

DOCUMENT 1

School Meals – recent developments and arguments

The celebrity chef Jamie Oliver started the campaign “Feed me Better” in 2004 to draw attention to the poor quality of school meals. With Greenwich Borough Council in London, he changed primary school meal menus. This cost the council a lot of money: by September 2007, Greenwich had invested £1.2 million in school meals. This money was used to retrain the chefs, re-equip the school kitchens and provide more expensive ingredients. However many children at the schools preferred to stick to the junk food rather than opting for the healthy meals. Therefore when more schools became involved only healthy meals were offered.

The School Food Trust was established by the government in September 2005 to promote the education and health of children and young people and improve the quality of food in schools. The Trust still exists and believes it has a vital role. Its website explains:

“There is evidence to link children’s diets with their immediate and long-term health. Balanced diets also lead to better concentration and behaviour in class. Improved nutrition and food habits can also assist emotional welfare, and reduce the number of overweight children. Since poorer eating is regularly associated with low income, improving food in schools can help address child poverty.”

There was, and remains, resistance to these changes to school meals. There are powerful vested interests who would oppose the government using compulsion. Feeding school children at lunchtime has proved very profitable to the fast food industry with sales tripling between 1981 and 2005. Children have also proved very resistant to attempts to limit their choice of foods or to go back to taking school meals. Many prefer to visit the local fast food outlets like fish and chip shops to purchase their lunch.

DOCUMENT 2**Extract from the Daily Mail**

Pupils revolt over new healthy food menu

The Government and Jamie Oliver may be behind the new healthy food menus in schools, but pupils in a Bristol primary school were not impressed. The primary school is trying out a new healthy menu including choices such as lentil korma with rice and two-bean bake with green leaves and garlic bread. However more than 50 pupils at the Bristol primary school have signed a petition calling for the return of chips and burgers.

The grandmother of one of the pupils said she was proud of the children for standing up for what they believed in. She claimed some of the children at the school had gone hungry at lunchtime instead of eating any of the new choices and that the menu was not suitable for children of a primary school age. She said: "At the end of the day, it's the kids that are eating the food, not Tony Blair or Jamie Oliver or the Council. It's the children that are eating it so they should be given a vote on what's on their plates."

Should pupils be forced to eat healthy meals at lunchtime? Tell us your view in our reader comments below.

Terry Bull, Dyfed:

"I would never force my kids to eat school meals – look at the slop they produce in school canteens. The kids all prefer packed lunches. It's a lot cheaper for everyone anyway. So we should do away with school meals altogether."

Joe King, Cornwall:

"OK, myth busting time. Jamie Oliver's campaign really did work in those schools. This is because kids are now getting healthy school meals and are all the better for it. Therefore Jamie's manifesto should be implemented across the country. Packed lunches are rarely as nutritious – they are often only a bag of crisps, a fizzy drink and some chocolate. And the reason you "miserable childless people" should agree with this is because there is an obesity time bomb happening which means they'll be too fat or dead to look after you in your retirement homes."

Freda People, Berkshire:

"All these people wanting better school meals are only bothered about improving educational standards. They just want children to achieve more so they can earn more money and we can compete with countries like Japan whose examination results are better than ours. They don't care about giving children or people freedom to choose."

Lotta Money, London:

"I believe it is all about the cost of school dinners. On average it seems to be £3.00 per day per child and the more children you have the more expensive it is. If school meals were cheaper they would be more popular as they would be less expensive than buying everything you need for packed lunches."

Jen Uwin, Hull:

"The School Food Trust needs to look into the continually rising cost of school meals. From September we will be asked to pay £2.00 per day for school meals. This is very hard when you have 3 children at school. Also why, when diets are supposed to be healthy, is there always the constant aroma of frying whenever I go into school?"

Demi Krasi, Liverpool:

“Bet if school dinners were free the situation would change. Otherwise let the market decide – if school dinners aren’t up to the mark and pupils prefer something else then isn’t that their right? Let’s stop this nanny state and let the people make their mind up without interference. After all, it is a democracy isn’t it?”

DOCUMENT 3**Jamie Oliver's manifesto**

Adapted from <http://www.jamieoliver.com/school-dinners/my-manifesto>



For the past couple of years I've been campaigning to ban the junk in schools and get kids eating fresh, tasty nutritious food instead. I can't do it without your help though – so start a revolution in your school and help us prove that school meals can be better.

It's all about making radical changes to the school meals system and challenging the junk food culture by showing schools they can serve fresh nutritious meals that kids enjoy eating. What we eat affects everything: our mood, behaviour, health, growth, even our ability to concentrate.

A lunchtime school meal should provide a growing child with one third of their daily nutritional intake.

My manifesto

Local and national government need to come up with a ten-year strategy and some real money to re-educate people about proper eating habits. This is what I think needs to happen now:

1. In schools: make cooking and life skills classes compulsory for all kids so they learn about food and good eating habits while they're young.
2. For teachers: recruit and train new cookery teachers, otherwise the new right that kids have to cookery lessons just isn't going to happen.
3. For heads: empower heads to make every school a junk food free zone.
4. For parents: educate parents and help them to understand the basics of family cooking and responsible nutrition.
5. For dinner ladies: invest in dinner ladies with proper training and enough paid hours to cook their food with fresh ingredients.
6. Commit to a ten-year plan and fund a long-term advertising campaign to get people back on to a proper diet. With obesity costing the NHS more than smoking, it seems logical that a campaign similar to the anti-smoking one is needed.

DOCUMENT 4**Miles Walker**

Miles is a former school canteen manager who now earns his living by writing for trade journals in the food industry. He is also paid as an adviser to a leading fast food chain. In his spare time, Miles is an active member of an association for the promotion of civil liberties.

Most people who oppose the government's attempts to impose so-called healthy school meals on children do not get the chance to voice their views in the majority of papers. The government thinks it knows better than us because they are educated and we are not. They seem to say that the whole issue is like solving the problem of a leaky pipe. You would not ask a man in the street to mend it but you'd use a plumber. Equally, the government argues, ordinary people would not know how to solve the problem of bad eating habits among the young. You need nutritionists backed up by government rules.

The government tells repressive regimes around the world that we live in a free society; yet the same government endlessly tells us what we can and cannot do "from the cradle to the grave". The fact is we're living in a police state. We've become prisoners in our own country. Children in particular are put under intense pressure – do your homework, pass your exams, compete for university places – why not allow them the chance to choose for themselves once they are educated enough about food to choose what they eat – say at eleven.

Mass produced school meals have always been horrible. Parents and teenage children should have the right to choose what they eat and where they eat it; it is not the government's right to interfere with that choice. Most parents and children are exercising this right; despite enormous government pressure, figures show that a majority of children still do not eat school meals.

DOCUMENT 5**Extract from the Daily Telegraph**

Most pupils 'shunning school dinners' after Jamie Oliver campaign

More than half of primary school children and almost two-thirds of pupils in secondaries are shunning canteen food after Jamie Oliver's campaign. It means the Government is one million short of its own target to improve take-up by this year, despite a small rise in the last 12 months.

Ministers launched a crackdown on unhealthy food after it emerged that pupils were regularly being fed chips and reconstituted meat, such as Turkey Twizzlers. The sale of high-fat and sugary food was banned from canteens and vending machines. The Government has pledged £627 million between 2005 and 2011 to improve school kitchens, train staff and help pay for ingredients.

But figures from the Government's School Food Trust for 2008-9 show that just 43.9 per cent of under-11s and 36 per cent of secondary school pupils are eating canteen meals. This is up slightly from 43.8 per cent and 35.5 per cent in 2007/08. A spokeswoman insisted there had not been a majority of pupils eating school meals since 1984.

Prue Leith, chair of the School Food Trust, said: "Real progress in terms of numbers is being made the length and breadth of England. I am heartened that take-up has increased slightly in primary schools following the introduction of new nutrient-based standards."

DOCUMENT 6a**Extract from the Guardian**

Fast food outlet near school told to shut

A fast food restaurant has become the first in the country to be ordered to close because it is too near to a school. The Caribbean restaurant, which has been running for six weeks, contravenes the local council's rules because it is within 400 metres of a school.

Waltham Forest, the first local council to impose a ban on fast food outlets near schools, has said fast food restaurants encourage children to eat unhealthily. Ed Balls, the education secretary, has praised the council's initiative.

DOCUMENT 6b**A letter to a newspaper about the action by the local council**

The council is right to close the restaurant near the school. One reason we elect councillors is to give the best chances for future happiness for our youngsters. The freedom to grow up fit and healthy is threatened by these fast food outlets. Furthermore this freedom is more important than the freedom of fast food firms to profit from our youngsters' bad eating habits. As long as this policy is applied equally to all restaurants, it is a fair thing for the council to do. Fast food outlets will simply have to move away from schools.

DOCUMENT 7

FISHupdate.com

Fish and chips in school row

FISH and chips are at the centre of a bizarre school meals dispute in South Yorkshire. Parents at Rawmarsh Comprehensive School, near Doncaster, are feeding their children with Britain's traditional dish through the school gates because they claim the canteen is not providing them with what they want. They say pupils, who are not allowed out at lunchtime, and are kept behind a 10 foot high fence and electric gates, are not being given enough time or choice for their meals.

One parent vilified in the press as "the meat pie mum" said: "The children aren't eating what the school provide in the cafeteria because they don't like the quality of the food. They prefer to come to us to have their food delivered fresh and hot, which is what they're asking for. We're giving them fish and chips because they are asking for it." But she insisted it was not just about promoting junk food as they had several orders for jacket potatoes and salad sandwiches alongside those for fish and chips. She said their actions had been prompted by the school's new half hour meal breaks, as pupils did not have long enough to eat and was about freedom of choice. She added: "Our kids are being served up disgusting, overpriced rubbish. The school charge £2.30 for a filled jacket potato but the local sandwich shop charge £1.20."

The head teacher said reorganising the school day and keeping pupils on site during lunchtimes had already shown its benefits. "Our motives are about effective education," he said. "Afternoon lateness has dropped to virtually zero and we know they are learning better in the afternoons." He said he understood some pupils would resist the changes but believed that parents taking orders undermined the school and their children's education. "We aim to provide good quality food which is within government healthy eating guidelines and helps the children's learning in the afternoon," he said. "The food that these parents are handing out is not part of a healthy eating diet."

But Jamie Oliver said: "If these mums want to effectively shorten the lives of their kids and others' kids, then that's down to them." A spokesman for Jamie Oliver added: "Jamie's view is that it is important for all school kids to have a nutritious hot and affordable meal at school every day."

And Nick Vermont, head of Scarborough-based chip maker McCain waded into the debate saying that demonising chips would not make children eat so-called healthy foods. Chips have their place in a balanced diet both in the home and at school, he added.

www.fishupdate.com is published by Special Publications. Special Publications also publish FISHupdate magazine, Fish Farmer, the Fish Industry Yearbook, the Scottish Seafood Processors Federation Diary, the Fish Farmer Handbook and a range of wallplanners.

DOCUMENT 8**Extract from The New York Times**

Glorious Food? English Schoolchildren Think Not

Five months after the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver succeeded in shaming the British government into banning junk food from its school cafeterias, many schools are learning that you can lead a child to a healthy lunch, but you can't make him eat.

What about the fancy new menu at the Rawmarsh School in Rotherham?

"It's rubbish" said a Year 11 student. We found him outside school recently, enjoying a northern speciality known as a chip butty: a French-fries-and-butter sandwich doused in vinegar.

The government's regulations have banned from school cafeterias the cheap, instantly gratifying meals that children love: hamburgers, chips, breaded and deep-fried processed meat and sugary drinks. Now schools must provide at least two portions of fresh fruit and vegetables a day for each child, serve fish at least once a week, remove salt from lunchroom tables, limit fried foods to two servings a week and cut out candy, soda and chips altogether.

But children love chips and getting them to give them up is hard. There is no nicotine patch equivalent for chicken nuggets.

And many parents object to being lectured by Londoners like Mr. Oliver.

"No matter how healthy it is, if kids don't like it they're not going to eat it," said one parent at Rawmarsh who has the nickname "meat pie mum". She claimed the school's new low-fat pizza, tagliatelle and meatballs were especially unappetizing to her children and said the cooks were so overworked that baked potatoes were being served half-cooked.

The fact that Rawmarsh now bans children who do not go home for lunch from leaving school has made things worse, she said, leading to an overcrowded canteen and the ending of the old fast-food-down-the-road option.

"The school shouldn't be allowed to tell the kids what to eat. They're treating them like criminals."

In September she and another mother – alarmed, they said, because their children were going hungry – began selling contraband hamburgers, chips and sandwiches to as many as 50 students a day, passing the food through the school gates or over a cemetery wall.

The mothers closed their business after they were vilified in the national news media.

The head claims that the two women represent a small minority and that most pupils are happy with the healthier menus, which include two hot choices every day – entrées like haddock provençal, and navarin of lamb – as well as baked potatoes for the unadventurous. If the children really hate the food, they can bring packed lunches with whatever food they like. "We don't police the contents. We're very strongly in favour of healthy eating, for all the reasons shared by most schools. But our students are young adults and our policy is to explain and persuade."

"It doesn't happen overnight; it takes an effort," said a local government officer, speaking of the campaign to win the children over. "We have the responsibility for ensuring the health of our children. We want to teach them how to make the right choices for themselves."

The menu changes at Rawmarsh are occurring across Britain, which is grappling with the issue of how to regulate school food to improve children's health. Britons are the fattest people in Europe. If current trends continue, the British Medical Association says, by 2020 some 30 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls here will be clinically obese.

DOCUMENT 9

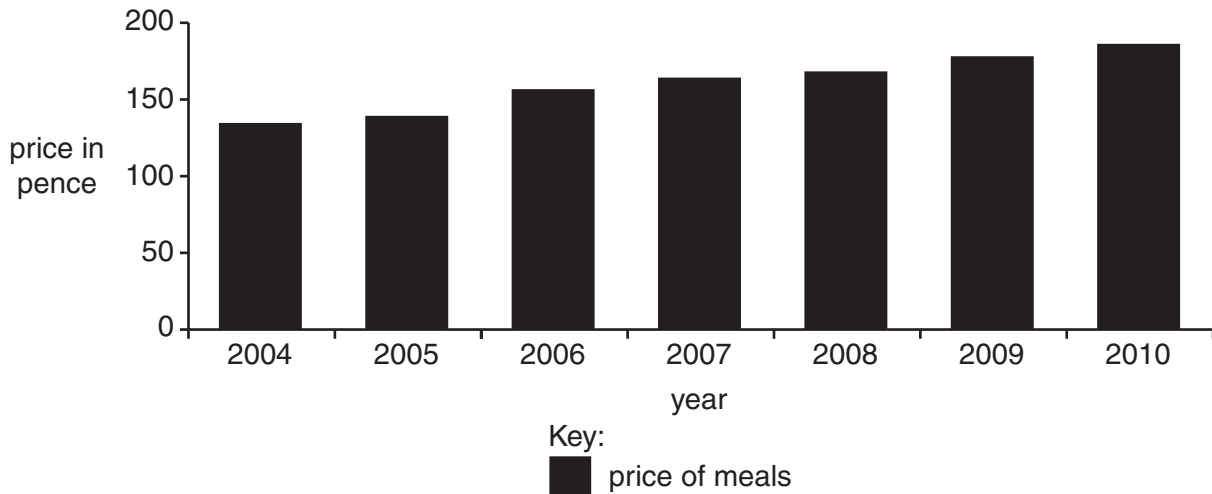
Some more facts and figures about school meals

(a) Extracts from an independent report on 5 schools which had participated in a healthy eating programme

- (i) Pupils who sat exams in 2006 were on the new diet for at least 12 months, and researchers found the proportion of pupils reaching levels four or five had risen by 6 per cent in English.
- (ii) The council involved spent more than £90,000 in one year towards retraining its dinner ladies, and has increased the subsidy towards each child's meal from 33p to 81p.
- (iii) Improvements in English Key Stage 2 results in the 5 schools 2005 to 2006:

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
% improvement in Level 3 and above	2.7	2.0	-0.3	0.3	0.5
% improvement in Level 4 and above	6.0	6.0	3.8	4.5	5.5
% improvement in Level 5 and above	4.1	3.8	3.4	2.7	3.3

(b) Price of meals in primary schools 2004–2010



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