



DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

News Release

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A NATIONWIDE CELEBRATION OF THE 'GREAT SCHOOL LUNCH'

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The Deputy Prime Minister is kicking off a week of celebrations to highlight just how far school meals have come since the days of lukewarm liver and bacon and lumpy banana custard.

As part of National School Meals Week (3-7 November) a host of celebrity chefs are joining forces with schools cooks to promote the great school lunch. It comes just months after the launch of free school meals for 2.8 million primary school children and the introduction of cooking on the curriculum.

On Monday, the Deputy Prime Minister will be joining school children at Brasserie Blanc in Oxford, to get some top cooking tips from Raymond Blanc, before heading to a primary school in North London to cook up a storm with Lorraine Pascale.

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg said:

“It’s a very simple truth that if you don’t give children a healthy, balanced meal at lunchtime, you can’t expect them to sit down, concentrate and learn well in the afternoon.

“That’s why I’m so proud of the work we’ve done in Government to put school food back on the agenda. We’ve introduced new food standards, cooking on the curriculum and free school meals, which can save families up to £400 per year, help children do better in class and improve their daily diet.

“This week is about not only encouraging children to really understand and enjoy the food they eat but to celebrate all the schools chefs and catering staff who work day-in day-out to help provide school meals and ensure that we live in a fairer society where every child can get the best possible start in life, regardless of their background.”

Hundreds of schools across the country will also be taking part in the celebrations, which mark the biggest healthy eating awareness week aimed at children in England and Wales. With one in five children leaving primary school overweight and obese, ensuring a healthy, nutritionally balanced school lunch has never been so important.

To help raise awareness and enhance children’s relationships with food, school cooks will be taking their skills out of the school kitchen to showcase to parents and pupils the variety and quality of food now being served in schools.

Planned activities include:

- Pop-up school kitchen outside Parliament to serve great school lunches to MPs on Tuesday 4 November. Top school food will be served by award-winning school chefs, including organic beef Jamaican Pie with mash, vegetable paella, cheesy leak pasta and tutti fruiti crumble.
- Celebrity chefs working with schools to highlight the tasty, health school food, including Gregg Wallace helping to serve lunch in Kent and Lorraine Pascale cooking for pupils in Haringey.
- School chefs cooking a great school lunch at high-profile venues across the country, including the restaurants in Parliament, Manchester City football club and the Gerkin in London.

Schools Minister David Laws, who's will be visiting will be Thomas Jones Primary School in West London, said:

"Eating a healthy, nutritious, meal at school has been proven to help children do better academically and we have made great progress in ensuring more and more pupils all over the country can enjoy those benefits.

"With the help of hard working teachers and staff, we have improved the quality of food in schools without increasing costs and thanks to Universal Infant Free School Meals every child from the age of six to eight has access to a healthy meal at lunchtime – saving parents up to £400 a year.

"This week celebrates that progress and provides a chance to show off the creativity and talent of our hard working school cooks and catering staff to the wider community."

Supportive quotes:

Brian Turner CBE, President Royal Academy of Culinary Arts:

'Every week should be National Schools Week, well done to all those getting involved. The future of our country depends on the health of our infants, lets make it work.'

Gary Rhodes OBE said:

"National School Meals week provides us with an opportunity to add a new approach and response from the young to good flavoursome and seasonal culinary produce. Within these days we can also help set a new table manners approach, which reminds me so much of my 'days of old'. As we all know the very early lessons in and to life, are the most important of all with children so easily led by their leaders in all walks of life, let's take advantage of such an influential set of days that will add a whole new a meaning to 'Great British Produce' to so many"

Carrienne Bishop, National Chair of LACA, the lead association for catering in education, said:

"It is vital to our children's wellbeing that they eat a healthy, nutritious hot meal on a regular basis. National School Meals Week is about celebrating the great school lunch and showing the great

quality of meals on offer to students every day. School food has come a long way in the 21 years since the first National School Meals Week with school cooks now amongst the best chefs in the country.

“A school lunch helps young people recharge their batteries to be at their best for afternoon lessons, and for many students a school lunch is the only hot and healthy meal they will get.”

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Notes to editors

- National School Meals Week is organised by LACA, the lead association for catering in education, who work with schools to promote healthy school meals in primary and secondary schools, colleges and academies.
- LACA represents staff in schools, local authorities and catering services who provide 3 million lunches in 22,000 schools every day. For more information on LACA visit: <http://laca.co.uk>
- For more information on National School Meals Week visit: <http://www.nsmw.org.uk>

Key facts:

School Food Plan

- Universal free school meals for primary school pupils were a key recommendation in a review of school food produced independently for the Department for Education. The School Food Plan, published by Henry Dimbleby and John Vincent in July 2013, recommended that government embark on a phased roll out of free school meals for all children in all primary schools.
- The School Food Plan presented evidence that this would lead to positive improvements in health, attainment and social cohesion, and help families with the cost of living:
 - the average school meal costs £437 per child per year
 - many children on low incomes are not eligible for free school meals approximately 4 in 10 children living in poverty
- Attainment (in pilot areas):
 - the students were found to be on average 2 months ahead of their peers elsewhere
 - around 2% more children reached target levels in Maths and English at Key Stage 1; while at Key Stage 2 the impact on achievement of between 3% and 5% was a bigger improvement than the 3.6% boost that followed the introduction of a compulsory literacy hour in 1998

- academic improvements were most marked among children from less affluent families
- Health (in pilot areas):
 - There is a real need to address health problems that are linked to a poor diet – almost 20% of children are obese by the time they leave primary school.
 - We need to address this problem from a very young age, evidence clearly shows that childhood eating habits stay with you for life.
 - A common misconception is that a packed lunch is healthier than a school meal. In fact only 1% of packed lunches meet the nutritional standards that currently apply to school food.
 - Pilots in Newham and Durham showed a 23% increase in the number of children eating vegetables at lunch and an 18% drop in crisps.

Easing the pressure on household budgets

- Extending free school meals to all infant school pupils will help ease the pressure on family budgets - The average school meal costs £437, meaning a significant saving to parents.
- Universal provision for children up to 7 would also ensure that those on low incomes but not eligible for FSM receive a hot meal – there are around 700,000 children (from all age groups) living in poverty who are not eligible for free school meals.

Better for all children

- Research from the pilots indicates that the provision of free school meals to all children helped to create a sense of cohesion within the school. There are a number of ways in which free schools meals for all could contribute to this:
 - it would remove concerns of stigmatisation of children who receive free school meals because of their parents financial situation – research has shown that some children do not currently claim a free lunch because of teasing, bullying or fear of stigma.
 - a nutritious lunch improves concentration, which in turn has a positive impact on classroom behaviour
 - it changes the culture of a division between those children who eat a packed lunch separately from those eating a school meal

Documents:

The School Food Plan: http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/School_Food_Plan_2013.pdf

The Institute for Fiscal Studies evaluation of the pilot projects: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/184047/DFE-RR227.pdf

Pilot studies:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/184047/DFE-RR227.pdf

The report on the pilot studies presents evidence on the impact of Free School Meals pilot on a range of pupil outcomes. The pilot was a 2-year programme operating in three local authorities (Wolverhampton, Durham and Newham) between autumn 2009 and summer 2011.