



Briefing 15-22 April 2015

School Meals and Ofsted

The School Food Plan and the introduction of Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) have had a profound effect on the finances of school caterers in England and Scotland. This paper and supporting letter details Ofsted's plans to include school meals within their inspection regime and should be shared with head teachers.

Key issues:

- School meals now form part of the Ofsted inspection regime
- Head teachers and governors are required to actively encourage healthy eating
- The school canteen is an integral part of the inspection visit

Background:

With the integration of the School Food Plan within the school curriculum, questions remained over the importance of the arrangements for school meals. Initial indications suggested that some head teachers were restricting the time allowed for school lunchtime to fulfil other priorities. No formal inspection regime accompanied the plan, leaving many to question how strictly aspects such as food standards would be adhered to.

As the inspecting body, Ofsted issued guidance but this was subsequently withdrawn. Inspectors were deemed not to be food experts and therefore not capable of making an informed judgement on the meals served.

Recent developments:

Following intervention by Sharon Hodgson MP, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary group on School Food, Ofsted has reviewed the position and has actually gone further. The New Inspection Framework from September 2015 will require inspectors to 'look for evidence of the culture or ethos of exercise and healthy eating throughout their entire inspection visit, in classrooms as well as in the school canteen'. Furthermore Ofsted will be providing training to inspectors on how to ensure that food is properly inspected and healthy eating effective.

Implications & Action:

Please circulate a copy of the attached letter to those schools to whom you provide catering services. Now is the time to impress on head teachers and governors, the importance of the mid-day school meal and the enhanced status within the Ofsted inspection regime. It is likely that a school that undervalues the lunchtime meal service will harm the chances of obtaining a top rated Ofsted classification.

APSE Comment

APSE has provided the secretariat support to the All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food for the past 2 years and provided significant information for the School Food Plan itself from our Performance Networks benchmarking club for education catering

APSE welcomes the enhanced status of the canteen and healthy eating within the Ofsted inspection framework. Local authority caterers have a fantastic record of delivering healthy nutritious school meals and should be exploring opportunities to further enhance their role. APSE Briefing 14-52, 'Cooking in the curriculum' is one such example. Some authorities have further recognised the importance of school meals within their Health & Wellbeing framework and financed development chefs and other food related interventions

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23 February 2015

Sean Harford HMI
National Director, Schools

Mrs Sharon Hodgson MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA.

Our ref: 318901

Dear Sharon

Ofsted's inspection of how children and learners keep themselves healthy, including through healthy eating, under the new Common Inspection Framework from September 2015

I am writing to you as Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food to highlight the changes Ofsted is making to give wellbeing, health and healthy eating a more prominent place in inspection.

On 3 February 2015, following a public consultation, we announced that we will introduce a new Common Inspection Framework for all early years settings on the Early Years Register, maintained schools and academies, non-association independent schools and further education and skills providers. This framework will come into effect in September 2015. Under the framework we will include, for the first time, a judgement on personal development, behaviour and welfare. As part of reaching this judgement, our inspectors will look at the extent to which schools and other providers are successfully supporting pupils to gain 'knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy, including through exercising and healthy eating'. The addition of this to the inspection framework (as opposed to the guidance) means that inspectors will be expected to place a greater emphasis on this issue than before.

Inspectors will look for evidence of a culture or ethos of exercise and healthy eating throughout their entire inspection visit, in classrooms as well as in the school canteen. They will look at the food on offer and visit the canteen to see the atmosphere and culture in the dining space and the effect this has on pupils' behaviour. Inspectors will also speak to school leaders about how they help to ensure a healthy lifestyle for pupils by helping them gain knowledge of a good diet, physical exercise and mental and physical wellbeing.

In addition to this, under the judgement on 'leadership and management' they will also consider the breadth and balance of the curriculum, of which practical cookery is now a part.

It has been suggested in some media reports that Ofsted has reduced its commitment to school food and healthy eating. I hope the information contained in this letter assures you that this is not the case. Some confusion may have arisen as a result of Ofsted's decision in summer 2014 to stop publishing subsidiary guidance (in which previous references to school food were to be found). However, the issues that were covered in the subsidiary guidance are now picked up in our training for inspectors. We have begun to engage with the School Food Plan team to ensure our training resources for inspectors are effective to ensure healthy eating and food in schools is properly inspected. The new Common Inspection Framework applies much more widely than schools, and we are currently looking at how to inspect this issue in other types of provider.

The health and wellbeing of children and learners is an extremely important area, and I am grateful for your continued work, that of the School Food Plan and the APPG in drawing attention to this issue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Sean Harford". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sean Harford HMI
National Director, Schools