

Secondary School Food Survey Pilot Project

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Dear Parent/Guardian

Secondary School Food Survey Pilot Project

The School Food Trust is working with TNS-BMRB, an independent market research company, to carry out a study in 10 randomly selected secondary schools across England.

The aim of this pilot study is to develop robust methods for a larger study in September 2010. The pilot study will find out what kinds of food and drink are on offer to pupils at school at mid morning break, lunch time, and other times of the day; gather information about what foods pupils eat; and look at the food and drink brought to school by pupils.

The Head Teacher has given permission for your school to take part. In each school, we will randomly select 90 pupils over three days to see what food they are eating. Your child **might** be included in the research, but not **definitely**. If your child is selected, an interviewer will make a note of what they are having for lunch, ask their age, why they chose to have a school or packed lunch, and details of anything they had to eat or drink before lunch at school that day. We will also record any food left over from their lunch.

Everything discussed, as above, will be treated as strictly confidential. **No school or pupil** will be identified individually in any report of our findings resulting from this survey.

We have been collecting many kinds of important information from young people for many years. I hope that your child is willing to take part in this project. If however, you would prefer that they did not take part, please let your school know as soon as possible so that the interviewers can be informed. If an interviewer asks your child if they want to take part and they decide on the day that they do not want to, then they do not have to take part. There will be no disadvantages if your child decides that they do not want to take part.

Full details of the study are provided overleaf on the Information Sheet. A similar sheet has been provided to the Head teacher and to the Catering manager/Head cook.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Michael Nelson
Director of Research and Nutrition
School Food Trust

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Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians

What is the study about?

This is a pilot study to test sampling and recruitment of students, and methods used to collect data on food provision and consumption in a random sample of secondary schools in England, in preparation for a national survey. The national survey to be carried out in September 2010 will look at the food and drink being provided in secondary schools at lunch time and throughout the school day. It will help us understand the impact of the new regulations that require schools to provide healthier options for school food. The national survey will also look at packed lunches and other food brought into schools.

Why is this study important?

Good nutrition is vital in childhood for growth and development. Eating habits developed in childhood are often carried into adulthood and there are increasing concerns about the rise in obesity in children as well as adults. How well we eat as children can have an impact on our future health. It is important to know what children are eating and the influences on their food choices so that we can help them to make healthier choices. This major study into school meals can help us in this task and help us to evaluate the extent to which the new standards have had an impact on food and drink actually consumed by children at school. The study will also look at the types of food and drink in packed lunches and food brought from outside, and will compare food and nutrient intakes from school meals and other food.

Who is conducting the study?

This study is being conducted by the School Food Trust in collaboration with TNS-BMRB, an independent market research company. The research team has extensive experience working with schools and caterers. The study is being funded by the School Food Trust.

Why was my school selected?

TNS-BMRB selected a random sample of 40 secondary schools in England from which 10 schools were selected. These 10 schools provide a good cross-section of the types of secondary school catering services in England so that we can test the methods for the national survey.

When will the study take place?

The fieldwork for the study will take place between February and March 2010 and will be conducted over mid morning breaks and lunch time periods on 3 consecutive days (in agreement with the Head teacher and catering manager).

What does the study involve?

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

- record details of all foods and drinks available each midmorning break and lunch time
- randomly select up to 10 pupils each day taking a school meal, and up to 5 pupils each day taking other meals, explain what the study is about, and ask if they would be willing to take part. If the pupil agrees, interviewers will record what they have chosen at school or brought in for lunch, ask questions about age, form, and usual eating habits at lunchtime, and after the meal record any leftovers. The interview will only take about 5 minutes. Each pupil will be seen only once. All data collection involving the pupils will take place at mid morning break and lunch time (i.e. outside lesson time). Participation is entirely voluntary; your child can decide to opt-out from the study at any time. There will be no adverse consequences if they do so.

What will it involve for the teaching staff?

The study will require no input from teaching staff, other than minimal involvement of the mid-morning break and lunch service. Telephone interviews will be held with the Head teacher and the Catering manager/Head cook to gather information on school food provision.

What will happen to the data collected?

Results from this study will improve our understanding of school food provision and consumption in secondary schools and will help us prepare for the national survey. All information collected from the pupils will be anonymous and will be held strictly confidential. Results will be reported at a national level and no school or pupil will be identified individually in any report of our findings.

For further information, please contact:

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