

# School meals - *Making the right choice for your child*

Eating the right balance of healthy, tasty food helps children to learn and develop. That's why making the right decision about what your child eats at school is so important.

Over the last year your child has been benefiting from all the good things school food offers, thanks to government funding for free school meals for all children in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2. They've had the chance to try new food, to enjoy eating with their friends, tucking into delicious meals packed full of the energy and essential nutrients they need to grow and learn.

If your child's about to move up to Year 3, you have a decision to make about whether to pay for school meals now. If you receive certain benefits, you may still be able to claim free school meals for your child (talk to your school for more information on how to apply).

Here's a reminder of just some of the great things about school food to help you make your choice...

## ***Better for your child***

It's simple - school meals are the best choice for your child's health, education and well-being. Each school meal is designed to meet standards which make sure your child is getting a healthy, balanced mix of food and drink.



## **School meals also...**

- *encourage your children to try different foods, as well as enjoy familiar favourites*
- *provide at least two of the recommended 5-a-day portions of fruit and vegetables*
- *get them thinking about healthy eating, which will help them make good food choices in the future*
- *help children's concentration and behaviour in the classroom.*

*"I really like having hot lunches - they keep you warm on cold days!"*

**- Louisa, Cheshire**

## Better for you

### *Choosing school meals will save you money*

It's easy to assume that making your own lunch is always cheaper. But making lunchboxes which pack in the same variety and nutrition as school meals day after day isn't as cheap as you might think. And when you compare the cost of the average school meal to other everyday spends, it's good value – costing less than a large Starbucks coffee and around the same as many prepacked sandwiches in the supermarket.

### *Choosing school meals will save you time*

The time and effort involved in planning, shopping for and preparing a lunchbox five days a week really adds up. Choosing school meals for your child takes away that hassle and will give you back some much-needed hours every week!



### *Choosing school meals gives you the reassurance your child is eating well*

If your child is eating a healthy school lunch every day you can have the confidence they're getting the variety and nutrition they need during the day. That's one less thing for you to worry about, at a time in their development when children are growing and learning so much.

Though some children prefer the familiarity of a lunch packed at home, it's not easy to make a lunchbox which packs in the same variety and nutrition as a school meal, day after day. Even "healthier" lunchbox favourites like smoothies, yoghurts and cereal bars can be packed full of sugar. School lunches which meet national school food standards, designed by leading experts in child nutrition, mean your child is getting the levels of energy and essential nutrients they need. Research shows only 1% of packed lunches meet these same standards.

### *A great choice*

School meals today are nutritious and tasty. They're good for your child's health and well-being, save you time and money and give you the confidence your child is eating and drinking the right things. Better for them and better for you, school meals are a great choice. If you'd like to read more about school food for your child, please visit [www.schoolfoodplan.com](http://www.schoolfoodplan.com) or [www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk](http://www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk).

*"He wasn't prepared to try anything new at home. We worried he wasn't eating enough, he wouldn't touch fruit or veg and would only eat white bread. When he sees his friends having new foods as part of their school meal he tries them too, so he doesn't feel left out. If he's sitting with his friends who are eating, he seems to eat more."*

- Donna, Norwich