other pupils can find out who gets a free school meal?	*Detail the different ways other pupils may find out*
C. What systems are in place if a pupil is teased / bullied?	*Detail current policies / processes e.g. anti-bullying strategy / peer mentors*

Actions (Foundation Level)					
Overall	Method	How could this be implemented?	Who would do it?	When?	What support is needed?
Making	**Assembly on the ' History of School**				Leeds Met to provide

Actions (Foundation Level)					
Overall	**Method**	**How could this be implemented?**	**Who would do it?**	**When?**	**What support is needed?**
claiming for Free School Meals normal	**Meals' delivered by senior member of staff to highlight the 'welfare aspect ' of school meals by provision of FSM**				suggested outline
	Lesson – covering Food Choice and showing how the new food standards help achieve all aspects of this including FSMs : e.g.				Leeds Met to provide suggested outline
	Any other?				
Process of claiming Consider ways of altering how pupils claim so that they are not identifiable.	Potential options?				
Support Systems	**Designate a member of staff for pupils to contact if they have any problems**				
	Older pupil(s) as FSM contact for peer support or tap into existing learning mentoring schemes (**secondary only**)				
	Any other ideas?				
Anti-bullying policy	**Incorporate claiming for FSMs (poverty) into current anti-bullying agenda**				

Actions (Foundation Level)					
Overall	**Method**	**How could this be implemented?**	**Who would do it?**	**When?**	**What support is needed?**
	Include into any planned activity for anti-bullying week (19th – 23rd November)				
	Any other ideas?				

Key Aim 2: Communicating Effectively with Parents

- Ensure all parents are aware of their potential entitlement

- Ensure all parents know how to claim if they wish to do so

- Reassure parents about the system of claiming for their children (i.e. they won't be stigmatised)

- Ensure parents are aware of what pupils can get for their FSM allowance (i.e. amount of food / halal / vegetarian options)

Current Practice	
A. How does the school inform parents about their entitlement currently?	*Detail methods used*
B. Are there any particular groups of parents that may be less aware of their entitlement?	
C. What might parents need reassuring about?	

Foundation Level Actions					
Overall	**Method**	**Key Messages**	**Who would do it?**	**When?**	**Is any support needed?**
Communication with parents Which are appropriate for your school?	**ALL PARENTS** • **Letter / flyer** • Posters within school • Presence at events (e.g. parent evenings) • In school newsletter / website **PARENTS NOT TAKING (on claiming list)** • Letter / flyer Via Parent Support Workers (or similar)?				
	Any other ideas / methods?				
Communication with pupils	**Flyer for pupils showing the amount of food that can be bought for the FSM allowance (secondary only)**	*Where positioned / how many needed.*			

Are there any other actions that you would like to consider taking to increase the uptake of free school meals?
If these are SPECIFIC to free school meals this can be done during the same period. If, cover both free and paid school meals – to be considered for building block intervention phase.

Excluded Pupils
Are excluded pupils (either permanent or fixed period only) able to still collect their free school meals? If so, how?

School Meal Policy
Is there a school food policy? If so, how is it communicated to parents / pupils?

Is there a policy on what pupils can put in their packed lunches? i.e. what pupils are / are not allowed to bring? If so, please could you describe.

Are packed lunch and school meal pupils allowed to sit together? If not, how is this organised?

Please outline **the times** when food is on sale at school and briefly describe **what food is available**
Breakfast club
Morning break
Lunchtime
After school club
Vending machines
Any other

Is there a way pupils / parents can feedback about school food? If yes, describe (e.g. school council / other less formal ways)
Are school meals in general actively promoted to parents / pupils? If yes, how is this done?

Please attach copies of the following (if available).
- School menu / prices (if applicable)
- School food policy
- Any communication to parents / pupils re school food

Appendix 2.4: Assembly and lesson plan

Title: The History of School Meals

Aims:
To highlight the 'welfare aspect' of school meals by provision of free school meals'

Objectives:
- To understand why school meals were originally brought in
- To understand the importance of a well balanced school meal
- To understand that school meals are available for everyone and cater for different dietary needs
- To understand that school food has changed for the better and to celebrate the food served at your school

The History of the School Meals Service

1879: Manchester provides free school meals to 'destitute and badly nourished children'.

1889: London School Board establishes a School Dinners Association.

1892: Bradford school board allows the use of school cellars to prepare and serve dinners to poor children. School meals are provided by 45 boards.

1893: An inter-departmental committee reports on the poor physique of volunteers during the Boer War. Compulsory education highlights the problem of underfed children. Over 350 voluntary bodies provide meals for underfed children.

1906: The Education Act empowers local education authorities (LEAs) to contribute to the costs incurred by school canteen committees. Boards of education are given powers (but not compelled) to provide free meals to the poorest children.

1924: Free milk in schools is introduced.

1940: National school meals policy is introduced. The government initially provides 70% of the cost of meals, increasing to 95% in the following year. Price of school meal is fixed at 5d.

1941: The first nutritional standards for school meals were set. A school dinner should provide a child with 1,000kca, 20-25g of first class protein and 30g fat (in all forms)

1944: The 1944 Education Act requires LEAs to provide a meal to every child in a maintained school who wants one.

1947: The full cost of school meals is met by the government.

1950: A standard charge for the school meal was introduced in 1950, with remission arrangements for those unable to pay

1955: Nutritional standards were updated

1967: The 100% grant for school meals expenditure is withdrawn and replaced by a system of general rate support.

1979: White Paper on public expenditure estimates the cost of school meals at £380million and targets to reduce this to £190 million by lowering the quality of the service through greater use of convenience foods.

1980: The new Education Act gives LEAs the power to axe the school meals service.

There are only two statutory requirements:
● LEAs must ensure that children whose parents receive supplementary benefit or family income supplement receive a free meal
● Facilities must be provided for pupils who bring their own food.
Charges now range from 35p to 55p per meal. Cafeterias are introduced in secondary schools.

1982 : As more budget cuts are introduced, cash cafeterias are encouraged in secondary schools.

1987: The Social Security Act 1986 comes into force. Children of parents in receipt of income support are still eligible for free school meals; those in receipt of family credit have the price of the meal nominally included in the benefit. As a result, thousands of children lose their entitlement – 49.4% of school children now have school meals. CPAG publishes One Good Meal A Day: the loss of free school meals.

1988: The Local Government Act forces LEAs to put the provision of school meals out to competitive tendering.

1991: The rise of compulsory competitive tendering leads to cuts in school meals services.

1992: The further tightening of eligibility rules for income support means that only people working under 16 hours a week are eligible to claim free school meals, compared with 24 hours previously. 11% of local authorities cease to provide school meals beyond their statutory requirement.

2001
Minimum nutritional standards for school lunches were re-introduced in England.

2002
The Education act 2002 amended free school meal eligibility criteria to include pupils whose parents are in receipt of income support, income based job seekers allowance or support under the immigration and Asylum act (1999), as well as those parents receive child tax credit (provided they are not entitled to working family tax credit and have an annual income that does not exceed a specified amount.

2004
The Department for education and skills, the department of Health, the food standards Agency and the department for Environment, food and rural affairs published the *healthy living blueprint for schools.* This included a proposed review of the nutritional standards for school meals, inclusion of more nutrition teaching in the curriculum and increased physical activity in the timetable

November 2004, the Government published the white paper *Choosing Health.* It set out the government commitment to revise primary and secondary school meal standards to reduce the consumption of fat, sugar and salt and increase fruit and vegetables and other essential nutrients. The department also committed to strongly considering introducing nutrient based standards and extending new standards to cover food served in school across the school day

2005
The Department of Education and skills announced a number of measures to improve food in schools including training of catering staff in healthy eating, the inclusion of school food in the OFSTED inspection programme.

March 2005, The Department of Health published Delivering Choosing Health. This made a commitment to bring in new statutory requirements for primary and secondary school meals by 2006

March 2005, the School Food Trust set up a new Non-Departmental Public Body whose role would be to give independent support and advice to schools and parents to improve the standard of school meals.

April 2005, the department of Health launched the Food in Schools programme to assist schools across England in implementing a whole school food approach to healthy eating and drinking, including advice and resources on breakfast clubs, packed lunches, vending, tuck shops, dining rooms, cooking clubs and water provision

2006
September 2006, new Interim food based standards for school lunch introduced in all schools

2007
September 2007, new food based standards for school food other than lunch introduced in all schools

2008
September 2008, Primary school to meet nutrient based standards and new food based standards

2009
September 2009, Secondary schools to meet new nutrient based standards and new food based standards

Source:
1. *McMahon W and Marsh T (1999) Filling the Gap: free school meals, nutrition and poverty. Child Poverty Action Group: London.*1906)
2. *Eating well at school.* Caroline Walker Trust 2005

Teacher's information for Assembly and lesson plan

1. Information on the History of school meals

   http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/snapshots/snapshot29/snapshot29.htm
   The National Archives: School dinners. Why were school dinners brought in?

   http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk/britain1906to1918/g1/cs1/g1cs1.htm
   Case studies – children's health 1903 and call to introduce school meals

   http://www.20thcenturysparks.org.uk/page_id__12_path__0p15p.aspx
   School dinners historically

   http://www.dg.dial.pipex.com/articles/educ25.shtml
   Food for thought: child nutrition, the school dinner and the food industry
   Article by Derek Gillard
   June 2003

2. Photographs
   http://www.scienceandsociety.co.uk/results.asp
   Children with rickets

3. The eatwell plate

   http://www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/eatwellplate/
   Information about the 'eatwell plate' (Healthy eating teaching tool)

4. Lesson plans
   http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/documents.asp?DocCatId=9

5. School Food and drink Information

   http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/
   The School Food Trust: Excellent website – information on the school food
   standards, case studies, resources, guidance and much more

   http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthyliving/schoolfoodanddrink/
   Information about the new standards and useful websites

Appendix 2.5: Poster Version 1

Appendix 2.6: Poster Version 2

Appendix 2.7: Poster Version 3

Appendix 2.8: Postcard reverse (copy only) primary schools

Dear Parents and Carers,

School dinners have changed, in fact, all food served at school has changed. There are more fruit and vegetables, more freshly cooked foods, more bread and free fresh drinking water. Gone are many of the ready made foods, the regular chips and the crisps and chocolates. Instead the meals are balanced tasty meals, with plenty to choose from.

The food is carefully thought out to cater for all needs including special menus for medical reasons e.g. gluten free diets, for religious and cultural reasons e.g. halal meat or for ethical reasons e.g. vegetarians. Some children are eligible to get their meals for free - if you have any questions about whether or not your child/children could get free school meals please contact MR /MRS X *(name completed for each particular school)*

 If you haven't already, take a look at the menus at your child's school and see if your children have seen and tasted the new food on offer.

Yours Sincerely,

Leeds Metropolitan University

P.S. Thank you to all those parents/carers who completed and returned the recent questionnaire about school meals, the winner of the shopping vouchers was a parent from X primary school

Appendix 2.9: Postcard reverse (copy only) secondary schools

Dear Parents and Carers,

School dinners have changed, in fact, all food served at school has changed. There are more fruit and vegetables, more freshly cooked foods, more bread and free fresh drinking water. Gone are many of the ready made foods, the regular chips and the crisps and chocolates. Instead the meals are balanced tasty meals, with plenty to choose from.

The food is carefully thought out to cater for all needs including special menus for medical reasons e.g. gluten free diets, for religious and cultural reasons e.g. halal meat or for ethical reasons e.g. vegetarians. Some children are eligible to get their meals for free - if you have any questions about whether or not your child/children could get free school meals please contact MR /MRS X *(name completed for each particular school)*

 If you haven't already, take a look at the menus at your child's school and see if your children have seen and tasted the new food on offer.

Yours Sincerely,

Leeds Metropolitan University

P.S. Thank you to all those parents/carers who completed and returned the recent questionnaire about school meals, the winner of the shopping vouchers was a parent from X secondary school

Appendix 2.10: Letter for all parents regarding entitlement (primary)

Insert school address

Dear parents and carers,

School dinners have changed in the past few years, in fact all food served at school has changed. More food is cooked from fresh ingredients and more fruit and vegetables and bread are served. Gone are many of the ready made foods, the regular chips and the crisps and chocolates. Instead the meals are balanced and tasty, with plenty to choose from.

The food is carefully thought out to provide for all needs including diets for medical reasons e.g. gluten free diets; for religious and cultural reasons e.g. halal meat or ethical reasons e.g. vegetarians. In Leeds, Education Leeds has been encouraging this change with training provided to school catering staff and teachers, improvement of the school dining rooms, and the creation of school ambassadors to help children to have their say.

Take a look at the questions in the boxes below- which box applies to you box A or box B? Now answer the questions in the box to assess your family's opportunity for free school meals

Box A **Is your child already entitled to a free school meal?**	**Box B** **Are you wondering if your child could be entitled to a free school meal?**
1. Does your child actually eat their school meal? 2. Does your child spend money on food outside of the school at lunchtime? 3. Are you spending money on providing them with packed lunches? 4. **If your child takes their free school meal then you are saving at least £331.50 (key stage 1) or £341.25 (key stage 2) per year**	**If you receive ANY of the following, your child can have free school meals:** 1. Income support (IS) 2. Income- Based Job Seekers allowance (JSA-IB) 3. Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (PGC) 4. Child Tax Credit (but <u>not</u> Working Tax Credit)- if your Annual Taxable Income as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs is less than £15,595 5. Section 95 or Section 4 Asylum Seeker Support from the UK Border Agency

If you have any questions about your free school meals please contact (insert the name of the person identified for this role)

If you haven't seen already what is on offer for school lunch take a look at the menus at your child's school and ask your children if they have seen and tasted the new food on offer.

Yours Sincerely,

Appendix 2.11: Letter for all parents regarding entitlement (secondary)

Insert School Address

Dear parents and carers,

School dinners have changed in the past few years, in fact all food served at school has changed. More food is cooked from fresh ingredients and more fruit and vegetables and bread are served. Gone are many of the ready made foods, the regular chips and the crisps and chocolates. Instead the meals are balanced and tasty, with plenty to choose from.

The food is carefully thought out to provide for all needs including diets for medical reasons e.g. gluten free diets; for religious and cultural reasons e.g. halal meat or ethical reasons e.g. vegetarians. In Leeds, Education Leeds has been encouraging this change with training provided to school catering staff and teachers, improvement of the school dining rooms, and the creation of school ambassadors to help children to have their say.

Take a look at the questions in the boxes below- which box applies to you box A or box B? Now answer the questions in the box to assess your family's opportunity for free school meals

<table>
<tr>
<td>

Box A
Is your child already entitled to a free school meal?

5. Does your child actually eat their school meal?

6. Does your child spend money on food outside of the school at lunchtime?

7. Are you spending money on providing them with packed lunches?

8. **If your child takes their free school meal then you are saving at least £351 per year**

</td>
<td>

Box B
Are you wondering if your child could be entitled to a free school meal?

If you receive ANY of the following, your child can have free school meals:
6. Income support (IS)
7. Income- Based Job Seekers allowance (JSA-IB)
8. Pension Credit Guarantee Credit (PGC)
9. Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit)- if your Annual Taxable Income as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs is less than £15,595
10. Section 95 or Section 4 Asylum Seeker Support from the UK Border Agency

</td>
</tr>
</table>

If you have any questions about your free school meals please contact MR /MRS X

If you haven't seen already what is on offer for school lunch take a look at the menus at your child's school and ask your children if they have seen and tasted the new food on offer.

Yours Sincerely,

Name of school

Appendix 2.12: Letter for those parents whose children are entitled but are not taking (primary schools)

School Name

Dear Parent / Carer,

Save more than £330 a year!
Do you know that your child (or children) can have a free school meal?
This is worth **£331 per year** if they are in Key Stage 1. Or **£341 per year** if they are in Key Stage 2.

Why not come and try a school dinner?
School meals at *(name of school)* have changed a lot recently. In a recent survey, half the pupils said the food was "delicious" or "good" and that there was lots of choice. *(Fact varied depending on school)*

We've attached a menu so you can see for yourself what's served.   Most is now homemade with plenty of fresh produce. If you'd like to try one yourself you are always welcome – just let Mrs X *(name inserted)* in the school office know when you'd like to come in.

It's easy to claim
If you would like your child to start having their free school meal please come and see Mrs X in the school office. She will make sure they get them from the following week.

Please complete the slip below.

Yours sincerely,

Your name: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _   Contact Number: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Child / children's name: _

      Yes, I would like to come in and try a school meal   [ ]

      Yes, I would like my child to have their Free School Meal   [ ]

      No, I would like my child to keep bringing in a packed lunch   [ ]
      If this is the case, please say why below.

      _

Appendix 2.13: Data capture template – primary schools (actual data capture sheet was in XI and included a space for additional information to be added)

FREE SCHOOL MEAL RESEARCH PROJECT: Data Capture Sheet for Primary Schools

School Name:		Completed by:		Date:	

Instructions:

1. PLEASE FILL IN THE SHADED BOXES ONLY - other numbers will be calculated automatically. Any queries please see the notes below.

All figures to be for Reception Year pupils upwards - i.e. not nursery school pupils

2. If you have any queries please see the notes at the bottom of the page or contact the Free School Meal Research Team.

Please make sure you use the same source of information each week - otherwise the results will be inconsistent over the year.

3. At the end of each calendar month please return to: The Free School Meal Research Team via post / telephone or email (see contact details below)

Week Commencing	Number of pupils on school roll (1)	Number of pupils entitled to Free School Meals				School Meal Numbers		% Uptakes		Number of pupils NOT taking the FSMs they are entitled to	
		From Leeds (2)	From outside of Leeds (3)	Asylum Seekers (4)	Total	TOTAL paid pupil meals taken in the week (5)	TOTAL free meals eaten in the week (5)	% PAID uptake	% FREE uptake		
Example only	550	250	20	10	280	500	650	37%	46%	150	
w/c											
w/c											

Note Number	Information	Any
1	Include pupils from Reception to Year 6 (i.e. not nursery school pupils)	
2	Supplied by Leeds Benefit Services on weekly AVCO reports. Please exclude nursery pupils.	Cont
3	If pupils are from OUTSIDE Leeds their entitlement will come from their relevant benefits authority. Schools will be notified of this separately by that benefit service.	Cont
4	Asylum seekers are entitled to FSMs but do not appear on the weekly AVCO reports (as they qualify under separate legislation). LBS have a list of asylum seekers that is sent out termly to schools. Also, at point of admission EL should provide documentation.	Cont
5	*Catering Agency Supplied Schools* - this data is already supplied to the catering agency (by the catering staff) on "Revised Form 7". It is also contained on "Form 9" which gives data by class (this is retained by the school and kept for auditing purposes). *PFI Schools* - this data should be available by speaking to your contractor.	Cont
6	Please note down anything that you think might have meant school meal numbers were either higher or lower than usual. E.g. one class out on a school trip / a 4 day week / a theme day.	Cont

School Lunch Worksheet

We want to know what you think about the school dinners at your school.

1. First some questions about you.

a) Are you a boy or a girl? *Please tick <u>one</u> box.*

      I am a boy   ☐

      I am a girl   ☐

b) What is your date of birth? _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
   (Day – Month – Year)

c) Do you only eat vegetarian food at home? *A vegetarian is a person who does not eat meat or fish? Please tick <u>one</u> box.*

      Yes   ☐

      No   ☐

      I don't know   ☐

d) Do you only eat halal food at home? *This is food that Muslims are allowed to eat. Please tick <u>one</u> box.*

      Yes   ☐

      No   ☐

      I don't know   ☐

e) Do you only eat kosher food at home? *This is food that Jewish people can eat. Please tick <u>one</u> box.*

      Yes   ☐

      No   ☐

      I don't know   ☐

Now we want to ask you about school dinners

You might have tried school dinners in the past and now eat packed lunches, however we are still interested in your views.

Please answer the questions on this worksheet. There are no right or wrong answers; we just want to know what you think!

1. **What dinner /lunch do you have at school?** .

    I have a school dinner/lunch ☐

    I have a packed dinner/lunch ☐

    I go home for dinner/lunch ☐

2. **If you take a packed lunch have you ever tried a school dinner/lunch?**

    Yes ☐

    No ☐

3. **Do you like the dinners/lunches served at your school?** *Tick one box.*

    Yes – I like them a lot ☐

    I think they are okay ☐

    No – I do not like them ☐

    I don't know ☐

4. What are the **best** things about the dinners/lunches served
    at your school?
    Write or draw whatever you think.

5. What are the **worst** things about the dinners/lunches served
at your school?
    Write or draw whatever you think.

6. Fill in the gaps using a word from the box. Use the word
    that **best** matches what you think about the dinners/
    lunches served at your school

a) The **dining room** is a _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ place to be

| nice   fun |
| boring horrid |

b) The food **looks** _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

| delicious   good   okay |
| bad   horrid |

c) There is _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ food to choose from

| lots of / |
| not enough |

d) I am given _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _food to eat

| lots of / |
| not enough |

e) The food **tastes**_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

| delicious   good   okay |
| bad   horrid |

7. Which of these are TRUE and which are Not True?
Tick <u>one</u> box for each sentence.

	True	Sometimes True	Not true
a) There are often long queues (waiting in a line) for a school dinner/ lunch.			
b) There is enough time to eat a school dinner/lunch			
c) You can eat your school dinner/lunch with your friends			
d) You are still hungry after having a school dinner/lunch			
e) The seating area is messy			
f) The dining room is noisy			

8. What school food do you **like?**

9. What school food do you **not like?**

10. Which of these would make school dinner/lunch better?
Tick as many as you want.

a) More choice of food

b) More healthy food

c) Bigger portions of food

d) More vegetarian food
A vegetarian is a person who does not eat meat or fish

e) More halal food
This is food that Muslims are allowed to eat

f) More Kosher food
This is food that Jewish people can eat

g) Shorter queues

h) Being able to sit with my friends

i) A nicer dining room

j) More seats

11. What else would make **school dinner/lunch better?**

12. If you have a packed lunch, what would make you change to having a **school dinner/lunch?**

Thank you!

Dear Pupil,

What do you think about your school meals?
You may remember completing a questionnaire about school meals earlier this year. We need to know if anything has changed since then, so we'd be grateful if you could complete this again. It should take no more than 20 minutes.

Like before, we want to know what you think about the meals served at your school; why some of you eat them and others don't. We're also trying to find out why some pupils who are entitled to free school meals don't eat them.

What you tell us will be used to make changes to the meals served in your school. Your comments will also be shared with Education Leeds so they can make changes across Leeds.

The information you give us is confidential and anonymous. That means we won't use your name at any point when reporting the results. The researchers at the university will keep all the responses safe.

When you have finished, please hand it back to your teacher.

Thank you very much for your help – again.

Faculty of Health
Leeds Met University

This section asks you what you do for lunch when you are at school.
After each question please circle _**one box**_ that best matches what you have **usually** done for lunch this term.

1. How often do you **buy lunch** at school? This could be a hot meal or a cold meal such as a sandwich.

Every day (5 times a week)	4 times a week	3 times a week	2 times a week	Once a week	Never

2. How often do you bring in a **packed lunch**?

Every day (5 times a week)	4 times a week	3 times a week	2 times a week	Once a week	Never

3. How often do you **go out** of school to buy something to eat?

Every day (5 times a week)	4 times a week	3 times a week	2 times a week	Once a week	Never

4. How often do you go **home** for lunch?

Every day (5 times a week)	4 times a week	3 times a week	2 times a week	Once a week	Never

5. How often do you have **nothing to eat** at lunch?

Every day (5 times a week)	4 times a week	3 times a week	2 times a week	Once a week	Never

6. If you do anything else for lunch at school please comment below e.g. have nothing to eat at all, or I take my main school meal at morning break time

…………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………………..

Section 2: Your School Meals

This section asks you **what you think** about the school meals served at your school. It will ask for your opinion on lots of different aspects of school lunches.

7. What do you think of the school meal service at your school in general?
Please circle **_one box_** only.

I like them a lot	I quite like them	I don't like them very much	I don't like them at all	I don't know

THE SCHOOL DINING ROOM (OR CANTEEN)

These are statements that other pupils have made about their school dining rooms. Thinking about your own - please circle **_one box_** under each statement to show how much you agree or disagree with it.

8. There are often long queues to be served at lunch-time

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

9. The dining area is a nice place to be

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

10. The seating area is often over-crowded

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

11. I have enough time to eat my lunch

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

12. The seating area is messy

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

13. The staff are not very helpful

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

14. I get to sit with my friends

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

15. The dining room is very noisy

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

16. It is clear what is on offer every day

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

17. If you have **any other comments** about your **school dining room** please write them here.

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………..

THE FOOD SERVED

These are statements that other pupils have made about their school meals.
Thinking about your own school - please circle **_one box_** under each statement to
show how much you agree or disagree with it.

18. The food tastes good

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

19. The portion sizes are too small

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

20. The food looks nice

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

21. There is plenty of choice

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

22. They don't serve the type of food I like to eat

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

23. The food costs too much

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

24. There are not many vegetarian options

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

25. There are not enough options for my special diet requirements (e.g. dairy free, gluten free)

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

26. I get a chance to say what I think about the food

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

27. If you have any other comments to make about the **food served** at your school please write them here.

…………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………..
…………………………………………………………………………………..

28. This question asks you **how important** each of the following are for you - please circle **one box** for each.

a. Being served quickly	Very important	Quite important	Not important
b. Having somewhere to sit	Very important	Quite important	Not important
c. A clean dining room	Very important	Quite important	Not important
d. Helpful staff	Very important	Quite important	Not important
e. Having enough time to eat	Very important	Quite important	Not important
f. Being able to sit with my friends	Very important	Quite important	Not important
g. The food tasting good	Very important	Quite important	Not important
h. Portion sizes being big enough	Very important	Quite important	Not important
i. The food looking nice	Very important	Quite important	Not important
j. Having plenty of choice	Very important	Quite important	Not important
k. Having the type of food I like to eat	Very important	Quite important	Not important
l. Being a price I can afford	Very important	Quite important	Not important
m. Having vegetarian options *(contains no meat or fish)*	Very important	Quite important	Not important
n. Having halal options *(This is food that Muslims are allowed to eat)*	Very important	Quite important	Not important
o. Having kosher options *(This is food that Jewish people can eat)*	Very important	Quite important	Not important

29. Which of the things listed below would make you choose a school meal more often? Please tick **_all_** that apply.

A wider range of food	
Healthier food	
Less queuing time	
Cheaper prices	
More helpful staff	
A nicer dining room	
More seating	
Food being more clearly labelled	
Bigger portions	
Being able to taste the food before buying it	
Chance to win prizes	
Theme days	
Other (please describe below)	

30. Is there anything else that would **improve** the school meals in your school? If so, please comment below.

…………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Section 3: Free School Meals

31. Are you entitled to Free School Meals? **Yes:** ☐   **No:** ☐

    If yes, please go to question 32

    If no, please go to question 42 (section 4)

Below are some statements that other pupils have made about claiming for free school meals. Please circle ***one box*** that best matches how you feel claiming for your free school meal.

32. I feel comfortable having a Free School Meal

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

33. The Free School Meal allowance is enough for me to get plenty to eat

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

34. I feel embarrassed claiming for my Free School Meal

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

35. The school encourages me to take my Free School Meal

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

36. I worry other pupils might tease me about having a Free School Meal

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

37. Claiming for a Free School Meal is easy

Agree	Not sure	Disagree

38. In your school you have a cashless system; do you think this encourages you to have a free school meal?

Yes	
I'm not sure	
No	

38a. If YES please could you explain why?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

38b. If NO please could you explain why?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

39. Is there anything else that would encourage you to take your Free School Meal more often? If so, please comment below.

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………….

40. How much money is your free school meal allowance? £

41. Do you spend your free school meal allowance at:

Morning break	Lunchtime	Both morning break and lunchtime

Please circle one box only.

Section 4: About You

42. Are you male or female?

      Male ☐   Female ☐

43. What is your date of birth? …………………

44. How old are you? …..…………………………………………………..

45. What class are you in? …………………………………………..

46. What school do you go to? …………………………………………..

47. Do you have any special dietary requirements?
Please tick _**either yes or no**_ against each question.

      a. Are you a vegetarian? *A vegetarian is a person who does not eat meat or fish*

         Yes: ☐   **No:** ☐

      b. Are you a vegan? *A vegan is a person who does not eat any food that has come from an animal and eats only plant foods*

         Yes: ☐   **No:** ☐

      c. Do you only eat halal food? *This is food that Muslims are allowed to eat*

         Yes: ☐   **No:** ☐

      d. Do you only eat kosher food? *This is food that Jewish people can eat*

         Yes: ☐   **No:** ☐

      e. Do you have any food allergies? **Yes:** ☐   **No:** ☐
         If yes, what are these?
        …………………………………………………………………………………
        …………………………………………………………………………………

      f. Do you have any other special dietary requirements? **Yes:** ☐   **No:** ☐
        If yes, what are these?
        …………………………………………………………………………………
        …………………………………………………………………………………

48. How would you describe your ethnic origin? *(Please **tick <u>one</u> only**)*

White	British	
	Irish	
	Any other white background *Please write here …………………*	
Mixed	White and Black Caribbean	
	White and Black African	
	White and Asian	
	Any other mixed background *Please write here …………………*	
Asian or Asian British	Indian	
	Pakistani	
	Bangladeshi	
	Any other Asian background *Please write here …………………*	
Black or Black British	Caribbean	
	African	
	Any other black background *Please write here …………………*	
Chinese or other ethnic group	Chinese Any other *Please write here …………………*	
Not sure	*If you feel that the above options do not properly describe your ethnic group, please describe it here in your own words …………………………………..* *…………………………………………..*	

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.
Please hand it to your teacher.

Appendix 2.16: Briefing notes for primary pupil questionnaire

**Instructions for distributing the
Free School Meal Research Project Pupil Questionnaire
(Primary School)**

Thank you for agreeing to distribute this questionnaire to your pupils. This is part of the Free School Meal Research Project being conducted by Leeds Metropolitan University, as commissioned by Education Leeds.

This research aims to find out what some of your pupils think about their school meals. It aims to find out why some eat school meals and some don't and what may encourage them to do so. Specifically it aims to:
- Assess uptake of school meals / other forms of lunch
- Assess attitudes towards (satisfaction of) school meals
- Identify key issues affecting school meal uptake including food and environmental issues
- Identify areas for action

Who should complete the questionnaire?
The questionnaire has been designed for **Year 5 pupils** - regardless of what they have for lunch. We need to make sure we can trace the pupils so we can survey the same group again at the end of the year.

How should it be distributed?
1. Select a time period where the pupils have about 20 minutes free to complete the questionnaire

2. Explain to the pupils why they are filling it in (i.e. to find out what they think of school lunches so they can be improved)

3. Emphasise that:
   o Filling it in is **voluntary**. If they don't want to complete it, they don't have to. Or if there are any questions they don't want (or can't answer) they don't have to.
   o Their answers are **anonymous**. We're looking for general themes and their answers will not be matched to their names. When we are reporting back none of their names will be used.
   o The information they give will be used to help improve school meals and will also be reported back to Education Leeds.

4. Hand each pupil a copy of the questionnaire and ask them to complete it remembering:
   o That there are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know their opinion.
   o Not to look at / talk about their answers with their friends
   o When they have finished, the pupils should hand it to the researcher or teacher
   o If pupils don't understand any of the questions please feel free to explain it to them – but let them come up with the answers themselves.

5. If possible, hand the completed questionnaires to the admin member of the project steering group. If they could mark on each questionnaire whether or not that pupil is claiming for a free school meal that would be very helpful.

6. Please pass all the completed questionnaires onto the researcher at Leeds Met University. They will then analyse the responses and report back to the Free School Meal Research Project working party.

If you have any further questions please refer to the information sheet provided or contact a member of the research team.

(NB information sheet – as per school pack, appendix 2.1 was also included)

Appendix 2.17: Briefing notes for secondary pupil questionnaire

Instructions for distributing the
Free School Meal Research Project Pupil Questionnaire
(Secondary School)

You may remember assisting us in distributing this questionnaire last year as part of the Free School Meal Research Project, conducted by Leeds Metropolitan University, as commissioned by Education Leeds. Thank you for agreeing to distribute this questionnaire once more so that we can measure any change following the interventions that took place during the project period.

Who should complete the questionnaire?
The questionnaire has been designed for **Year 9 pupils** – it is intended to be given to the same Year 8 classes that completed it last year, whether or not the pupils are entitled to a Free School Meal and regardless of what they have for lunch.

How should the questionnaire be distributed?
4. Select a time period where the pupils have about 30 minutes to complete it.

5. Explain the aims of the project to the pupils.

6. Emphasise to them that:
    o Their participation is **voluntary**. If they don't want to complete it, they don't have to. Or if there are any questions they don't want to answer, again, they don't have to.
    o Their answers are **anonymous**. We have not asked for their names so it is vital that they complete their **date of birth** and **gender** correctly. We're looking for general themes and their answers will not be matched to their class
    o The information they give will be reported back to Education Leeds.

4. Hand each pupil a copy of the questionnaire. Please ask them to read the covering letter and to complete the questionnaire remembering:
    o That there are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know their opinion.
    o Not to look at what their neighbour / friend is completing
    o When they have finished, the pupils should hand it to the teacher

5. Please store the completed questionnaires securely and they will be collected by one of the research team from Leeds Met University. They will then analyse the responses and report back to the Free School Meal Research Project working party.

You may recall that this research aims to find out why some young people eat school meals, particularly free school meals, and some don't. It also aims to find out what can be done to improve school meals so more pupils want to eat them. Specifically the questionnaire has been designed to:
• Assess uptake of school meals / other forms of lunch
• Assess attitudes towards (satisfaction of) school meals
• Identify key issues affecting school meal uptake including food and environmental issues
• Assess why Free School Meals specifically are not taken up
• Identify areas for action

If you have any further questions about completing the questionnaire, or regarding the project as a whole, please contact a member of the research team.

Thank You

SCHOOL MEALS QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Parent or Carer,

Would you like to win £30 of shopping vouchers?

We'd like to know what you think about the schools meals served at your child's school. We're trying to find out how they could be improved and what would encourage more children to eat them.

Every completed questionnaire from a parent or carer will be entered into a free prize draw to win £30 of shopping vouchers.

This survey is being run by the Faculty of Health at Leeds Metropolitan University. It is part of a project commissioned by Education Leeds to investigate how school meals can be improved. The school your child attends is one of those taking part.

What you tell us will be shared with Education Leeds. Please be assured that the information you give us is confidential and anonymous – your name will not be used at any point. The researchers at Leeds Metropolitan University will keep all the responses safe.

Giving your name, address and telephone number is optional and will only be needed if you want to be entered into the prize draw.

Please answer the questions as honestly as you can. It only takes about ten minutes to complete. It works best if you are able to answer every question for us. However, if there is anything you would rather not answer, we respect that.

Please return the completed questionnaire by (date) to the school office. We would like to thank you very much for your help.

Faculty of Health
Leeds Met University

Your Details
If you would like to be entered into the prize draw please complete your details over the page. Please note this section is optional. *(NB deleted for appendix version)*

This section will be removed from the questionnaire and only be used by Leeds Metropolitan University for the free prize draw.
Remember **your name will not be used at any point** when reporting results.

SECONDARY SCHOOL MEAL SURVEY

Name of School: ……………………………

Section 1: SCHOOL LUNCHES OR NOT?

1. How many children of school age do you have? Please circle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 or more

2. What do your children currently do for lunch? Please tick _**for each child**_
(e.g. if you have 4 children you will need to put 4 ticks**)**

Have a school lunch   [   ]
Bring a packed lunch   [   ]
Go home for lunch   [   ]
Go out at lunchtime to buy their lunch   [   ]
Other   [   ]
Please write what this is ……………..…………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………

Section 2: ABOUT PACKED LUNCHES - Please circle one box

3. Does your child take a packed lunch?

Yes	No	Sometimes

4. If your child takes a packed lunch, please could you explain why?

……………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………..

5. Would you like some advice about what makes up a healthy balanced
packed lunch for your child?

Yes	No	Don't know

6. Would you like some ideas and suggestions for healthy packed lunches?

Yes	No	Don't know

7. Do you think that all schools should have a packed lunch policy i.e. say
what is allowed or not allowed in packed lunches?

Yes	No	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………………..……………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

Section 3: ABOUT THE SCHOOL MEALS

We'd like to know what you think about the school meals at your child's school.

After each statement please circle _**one box**_ that best matches what you think and add any further comments you wish to make.

8. The **quality** of the food served is:

Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………..……………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

9. The **choice** of food served is:

Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………..……………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

10. The **portion sizes** are:

Too small	About right	Too big	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………..……………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

11. The **price** of a school meal is:

Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………..……………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

12. The **dining room** facilities are:

Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………..……………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………

13. My **child likes** the type of food served:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………..…………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………

14. Please tell us if there is any food item or meals you would like on the menu at your child's school?

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………….……….

…………………………………………………………………………….……………

………………………………………………………………………………………

…….

15. What would **improve** the school meal service at your child's school?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………….……

…………………………………………………………………………………….……

…………………………………………………………………………………………

………….

16. What would encourage more children to take a school meal?

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………..

17. Have you heard about any of the changes in school meals taking place at your child's schools?

Yes	No	Don't know

18. Would you like to know more about the meals served at your child's school?

Yes	No	Don't know

For the next three questions we would like to know if in the last year (i.e. since January 2008) you have had any further information from your child's school regarding the school meals. After each statement please circle ***one box*** that best matches what you think and add any further comments you wish to make.

19. Have you received any letters from your child's school regarding school meals?

Yes	No	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………….…………………………..

………………………………………………….……………………………….

20. Have you seen an example of the kind of meal that is available to your child at school?

Yes	No	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………….…………………………..

………………………………………………………………………………….

21. Have you had the chance to taste the food or eat a meal served at your child's school?

Yes	No	Don't know

Any further comments? …………………………….…………………………..

………………………………………………….……………………………….

Section 3: FREE SCHOOL MEALS

22. Is your child or children entitled to Free School Meals?
        Yes: □   **No:** □   **Don't know**: □

    If yes, please complete this section
    If no or don't know, please go Section 4.

23. Does your child or children eat Free School Meals?
        Always: □
        Sometimes: □   *If always,* please go to question 23.
        Never: □   *If never or sometimes*, please go to question 26

24. Why do he/she/they **not** eat Free School Meals?

    …………………………………………………………………………………

    …....……………………………………………………………………………

    ………….……………………………………………………………………

    ………….………………………………………………………………………

    ……..

25. What would encourage your child/children to eat their Free School Meals **more often**?

    …………………………………………………………………………………..

    …………………………………………………………………………………..

    …………………………………………………………………………………..

    …………………………………………………………………………………..

26. Is the Free School Meal allowance enough?
    Yes: □   **No:** □

    If no, please say how much you think it should be: £………….. per day

27. Do your and your child/children feel comfortable claiming for Free School Meals?
    Yes: □   **No:** □
    If no, please say why this is
    ………………………..
    …………………………………………………………………………………
    …………………………………………………………………………………

28. Does your child know that he/she has free school meals?
    Yes: □   **No:** □
    If no, please say why this is
    ………………………..
    …………………………………………………………………………………

Section 4: THANK YOU

**Please place the completed questionnaire into the envelope provided
and give it to the school office at your child's school by Oct/08.**
        Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix 2.19: Parent questionnaire – post-intervention

SCHOOL MEALS QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Parent or Carer,

Another chance to win £30 of shopping vouchers
You may remember being asked some questions about school meals earlier this year. We'd like to find out whether your views have changed since then.

Every completed questionnaire from a parent or carer will be entered into a free prize draw to win £30 of shopping vouchers.

This project is being run by the Faculty of Health at Leeds Metropolitan University. It is part of a project commissioned by Education Leeds to investigate how school meals can be improved. The school your child attends is one of those taking part.

What you tell us will be shared with Education Leeds. Please be assured that the information you give us is confidential and anonymous – your name will not be used at any point. The researchers at Leeds Metropolitan University will keep all the responses safe.

Giving your name, address and telephone number is optional and will only be needed if you want to be entered into the prize draw.

Please return the completed questionnaire by Friday October 10th 2008 to the school office. We would like to thank you very much for your help.

Faculty of Health
Leeds Met University

Your Details
If you would like to be entered into the prize draw please complete your details below. Please note this section is optional – it will be removed from the questionnaire and only used by Leeds Metropolitan University for the free prize draw.

Name: ……………………………………………………………………………

Address: ………………………………………………………………………….

……………………………………………………………………………………

Postcode: ……………………   Telephone Number:…………………………..

Name of Childs/ Children's school : …………………………………………..

SECONDARY SCHOOL MEAL SURVEY

Name of School: ……………………………

Section 1: SCHOOL LUNCHES OR NOT?

1. How many children of school age do you have? Please circle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7 or more

2. What do your children **currently** do for lunch?
Please tick _**for each child**_ (e.g. if you have 4 children you will need to put 4 ticks**)**

Have a school lunch   [   ]
Bring a packed lunch   [   ]
Go home for lunch   [   ]
Go out at lunchtime to buy their lunch   [   ]
Other   [   ]
Please write what this is ……………..………………………………..

3. What did your children do for lunch **last term**?
      As before, please tick _**for each child**_

Have a school lunch   [   ]
Bring a packed lunch   [   ]
Go home for lunch   [   ]
Go out at lunchtime to buy their lunch   [   ]
Other   [   ]
Please write what this is ……………..………………………………..

4. If there has been a change in what your children do for lunch, please say why.
            ……………………………………………………………………………
            ……………………………………………………………………………
            ……………………………………………………………………………
            ……………………………………………………………………………

Section 2: CHANGES SINCE JANUARY 2008

5. Since January 2008 have you received a letter or a postcard from your child's school about school meals?

Yes	No	Not sure

If yes, did this change what you thought about school meals? If so, please describe how.

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

6. Since January 2008 have you seen an example of the meals served at your child's school?

Yes	No	Not sure

If yes, did this change what you thought about school meals? If so, please describe how.

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

7. Since January 2008 have you tasted the food served at your child's school?

Yes	No	Don't know

If yes, did this change what you thought about school meals? If so, please describe how.

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

8. Since January 2008 have your children told you about any changes in school meals?

| Yes | No | Don't know |

If yes, did this change what you thought about school meals? If so, please describe how.

…………………………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………….

9. Have you received information about your child's school meals from any other sources since January 2008?

| Yes | No | Don't know |

If yes, please describe what these were.

…………………………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………….

10. Have there been any other changes to your child's school meals or lunchtime in general since January 2008?

| Yes | No | Don't know |

If yes, please describe what these were.

…………………………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………….

Section 3: FREE SCHOOL MEALS

11. Is your child or children entitled to Free School Meals?
    Yes: □   **No:** □   **Don't know**: □

    If yes, please complete this section.
    If no or don't know, please go Section 4.

12. If you had a question about Free School Meals would you know **who** to ask at your child's school?

> **Yes:** ☐   **No:** ☐

13. Do you know **how** to claim for Free School Meals?

> **Yes:** ☐   **No:** ☐
>
> If no, what would help you?

………………………………………………………………………………………

……..………………………………………………………………………………

14. Does your child or children eat their Free School Meals?

> **Always:**   ☐   *If always,* please go to question 17
> **Sometimes:** ☐
> **Never:**   ☐   *If never or sometimes,* please go to question 15

15. Why do they **not** eat their Free School Meals?

> …………………………………………………………………………………
>
> ……..……………………………………………………………………………
>
> …………………………………………………………………………………
>
> …………………………………………………………………………………
>
> ……..

16. What would encourage your child/children to eat their Free School Meals **more often**?

> …………………………………………………………………………………..
>
> …………………………………………………………………………………..
>
> …………………………………………………………………………………..
>
> …………………………………………………………………………………..

17. Is the Free School Meal allowance enough?

> **Yes:** ☐   **No:** ☐
>
> *If no,* how much you think it should be: £………….. per day

18. Do your and your child/children feel comfortable claiming for Free School Meals?

> **Yes:** ☐   **No:** ☐
>
> *If no,* please say why this is
>
> …………………………...
>
> …………………………………………………………………………………

Section 4: THANK YOU

Please place the completed questionnaire into the envelope provided and give it to the school office at your child's school by Friday October 10th.

<div align="center">

Thank you very much.

</div>

Free School Meals Research Project

School Team Focus Group Schedule

Objectives of the focus groups:
- To assess the effectiveness of the interventions in increasing the uptake of FSM
- To learn what barriers / enablers there are within the school environment to tackling the issue of FSM uptake
- From their experience develop "best practice" guidelines for other schools in the area

Intro
- Aims of the focus groups
  This project has aimed to find out what could be done to increase the uptake of FSMs. Government targets said uptake should be 100% but reality is far lower (about 80% in primary, 70% in secondary). As a pilot school in this project you're one of the few schools to have actively tried to increase the uptake of FSMs.

  We want to try and find out from you about your experiences over the past year - what you think has worked, what hasn't and what you'd recommend to others. Important to be as honest as possible as we're going to be using the information to roll-out to other schools / lots of interest at a national level.

We've got an hour now but if you did want to add anything afterwards you're welcome to email / call either Sarah or myself.

- Anonymity –whatever they say is anonymous (schools will be coded).
- Check okay to be recorded

Roles:
- Who was involved in the free school meal project in your school and what was their role?
  Prompts:
  - Did anyone else help at anytime?
  - Was senior management involved?
  - Were pupils?

- Was there anyone else who you should have been involved but wasn't?

Situation within the school:
- Before the project began do you think people in the school were aware that there was an issue with FSM uptake?

- Was anything being done about the issue?

Training Day:
- Back in (insert month) a training day was run for the team in this school. Was this useful?
  Probe:
  - What role did it play in terms of the project?
  - What parts were useful (if you can remember that far back!)
  - What could have improved it?

Actions:
- Using your schools action plan can we go through each of the actions you took (in order) and discuss them?
  Probe:
  - What was done? / Who did it? / What materials were used?
  - What do you think its impact was?
  - Were there any barriers to it working?
  - What could have been done to improve how well it worked?

- If any actions from the plan were NOT done. What were the reasons for this?
  - What would have helped you implement it?

- Was there anything you would have liked to try but did not?
  Probe:
  - What would be needed to make it happen?

- Were any other actions taken to improve SM uptake at the same time? (questions as above)

Reflection
- Thinking about the situation now, do you think things have changed within the school as regards FSM? In what way?

Recommendations:
- If another school was trying to increase FSM uptake what would you recommend they do?
  - Which interventions are "must dos"?
  - Which are optional extras?
  - In what order would you suggest doing them?
  - Are there any that you *wouldn't* recommend?

- Education Leeds is planning to produce a tool kit to help schools increase their uptake levels. What do you think needs to be in this?
  - What information?
  - What tools?
  - In what format?

- It won't be possible to have a training day for every school in Leeds. Do you think this is an issue? If so, what could replace it?

- Is there any other support that schools may need?

- (What would help made FSM uptake more of a priority within the school environment)?

Wrapping up:
- Is there anything else you'd like to pass onto the research team or Education Leeds?

Thanks for their help. Let them know they can contact us with any further information.

Appendix 3.1: Free School Meals Crib Sheet

To complement the document issued by Leeds Benefits Service:
"Free School Meals Administration – a best practice guide for schools, Second Edition, Spring 2007"

Section 1. Who is eligible for Free School Meals?

1a	Does the **person claiming** have parental responsibility for the pupil? •This could be as a "natural" parent, a grandparent, other close relative or a foster parent.	*If yes:* Go to question 2 *If no:* Go to question 1b
1b	Are they an older pupil making a claim for themselves?	*If yes:* Go to question 2 *If no:* Go to statement B
2	Does **the pupil** go to a mainstream school, a Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC) or a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) for **one or more full days** a week? •This includes pupils who have stayed on at their high school or SILC beyond school leaving age but not if they have transferred to specialist sixth form colleges or other higher education establishments •It also includes nursery age children attending mainstream or special schools who receive "wrap-around care" before and after lunchtime (but not if they only come for a morning or afternoon session)	*If yes:* Go to question 3 *If no:* Go to statement B
3	Is the person claiming an **Asylum Seeker**? •Education Leeds should provide you with documentation to confirm Asylum Seeker status. If still unsure ask to see the pupil's IND Application Registration Card (these come with photos) and contact Leeds Benefits Service for further help (contact details overleaf).	*If yes*: Go to statement C *If no:* Go to question 4
4	Does the person claiming receive *__any one__* of the **following benefits?** •Income Support •Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance •Guarantee Credit (normally for people over 60 years old)	*If yes:* Go to statement A *If no:* Go to question 5
5a	Does the person claiming receive any **Working Tax Credit**?	*If yes:* Go to statement B *If no:* Go to question 5b
5b	Do they receive Child Tax Credit?	*If yes*: Go to question 5c *If no:* Go to statement B
5c	Is their annual taxable income (as calculated by HM Revenue & Customs) **no more** than £14,495 (as of Sept 07)?	*If yes:* Go to statement A *If no:* Go to statement B

Statements of Likely Free School Meal Eligibility

Statement A:	Statement B:	Statement C:
It is **likely that there is a valid claim** for Free School Meals. See next page for more information on how claims are processed.	It is **likely that there is NOT a valid claim** for Free School Meals. If the person claiming disagrees please consult the administration guidance in more detail or speak to Leeds Benefits Service (contact details overleaf).	All verified Asylum Seeker children are entitled to Free School Meals as of right under specific legislation. Parents do not need to complete any application forms. They are not listed on Leeds Benefits Service main Free School Meal reports but schools are notified of their eligibility separately by David Pattison at the start of every term.

Authors:
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as commissioned by Education Leeds.
David Pattison and Linda Baldwin, Leeds Benefits Service

Section 2. How claims are processed

6	Is the **person claiming** resident in Leeds?	*If yes:* Go to question 7 *If no:* Go to Process A
7	Are they already claiming for _**any one**_ of the following benefits? •Housing benefit •Council tax benefit •School clothing allowance	*If yes:* Go to Process B *If no:* Go to Process C

Process Paths for Claims

Process A:
Non-Leeds Residents
Non-Leeds residents must claim for Free School Meals from their own authority. This authority will then inform schools directly. Contact details are as follows:
• Bradford   01274 432772
• Harrogate   01609 534960
• Kirklees   01484 221919
• Selby   01609 536806
• Wakefield   01924 305628

Process B:
Existing claimants
Any Leeds resident who already has a valid claim for either housing benefit, council tax benefit or a school clothing allowance does **not need to make a new claim for Free School Meals.**

Children in this situation who are starting or changing schools after the summer break will have Free School Meals awarded automatically by Leeds Benefits Service. Parents will be advised of their entitlement by letter. Schools should make a new call to their AVCO system <u>every</u> Monday morning after 9.30am for weekly updates.

Children identified as eligible who **move schools** during the academic year should be notified to Leeds Benefits Service on Query proforma B.

Process C:
New claimants
1. The person claiming must **complete an application form**. They can get these by:
• Telephoning the Leeds Benefits Customer Helpline on 0845 127 0113
• Downloading it from www.leeds.gov.uk (follow the link to "benefits")
• Visiting one of the 15 council One Stop centres across Leeds. To find the nearest one call 0113 234 8080 or email onestop@leeds.gov.uk

2. Leeds Benefits Service will assess the application. If this is successful the person claiming and the relevant school will be notified as soon as possible.

Section 3. Why might an entitlement end?

Free School Meal entitlement may be cancelled because:

The **person claiming**: •no longer receives one of the qualifying benefits (see questions 3, 4 and 5) •has not responded to a query from Leeds Benefits Service •has left Leeds	The **pupil**: •no longer lives with the person claiming •no longer attends the same school

Cancellations are notified to the schools via AVCO and by writing to the person claiming.
The entitlement stops on the 1st Monday after the cancellation has been input plus 7 days.

Section 4. Any queries?

Parents should be directed to the Leeds Benefits Service Helpline Tel 0845 127 0113. Or visit one of the Council's one-stop centres located throughout the city.

Schools should consult the more detailed guidelines named overleaf. If further assistance is needed contact David Pattison or Linda Baldwin at Leeds Benefits Service
Email: fsmenq@leedslearning.net
David: 0113 224 3929   Linda: 0113 395 1721

Appendix 8.1

For the attention of Head Teachers, Bursars and Administration staff
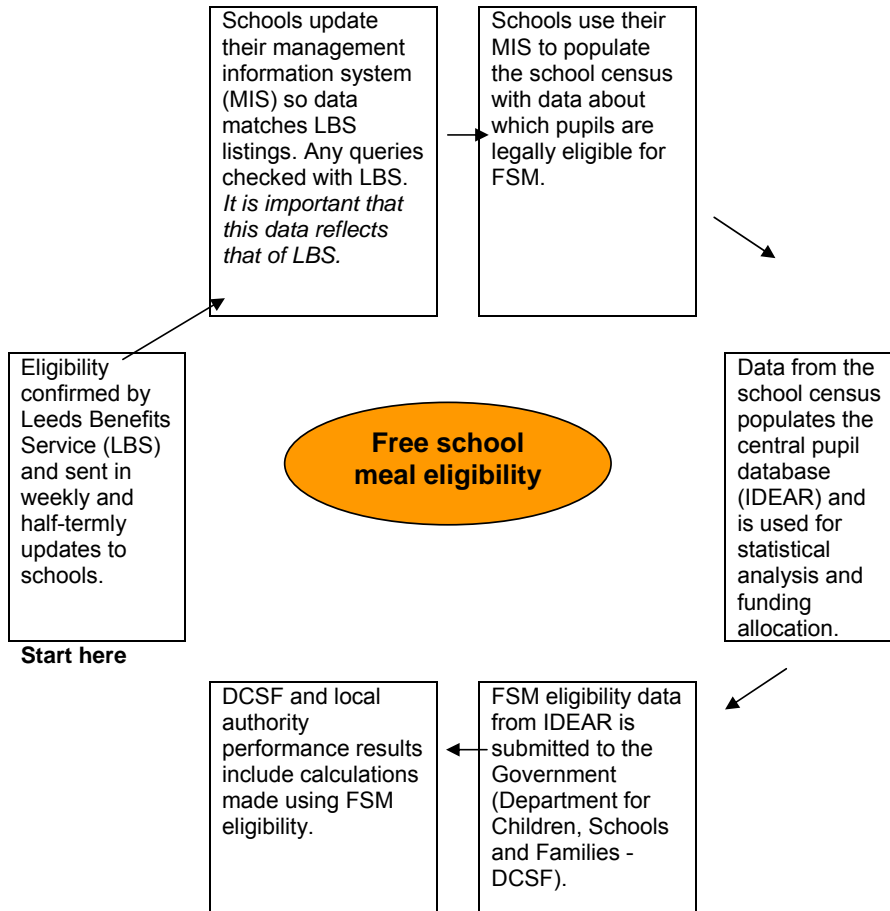
The following information aims to illustrate how free and paid school meal data impacts on performance indicators and funding allocation.

<p style="text-align:center;color:red;font-weight:bold">Life cycle of Free and Paid School Meal data – all you need to know.</p>

The information you input into your school's management information system (e.g. SIMS, CMIS) about free school meal entitlement and uptake is circulated round Education Leeds and to national government. Correct data helps us improve our services for children and young people, and enables us to have a sound understanding of how we are performing.

There are two sets of information that it are important to record accurately: free school meal **eligibility** and free / paid school meal **uptake**.

This diagram shows how data about **free school meal eligibility** moves from schools, to Education Leeds, and to a national government department:

Schools update their management information system (MIS) so data matches LBS listings. Any queries checked with LBS. *It is important that this data reflects that of LBS.*	Schools use their MIS to populate the school census with data about which pupils are legally eligible for FSM.

Free school meal eligibility

Eligibility confirmed by Leeds Benefits Service (LBS) and sent in weekly and half-termly updates to schools.

Start here

Data from the school census populates the central pupil database (IDEAR) and is used for statistical analysis and funding allocation.

DCSF and local authority performance results include calculations made using FSM eligibility.	FSM eligibility data from IDEAR is submitted to the Government (Department for Children, Schools and Families - DCSF).

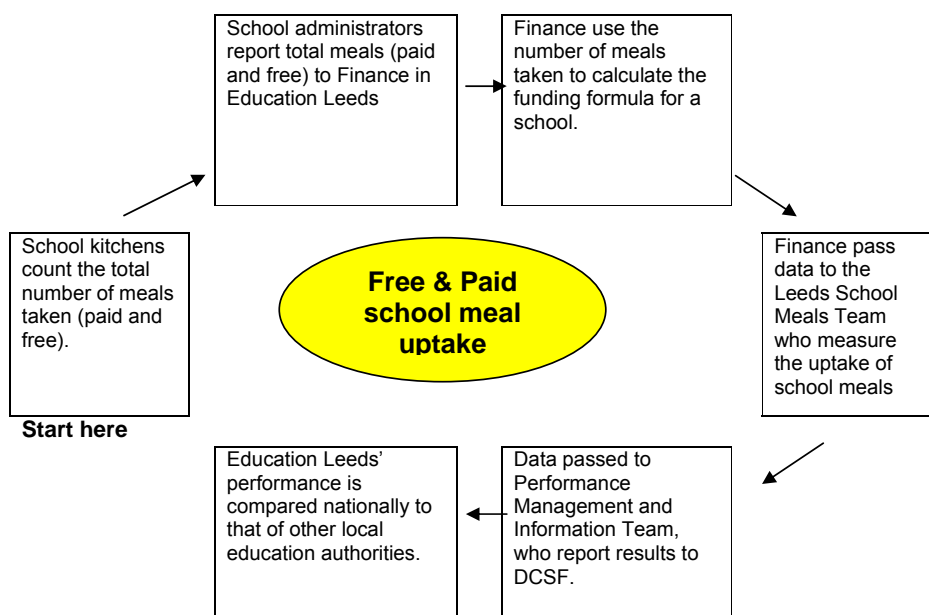*How is FSM eligibility data used for making improvements?*

- Free school meal eligibility is used as an indicator of levels of deprivation within a neighbourhood and across a local education authority. FSM eligibility is one of the factors used when comparing the performance of schools and local authorities with that of other schools and local authorities. To make a fair comparison with schools in similar neighbourhoods, the FSM data needs to be accurate.

- Performance measurements include the gap between the achievement of FSM and non-FSM pupils, and the difference in attendance levels between FSM and non-FSM pupils. Education Leeds uses this data to understand if more resources are needed to support schools where this may be an area for development.

- Contextual value-added (CVA) scores compare the progress made by each pupil with the progress made by pupils with similar prior attainment and similar backgrounds. Eligibility for FSM is one of the variables used in determining the context for a child.

What if the data is inaccurate?

If the FSM data is inaccurate at one point in the chain, it will continue being reported inaccurately at every subsequent stage. This could mean that….

- If levels of FSM eligibility are *under-reported*: schools might miss out on funding or additional support for attainment or achievement; or be subject to unrealistic comparisons with schools in more affluent neighbourhoods, this could have a demotivating affect on staff, parents and pupils.

- If levels of FSM eligibility are *over-reported*: the school could appear to be serving a more deprived community than is really the case, so judgements on CVA scores could be over-estimated.

This diagram shows how data about **free and paid school meal uptake** moves from schools, to Education Leeds, and to a national government department:

Note – increases in paid school meal uptake increases funding allocation

How is FSM uptake data used for making improvements?

- Free school meal uptake is used by Education Leeds Finance staff to calculate the amount of funding a school receives.

- The Leeds School Meals Team are currently conducting research on the level of take-up of free school meals. This team needs accurate information to be able to assess the impact of any interventions that are made to increase take-up.

- The take-up of all school meals (paid and free) is a new national performance indicator, where results need to be reported to the government. Leeds' performance will be compared with that of all other local education authorities. Any future funding arrangements around supporting school meal uptake are likely to be based around this performance information, so the data could affect future funding for Education Leeds and your school's funding allocation.

What if the data is inaccurate?

If the FSM data is inaccurate at one point in the chain, it will continue being reported inaccurately at every subsequent stage. This could mean that….

- If levels of FSM uptake are *under-reported*: Leeds' performance at encouraging FSM-eligible pupils to take their meal entitlement will appear worse than it really is, and we may be subject to criticism or negative publicity, this has a demotivating effect.

- If levels of FSM uptake are *over-reported*: there is a risk that funding might be overpaid to a school and they would have to repay this. Targets set for further increases in take-up levels could prove to be unrealistic, as baseline levels of reporting are found to be wrong.

Why this is increasingly important

The government's national set of performance indicators (PIs) include information about free and paid school meals uptake, and free school meal eligibility and Education Leeds reports performance against these PIs to the government. Data that you input into school management information systems, forms part of this process, so your role is very important in helping us to get this right.

Remember, data that you input filters right up to a national government department. If it is correct then:
- Decisions about free school meal provision that are based on accurate data are more likely to be the right ones.
- Senior managers and elected members can make a more honest assessment of how we perform.
- Less time will need to be spent making corrections to inaccurate data. Time spent on re-working inaccurate data could mean delays in processing free school meal applications for pupils who are eligible – better data quality helps ensure that children and young people get their entitlement promptly.
- Calculations about catering charges and school funding are made fairly.
- Additional support can be targeted to the schools that could benefit most.
- When we are audited about our performance by external bodies, we are more likely to score well. If auditors identify that our data is poor and that we not presenting accurate information about our performance, this could result in losing out on grant money, and wasting our own time and money in investigating errors; damage to our external reputation; and placing the council or Education Leeds in difficult legal circumstances.

Sound administrative practice around the awarding of free school meals and maintaining good data quality about all pupil characteristics, including FSM eligibility, is also good evidence for schools to include in their Ofsted SEF reporting criteria.

The School Meals team are happy to provide any additional guidance or support to schools. Please contact: education.leedsschoolmeals@educationleeds.co.uk

For information on free school meals call Leeds Benefit Service 0113 224 3929 or 0113 395 1721