



**SCHOOL
FOOD
MATTERS**

**FARM
GATE TO
SCHOOL
PLATE**

12 Tips for Parents to get fresher, healthier, more sustainable food into your child's school

The School Food Plan and Universal Infant Free School Meals offers a new beginning and a huge step on the road to a Golden Age in school food. If you're a parent and you're worried about school food then you'll be encouraged to know that the power to change the menu is in your hands. Here are our top 12 tips to get the ball rolling in your child's school.

- 1.** Go and have lunch with your child at school - does it look, taste and smell nice? If you don't like what you see, take photos and tell other parents.
- 2.** As you're at school for lunch, have a look at the dining room as well as the food. Don't be a queue jumper! Stand in line and see how long it takes to get served. Does the food run out? Is it served with a smile? Is there somewhere to sit and enjoy your food without feeling rushed or overwhelmed and are you eating off a plate rather than a prison tray. Remember this is lunchtime not the feeding frenzy of a discount airline!
- 3.** Ask the school's caterer to tell you all about food sourcing. If they're doing good work, they'll be keen to tell you about it, if not, find out why.
- 4.** Measure your school food against Sustain's 7 Principles for Sustainable Food. What can your school do better? And how do your school meals measure up to the Food for Life Catering Mark? Do the meals meet the bronze criteria as a minimum standard?
- 5.** Get your school to form a SNAG (Schools Nutrition Action Group) to give the real customers (the children) a voice.
- 6.** If you're not happy with the meal service at your school, find a school that's doing it really well and learn how they transformed their service. Take your head, school governor, or a senior member of staff from your school to show them.
- 7.** If your school is serviced by a local authority contract and you're not happy, write to your council's cabinet member for education and get your friends to do the same.
- 8.** Likewise, if you're not happy with the way school food is being sourced, write to your council's sustainability unit. They should have a food policy and you may need to spill the beans on a contract that might have slipped below their radar!
- 9.** Encourage your school to grow veg a ask the school cook to prepare something that can be featured on that day's menu.
- 10.** Likewise, produce grown at school can be used for cooking classes. With cooking on the curriculum, why not grow the ingredients?
- 11.** Find a farmer! There are hundreds of farmers out there wanting to share their wisdom. Organise a school trip to a farm so they can see where their food comes from. If you've got a good caterer, ask them to recommend one of their growers to host the visit. They might even help out with transport costs.
- 12.** If you're feeling really ambitious, visit one of the 100 school farms in the UK and find out if you can produce the ingredients for your school meals.

Good luck!