
Fourth annual survey of take-up of school lunches in England

Michael Nelson,¹ Ellen Lever,¹ Jo Nicholas,¹ Lesley Wood,¹
Thea Patsias,¹ Emily Knowles¹ and Neil Porter²

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¹ School Food Trust

² Local Authority Caterers Association

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Summary

- All 150 local authorities (LAs) in England were approached for information regarding school catering services. Of these, 150 (100%) responded, providing information related to both LA organized catering services (whether provided directly or contracted on behalf of schools in the LA) and non-LA catering services.
- The response rate is sufficiently high, and findings are in sufficiently good agreement with other nationally collected data, to be confident that the findings presented in this report are representative of Local Authority organized school meal provision in England. The coverage relating to take up of school lunches is over 90% of primary schools and 73% of secondary schools, making this the most comprehensive picture of take up in England ever reported.
- LA catered or contracted provision accounted for 80%, 41% and 70% of primary, secondary and special school lunch provision, respectively, the remaining 20%, 59% and 30% being provided privately or in-school.
- Take up of school lunches was 39.3% in primary schools and 35.0% in secondary schools.
- Average school lunch prices were £1.77 in the LA catered primary sector and £1.88 in the LA catered secondary sector, each up 6% on the preceding year.
- In primary schools, 75% had a full production kitchen, 6.5% had facilities for regeneration or a mini-kitchen, 13.5% had food transported from another school or venue. 3% of primary schools had cold food only or FSM only service, compared with 5% reported in 2007-2008. In secondary schools, 94% had full production kitchens.
- As of March 2009, 94% of primary and 35% of secondary LA catered school lunch provision was thought by respondents to be compliant with the final food-based and nutrient-based standards for school lunches. This was an encouraging result considering secondary schools did not have to comply with the nutrient-based standards until September 2009.
- 64% of LAs indicated that they thought attitudes in primary schools had improved in the last year, 36% thought they were about the same, and none thought that primary pupils' attitudes were worse. For the secondary sector, 25% of LAs thought attitudes had improved, 60% had remained about the same, and 15% thought that attitudes were worse.

1 Introduction

The School Food Trust (“the Trust”) has been established to support the implementation of changes in school food in England consistent with new standards for school food published on 19 May 2006 by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES),¹ revised and updated on 17 August 2007² and amended on 11 July 2008.³ The original national targets for schools recommended by the School Meals Review Panel⁴ to the DfES^a were an increase in take up of school meals of four percentage points by March 2008 and ten percentage points by autumn 2009, relative to the baseline of take up in the 2005-2006 financial year. The baseline figures were based on the first annual survey of school meal take up in England commissioned by the Trust in May 2006 (and published in July 2006).⁵ These targets have now been revised to reflect the longer timescale needed to introduce the changes in catering provision nationally.⁶

This is the fourth annual survey of school meal take up in England; the three previous surveys were carried out at the end of the financial year from 2006 to 2008.^{5 7 8} As in previous years, the 2008-2009 survey was carried out jointly with the Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA), and in consultation with other organizations and agencies with an interest in school food provision.

This year has seen the introduction of a standard method for calculating school lunch take up (NI 52). The 2008-2009 school lunch take up figures were reported in July.⁹ The core questions in the survey have and will remain essentially the same each year, but additional questions may be added according to the needs of the Trust, LACA and other interested parties (e.g. Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Department of Health (DH)). The timing of the survey coincides with the annual assessment by local authorities (LAs) of their turnover and take up of school lunches in the preceding financial year (April-March). The method and timing provide a stable assessment of annual take up of school lunches which is not biased by the seasonal variation known to be associated with take up (highest in the Autumn term, lowest in the Summer term) and avoids the problems of interpretation associated with findings based on a single census date chosen at one point in the school year. It also provides LAs with an opportunity to reflect on factors associated with changes in take up over the previous year. The present report is similar in format to, and makes reference to, the findings from the Trust’s earlier annual surveys of take up.

^a Now the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)

2 Methods

2.1 Survey design

The survey was designed jointly by researchers from the School Food Trust and LACA. For the take up of school lunches, meal prices and costs, and catering facilities, LAs were asked to report separately for schools with LA catering (either LA in-house or LA-contracted private contractor) and schools with other catering (school contracted private contractor or school in-house), generally referred to in the tables as non-LA catering.

2.2 Questionnaire testing

Prior to administering the survey, detailed consultation took place with LACA, LA caterers and other organisations such as DCSF and UNISON to refine the questions and to ensure that the language and terminology used was specific and appropriate for encouraging accurate and comprehensive responses from recipients.

2.3 Sample selection and logistics

Before the questionnaire was sent out all LAs were invited to participate in a series of three conference calls between February and March 2009. These calls were set up to address the changes in the method of computing school lunch take up (including issues in schools with FSM provision only and how to factor in mid-morning break income into take up calculations). The third conference call was held after the questionnaire was sent out to address any general queries related to the updated terminology. The questionnaire was sent to the lead officials in all 150 local authorities. The initial survey was sent out by email in March 2009. Reminder emails were sent from mid-April and telephone calls made to non-responding authorities. Follow-up emails and calls to LAs to clarify responses continued until the end of June.

2.4 Data entry and coding

The data collected on written or electronic versions of the questionnaire were entered by a specialist data entry firm. Where information was missing or unavailable, follow up contact was made with the respondent to complete the information wherever possible.

2.5 Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis for the present report was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences¹⁰ (SPSS). Analyses were undertaken so as to reflect the relative numbers of schools or pupils in each LA. Estimates of take up of school lunches took into account the numbers of pupils on roll in the schools covered by the catering services. Estimates of catering characteristics (e.g. facilities for food preparation) took into account the number of schools catered for by the service provider within each LA. The findings therefore reflect the correct balance of provision across England and do not give undue emphasis to the findings from smaller schools, LA providers or caterers.

2.6 Reporting and coverage

All 150 LAs in England responded to the questionnaire, of which 148 were able to provide information on take up for 2008-2009. LAs were asked to provide information on take up separately for their own services (either provided directly or contracted) and for those provided by school contracted, private contractors or school in-house. The complexity of school meal catering means that not all LAs provided information for every question. Where not stated explicitly, information relates only to catering services provided by the LA. The findings in the main do not therefore include the characteristics of schools who arrange

catering services from providers who do not operate within the local authority structure (e.g. private catering companies) or schools who provide their own services in-house. For each table, the number of LAs responding is shown in a footnote (“Base (unweighted)”).

2.7 Quality assurance

The data entered were double checked for accuracy and consistency by the lead researchers for 100% of the data entry. Where queries or inconsistencies occurred, information providers from the relevant LA were contacted for clarification and changes were made where appropriate. Similarly, respondents were contacted, wherever possible, to complete missing data on the questionnaires.

3 Results

3.1 Response rates

Responses to the survey were received from 150 LAs. Two of these responses contained insufficient data to be able to compute take up of school lunches. After excluding LAs whose information was of inadequate quality, the calculation of take up was based on responses from 145 LAs for the primary and special sectors combined, and 139 LAs for the secondary sector. For the remaining variables, the number of responses to each question varies, and the number on which each analysis is based is shown as the base number(s) in each table.

3.2 Sample characteristics

The total numbers of schools in the responding LAs and the number (and %) actually catered for by LA and non-LA providers is shown for nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, by region in Table 1. Overall, LA catered or contracted provision accounted for 80%, 41% and 70% of primary, secondary and special provision, respectively, the remaining 20%, 59% and 30% being provided privately or school in-house or unknown.

Table 1. Total number of primary, secondary and special schools in the responding local authorities in England, by type of provider, by region

Region	Number of local authorities <i>n</i>	Nursery		Primary		Secondary		Special	
		Schools in LA catered for <i>n</i>	%	Schools in LA catered for <i>n</i>	%	Schools in LA catered for <i>n</i>	%	Schools in LA catered for <i>n</i>	%
LA Catered or LA Contracted Provision									
North East	12	19	5.5	849	6.2	119	9.0	59	8.5
North West	22	56	16.1	2128	15.5	201	15.2	123	17.7
Yorkshire/Humber	15	53	15.2	1714	12.5	192	14.5	75	10.8
East Midlands	9	14	4.0	1231	8.9	110	8.3	48	6.9
West Midlands	14	85	24.4	1551	11.3	230	17.4	98	14.1
East of England	10	24	6.9	1416	10.3	114	8.6	60	8.7
Inner London	13	36	10.3	461	3.4	51	3.8	40	5.8
Outer London	20	23	6.6	809	5.9	65	4.9	56	8.1
South East	19	20	5.7	2183	15.9	163	12.3	92	13.3
South West	16	18	5.2	1417	10.3	80	6.0	42	6.1
England	150	348	100.0	13759	100.0	1325	100.0	693	100.0
Non LA Catering Provision									
North East	12	4	1.2	49	1.5	82	4.3	6	2.1
North West	22	61	17.7	358	10.6	255	13.4	32	11.0
Yorkshire/Humber	15	66	19.1	139	4.1	124	6.5	10	3.4
East Midlands	9	46	13.3	395	11.7	185	9.7	31	10.6
West Midlands	14	51	14.8	271	8.1	171	9.0	24	8.2
East of England	10	19	5.5	652	19.4	221	11.6	36	12.3
Inner London	13	13	3.8	172	5.1	75	3.9	16	5.5
Outer London	20	34	9.9	376	11.2	217	11.4	28	9.6
South East	19	28	8.1	459	13.6	334	17.5	66	22.6
South West	16	23	6.7	492	14.6	243	12.7	43	14.7
England	150	345	100.0	3363	100.0	1907	100.0	292	100.0

Table 1 (cont'd). Total number of primary, secondary and special schools in the responding local authorities in England, by type of provider, by region

Region	Number of local authorities <i>n</i>	Nursery		Primary		Secondary		Special	
		Schools in LA catered for <i>n</i>	%	Schools in LA catered for <i>n</i>	%	Schools in LA catered for <i>n</i>	%	Schools in LA catered for <i>n</i>	%
All Catering Provision									
North East	12	23	3.3	898	5.2	201	6.2	65	6.6
North West	22	117	16.9	2486	14.5	456	14.1	154	15.7
Yorkshire/Humber	15	119	17.2	1853	10.8	316	9.8	85	8.6
East Midlands	9	60	8.7	1626	9.5	295	9.1	79	8.0
West Midlands	14	136	19.6	1822	10.6	401	12.4	122	12.4
East of England	10	43	6.2	2068	12.1	335	10.4	96	9.7
Inner London	13	49	7.1	633	3.7	126	3.9	56	5.7
Outer London	20	57	8.2	1185	6.9	282	8.7	84	8.5
South East	19	48	6.9	2642	15.4	497	15.4	158	16.0
South West	16	41	5.9	1909	11.1	323	10.0	85	8.6
England	150	693	100.0	17122	100.0	3232	100.0	985	100.0

Base (unweighted): 150 LAs. N.B. 6 LAs provide no catering in primary schools, 17 provide no catering in secondary schools, and 9 provide no catering in special schools. Provision of catering in nursery schools is less well characterised.

Table 2 shows the number of pupils catered for in each sector by type of provider.

Table 2. Total number of primary, secondary and special school pupils in the responding local authorities in England, by type of provider, by region

Region	School Roll <i>n</i>	Primary		School Roll <i>n</i>	Secondary		School Roll <i>n</i>	Special	
		Registered for FSM* <i>n</i>	Not registered for FSM <i>n</i>		Registered for FSM <i>n</i>	Not registered for FSM <i>n</i>		Registered for FSM <i>n</i>	Not registered for FSM <i>n</i>
LA Catered or LA Contracted Provision									
North East	177311	38494	138817	93564	15666	77898	4257	1810	2447
North West	391279	79271	312008	170931	27791	143140	8847	3416	5431
Yorkshire/Humber	355308	61614	293694	180106	25385	154721	5975	2064	3911
East Midlands	222364	33993	188371	96498	15224	81274	2272	694	1578
West Midlands	371945	78515	293430	189542	33933	155609	9860	3530	6330
East of England	286349	30415	255934	103700	10279	93421	3743	1045	2698
Inner London	134829	48593	86236	40770	14077	26693	3068	1543	1525
Outer London	272527	57873	214654	69658	17615	52043	5303	1618	3685
South East	495735	52563	443172	138142	9478	128664	5368	1328	4040
South West	269422	30906	238516	70428	6475	63953	3397	1054	2343
England	2977069	512237	2464832	1153339	175923	977416	52090	18102	33988
Non LA Catering Provision									
North East	9765	2465	7300	41070	6256	34814	395	195	200
North West	40326	5736	18702	69628	14106	55522	247	91	156
Yorkshire/Humber	28287	4477	23810	70632	8385	62247	382	127	255
East Midlands	49964	5319	44645	116045	8531	107514	2308	561	1748
West Midlands	19409	2677	16732	67081	8679	44006	895	274	621
East of England	99628	12508	87120	121580	7645	113935	1794	408	1386
Inner London	26714	8420	18294	13801	3782	10019	343	163	180
Outer London	92919	17950	74879	126147	20677	105470	1564	553	1011
South East	102260	8477	93783	290998	23020	267978	6164	1708	4456
South West	65435	7380	58515	146676	13226	133450	2331	592	1739
England	534707	75409	443780	1063658	114307	934955	16423	4672	11752
All Catering Provision									
North East	187076	40959	146117	134634	21922	112712	4652	2005	2647
North West	431605	85007	330710	240559	41897	198662	9094	3507	5587
Yorkshire/Humber	383595	66091	317504	250738	33770	216968	6357	2191	4166
East Midlands	272328	39312	233016	212543	23755	188788	4580	1255	3326
West Midlands	391354	81192	310162	256623	42612	199615	10755	3804	6951
East of England	385977	42923	343054	225280	17924	207356	5537	1453	4084
Inner London	161543	57013	104530	54571	17859	36712	3411	1706	1705
Outer London	365446	75823	289533	195805	38292	157513	6867	2171	4696
South East	597995	61040	536955	429140	32498	396642	11532	3036	8496
South West	334857	38285	297032	217104	19701	197403	5728	1646	4082
England	3511776	587645	2908612	2216997	290230	1912371	68513	22774	45739

Base (unweighted): 150 LAs

*Free school meals

The findings from the present survey are wholly representative of the national characteristics of Local authority school catering provision. Comparisons with previous findings (2006-2008) may not reflect true change, in part because of less complete coverage in previous years.

3.3 School food catering providers

Respondents were asked for information on the type of catering providers for all schools in their LA. Table 3 shows the totals for nursery, primary, secondary and special schools by region. Table 4 shows the numbers of schools for which there is Free School Meal (FSM) only provision.

Information on catering provision in nursery schools has been included here to provide an indication of the level of provision. There is no further analysis or reporting in relation to nursery schools due to the variability of the service.

Unless denoted separately, values in tables for “primary schools” reflect information for primary and special schools combined. The findings are therefore comparable with those reported in previous years.

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Table 3. Number and percentage of types of school food providers in nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in England, by region

Region	Total number of schools	LA contracted catering service – LA in-house provider		LA contracted catering service – private contractor (one or more)		School contracted catering service – LA provider		School contracted catering service – private contractor		School catering service – school in-house service		FSM service only or no catering		Don't know	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Nursery															
North East	23	19	82.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	4.3	0	0.0	3	13.0
North West	117	50	42.7	0	0.0	6	5.1	1	0.9	15	12.8	38	32.5	7	6.0
Yorkshire/Humber	119	36	30.3	11	9.2	6	5.0	0	0.0	1	0.8	6	5.0	59	49.6
East Midlands	60	9	15.0	5	8.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	29	48.3	8	13.3	9	15.0
West Midlands	136	54	39.7	2	1.5	29	21.3	0	0.0	7	5.1	6	4.4	38	27.9
East of England	43	18	41.9	6	14.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	7.0	6	14.0	10	23.3
Inner London	49	14	28.6	22	44.9	0	0.0	6	12.2	5	10.2	0	0.0	2	4.1
Outer London	57	16	28.1	1	1.8	6	10.5	4	7.0	12	21.1	5	8.8	13	22.8
South East	48	11	22.9	9	18.8	0	0.0	3	6.3	5	10.4	5	10.4	15	31.3
South West	41	4	9.8	14	34.1	0	0.0	5	12.2	6	14.6	11	26.8	1	2.4
All nursery	693	231	33.3	70	10.1	47	6.8	19	2.7	84	12.1	85	12.3	157	22.7
Primary															
North East	898	588	65.5	201	22.4	60	6.7	7	0.8	42	4.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
North West	2486	990	39.8	0	0.0	1133	45.6	150	6.0	153	6.2	51	2.1	9	0.4
Yorkshire/Humber	1853	993	53.6	228	12.3	493	26.6	50	2.7	84	4.5	3	0.2	2	0.1
East Midlands	1626	1061	65.3	170	10.5	0	0.0	249	15.3	54	3.3	92	5.7	0	0.0
West Midlands	1822	595	32.7	47	2.6	908	49.8	135	7.4	63	3.5	61	3.3	13	0.7
East of England	2068	928	44.9	488	23.6	0	0.0	111	5.4	353	17.1	21	1.0	167	8.1
Inner London	633	164	25.9	297	46.9	0	0.0	89	14.1	73	11.5	0	0.0	10	1.6
Outer London	1185	478	40.3	235	19.8	64	5.4	305	25.7	50	4.2	53	4.5	0	0.0
South East	2642	935	35.4	1244	47.1	3	0.1	152	5.8	117	4.4	180	6.8	11	0.4
South West	1909	501	26.2	653	34.2	130	6.8	183	9.6	181	9.5	203	10.6	58	3.0
All primary	17122	7233	42.2	3563	20.8	2791	16.3	1431	8.4	1170	6.8	664	3.9	270	1.6
Secondary															
North East	201	113	56.2	4	2.0	2	1.0	61	30.3	21	10.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
North West	456	62	13.6	2	0.4	137	30.0	81	17.8	158	34.6	2	0.4	14	3.1
Yorkshire/Humber	316	99	31.3	39	12.3	54	17.1	33	10.4	84	26.6	1	0.3	6	1.9
East Midlands	295	79	26.8	0	0.0	31	10.5	50	16.9	133	45.1	0	0.0	2	0.7
West Midlands	401	69	17.2	12	3.0	149	37.2	97	24.2	58	14.5	0	0.0	16	4.0
East of England	335	53	15.8	22	6.6	39	11.6	59	17.6	119	35.5	0	0.0	43	12.8
Inner London	126	18	14.3	25	19.8	8	6.3	36	28.6	24	19.0	1	0.8	14	11.1
Outer London	282	38	13.5	15	5.3	12	4.3	107	37.9	78	27.7	0	0.0	32	11.3
South East	497	30	6.0	93	18.7	40	8.0	158	31.8	158	31.8	0	0.0	18	3.6
South West	323	22	6.8	28	8.7	24	7.4	96	29.7	128	39.6	7	2.2	18	5.6
All secondary	3232	583	18.0	240	7.4	496	15.3	778	24.1	961	29.7	11	0.3	163	5.0
Special															
North East	65	52	80.0	7	10.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	6.2	0	0.0	2	3.1
North West	154	65	42.2	1	0.6	57	37.0	10	6.5	15	9.7	0	0.0	6	3.9
Yorkshire/Humber	85	49	57.6	8	9.4	18	21.2	2	2.4	8	9.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
East Midlands	79	37	46.8	11	13.9	0	0.0	7	8.9	24	30.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
West Midlands	122	42	34.4	2	1.6	54	44.3	2	1.6	20	16.4	2	1.6	0	0.0
East of England	96	44	45.8	15	15.6	0	0.0	2	2.1	20	20.8	1	1.0	14	14.6
Inner London	56	14	25.0	26	46.4	0	0.0	3	5.4	13	23.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Outer London	84	31	36.9	23	27.4	2	2.4	15	17.9	10	11.9	2	2.4	1	1.2
South East	158	55	34.8	33	20.9	4	2.5	9	5.7	54	34.2	1	0.6	2	1.3
South West	85	15	17.6	22	25.9	5	5.9	10	11.8	31	36.5	1	1.2	1	1.2
All special	984	404	41.1	148	15.0	140	14.2	60	6.1	199	20.2	7	0.7	26	2.6

Base (unweighted): nursery 693 schools, primary 17122 schools, secondary 3232 schools, special 984 schools

Table 4. Number and percentage of types of school food providers in nursery, primary, secondary and special schools providing FSM only in England, by region

Region	Total number of schools	LA contracted catering service – LA in-house provider	LA contracted catering service – private contractor (one or more)	School contracted catering service – LA provider	School contracted catering service – private contractor	School catering service – school in-house service	No catering service	Don't know
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Nursery								
North East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North West	38	0	0	0	0	0	38	0
Yorkshire/Humber	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
East Midlands	8	0	0	0	0	0	8	0
West Midlands	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
East of England	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Inner London	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Outer London	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
South East	5	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
South West	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
All nursery	85	0	0	0	0	0	72	13
Percentage of FSM only	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	84.7	15.3
Primary								
North East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North West	51	0	0	5	5	16	20	5
Yorkshire/Humber	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
East Midlands	92	0	0	0	55	5	23	9
West Midlands	61	0	1	0	48	0	12	0
East of England	21	0	0	0	0	0	21	0
Inner London	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Outer London	53	2	30	0	7	6	7	1
South East	180	0	1	0	50	11	75	43
South West	203	42	91	0	16	11	43	0
All primary	664	44	123	5	181	52	201	58
Percentage of FSM only	100.0	6.6	18.5	0.8	27.3	7.8	30.3	8.7
Secondary								
North East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North West	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Yorkshire/Humber	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
East Midlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East of England	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inner London	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Outer London	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South West	7	0	6	0	1	0	0	0
All secondary	11	0	6	0	4	0	1	0
Percentage of FSM only	100.0	0.0	54.5	0.0	36.4	0.0	9.1	0.0

Table 4 (cont'd) Number and percentage of types of school food providers in nursery, primary, secondary and special schools providing FSM only in England, by region

Region	Total number of schools	LA contracted catering service – LA in-house provider	LA contracted catering service – private contractor (one or more)	School contracted catering service – LA provider	School contracted catering service – private contractor	School catering service – school in-house service	No catering service	Don't know
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
Special								
North East	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North West	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yorkshire/Humber	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Midlands	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
East of England	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Inner London	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Outer London	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
South East	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
South West	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
All special	7	1	0	0	1	2	1	2
Percentage of FSM only	100.0	14.3	0.0	0.0	14.3	28.6	14.3	28.6

Base (unweighted): nursery 85 schools, primary 664 schools, secondary 11 schools, special 7 schools

3.4 Take up of school lunch

Of the 150 LAs, 145 provided information on the take up of school lunch in primary and special schools,^b and 139 provided information relating to secondary schools. The take up values for all catering are shown in Table 5, in LA organized catering provision in Table 6, and in non-LA catering provision in Table 7. These findings very nearly replicate those in the NI 52 Statistical Release on school lunch take up⁹. A number of local authorities provided data after the publication of the Statistical Release which they felt it was appropriate to include and which resulted in small changes in the calculated take up values. These are reflected in the tables below. All changes are of the order of 0.1%.

Mean take up for all catering services is 39.3% in the primary sector and 35.0% in the secondary sector. In the secondary sector, take up is similar in both LA and non-LA catered provision. In primary schools however, the overall take up reflects the take up in LA catered schools (39.9%) as it is influenced by the higher proportion of schools with LA catering (13618 schools), compared with the relatively few schools with non-LA catering provision (2325 schools) in which take up is 35.8%. Coverage of schools is 93% in primary and 74% in secondary. This is a substantial improvement on coverage compared with previous years.

^b Unless denoted separately, values in tables for “primary schools” represent take up in primary and special schools combined. The findings are therefore comparable with those collected in previous years.

Table 5. NI 52: percent take up of school lunches and percent coverage, primary and secondary schools in England, by region, 2008-2009

Region	Primary						Secondary					
	Number of LAs in region*		% take up	Number of schools		% coverage	Number of LAs in region*		% take up	Number of schools		% coverage
	Responding	Reporting		Total in LAs responding	Total reported on		Responding	Reporting		Total in LAs responding	Total reported on	
North East	12	12	50.8	963	950	98.7	12	12	41.4	201	171	85.1
North West	22	21	45.4	2143	1952	91.1	22	21	42.2	387	255	65.9
Yorkshire/Humber	15	15	44.9	1924	1858	96.6	15	15	36.4	314	236	75.2
East Midlands	9	8	36.4	1430	1413	98.8	9	8	35.7	257	232	90.3
West Midlands	14	14	43	1948	1703	87.4	14	14	33.9	392	288	73.5
East of England	10	10	37.6	2164	1900	87.8	10	10	33.8	335	217	64.8
Inner London	13	12	56.8	644	572	88.8	13	8	43.5	82	52	63.4
Outer London	20	20	40.2	1264	1131	89.5	20	17	40.2	250	171	68.4
South East	19	18	27.9	2737	2688	98.2	19	19	30.4	496	422	85.1
South West	16	15	29	1952	1776	91	16	15	26.2	323	201	62.2
England	150	145	39.3	17169	15943	92.9	150	139	35.0	3037	2245	73.9

Base (unweighted): 145 LAs reporting for primary, 139 LAs reporting for secondary

Analysis: weighted by number of pupils attending schools reported on

* Number of LAs in region – Responding: number of LAs in which there was catering provision; Reporting – number of LAs in which take up values were reported

Table 6. NI 52: percent take up of school lunches and percent coverage, primary and secondary schools in England with LA catered or contracted provision, by region, 2008-2009

Region	Primary						Secondary					
	Number of LAs in region*		% take up	Number of schools		% coverage	Number of LAs in region*		% take up	Number of schools		% coverage
	Responding	Reporting		Total in LAs responding	Total reported on		Responding	Reporting		Total in LAs responding	Total reported on	
North East	12	12	50.6	909	905	99.6	11	11	39.9	122	119	97.5
North West	20	20	45.7	1797	1795	99.9	18	18	40.8	207	200	96.6
Yorkshire/Humber	15	15	45.3	1785	1750	98.0	14	14	36.0	192	177	92.2
East Midlands	7	7	37.1	1115	1111	99.6	6	6	30.2	110	110	100.0
West Midlands	13	13	43.2	1653	1609	97.3	12	12	33.4	218	218	100.0
East of England	8	8	37.8	1473	1472	99.9	7	7	31.0	114	107	93.9
Inner London	10	10	56.0	519	505	97.3	7	7	42.5	47	44	93.6
Outer London	17	17	40.5	865	838	96.9	10	10	36.9	63	63	100.0
South East	17	17	28.3	2210	2210	100.0	14	13	26.2	162	154	95.1
South West	14	14	29.5	1429	1423	99.6	9	9	24.8	80	76	95.0
England	133	133	39.9	13755	13618	99.0	108	107	34.1	1315	1268	96.4

Base (unweighted): 133 LAs reporting for primary, 107 LAs reporting for secondary

Analysis: weighted by number of pupils attending schools reported on

* Number of LAs in region – Responding: number of LAs in which there was catering provision; Reporting – number of LAs in which take up values were reported

Table 7. NI 52: percent take up of school lunches and percent coverage, primary and secondary schools in England with non-LA catering provision, by region, 2008-2009

Region	Primary						Secondary					
	Number of LAs in region *		% take up	Number of schools		% coverage	Number of LAs in region *		% take up	Number of schools		% coverage
	Responding	Reporting		Total in LAs responding	Total reported on		Responding	Reporting		Total in LAs responding	Total reported on	
North East	10	8	53.8	52	45	86.5	12	7	44.8	57	52	91.2
North West	13	7	42.8	200	157	78.5	18	12	45.8	128	55	43
Yorkshire/Humber	10	8	40.4	116	108	93.1	14	10	37.5	74	59	79.7
East Midlands	8	7	33.1	312	302	96.8	8	7	40.3	140	122	87.1
West Midlands	11	9	37.6	284	94	33.1	13	10	35.2	145	70	48.3
East of England	10	9	37	689	428	62.1	10	8	36.1	203	110	54.2
Inner London	11	8	61.1	105	67	63.8	8	4	49.1	20	8	40
Outer London	17	14	39.4	378	293	77.5	17	13	42.0	153	108	70.6
South East	18	17	26	524	478	91.2	19	19	32.4	333	268	80.5
South West	12	11	27.2	519	353	68	15	14	26.8	242	125	51.7
England	120	98	35.8	3179	2325	73.1	134	104	36.1	1495	977	65.4

Base (unweighted): 98 LAs reporting for primary, 104 LAs reporting for secondary

Analysis: weighted by number of pupils attending schools reported on

* Number of LAs in region – Responding: number of LAs in which there was catering provision; Reporting – number of LAs in which take up values were reported

The number of schools in LAs reporting is correct, but is a subset of the number of schools in LAs reporting in Table 5. The total number of schools in LAs reporting in Table 6 and Table 7 do not therefore sum to the total number of schools in LAs reporting in Table 5.

Year-on-year changes in take up of school lunch are shown in Table 8 for a subset of 82 LAs who provided information for LA catered services in the primary sector using NI 52 methodology in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, and a different subset of 81 LAs who provided information in both years based on NI 52 for LA catered services for the secondary sector. The finding suggests that take up is more or less stable in the primary sector (following the introduction of nutrient-based standards in September 2007) and increasing slightly in the secondary sector. Although these values are higher than for England as a whole, they are the best available indicator of change in take up over these two financial years. Within each region there is considerable variation in the change in take up across individual LAs. A possible reason for this variability includes a difference in coverage of schools within the LAs compared with last year^c.

Table 8. Take up of school meals (%) in primary and secondary schools in England, by region, 2008-2009 and 2007-2008 based on NI 52 method of calculation

Region	Financial year		NI 52	
	2007-2008	2008-2009	% of 2007-2008	Change in provision
	%	%	%	Difference (percentage points)
<i>Primary</i>				
North East	52.9	51.5	97.3	-1.4
North West	45.0	45.3	100.8	0.4
Yorkshire/Humber	44.0	45.3	103.1	1.4
East Midlands	40.8	40.0	98.1	-0.8
West Midlands	47.4	47.6	100.4	0.2
East of England	39.7	39.7	100.0	0.0
Inner London	55.6	55.6	99.9	-0.1
Outer London	39.2	40.7	103.9	1.5
South East	31.8	31.2	97.9	-0.7
South West	34.8	35.4	101.5	0.5
All primary	43.8	43.9	100.3	0.1
<i>Secondary</i>				
North East	39.7	40.8	102.7	1.1
North West	40.0	43.2	108.0	3.2
Yorkshire/Humber	34.6	36.3	104.9	1.7
East Midlands	34.4	36.3	105.7	2.0
West Midlands	36.5	33.8	92.7	-2.7
East of England	34.0	33.0	97.0	-1.0
Inner London	39.6	40.5	102.2	0.9
Outer London	38.3	39.4	102.8	1.1
South East	29.8	30.2	101.3	0.4
South West	32.0	30.4	94.8	-1.7
All secondary	35.5	35.9	101.2	0.4

Base: Primary: 82 (2008-2009); 82 (2007-2008), Secondary: 81 (2008-2009); 81 (2007-2008)
Analysis: weighted by number of pupils attending schools reported on.

3.4.1 Contributions of paid-for and FSM to overall take up

When the take up of free school lunches and paid for lunches is calculated relative to the number of pupils registered for FSM and not registered for FSM the figures for the paid element are similar in both the primary and secondary sectors (Table 9). The

^c Even though the subset of LAs was the same, the number of schools reported on in each of these LAs was not necessarily consistent across the two years

difference in overall take up between the two sectors is explained by the greater take up of FSM in primary schools (79.5% of those registered for FSM) compared with secondary schools (65.7% of those registered).

Table 9. NI 52: Take up (%) of FSM and paid-for school lunches in primary and secondary schools, by region.

Region	Primary & Special			Secondary		
	LAs reporting	Take up of FSM*	Take up of paid-for meals**	LAs reporting	Take up of FSM*	Take up of paid-for meals**
	<i>n</i>	%	%	<i>n</i>	%	%
North East	12	83.1	41.4	12	63.9	37.0
North West	21	81.6	36.5	21	70.1	36.3
Yorkshire/Humber	15	78.1	37.9	15	59.6	32.8
East Midlands	8	78.3	29.2	8	64.5	32.1
West Midlands	14	78.6	33.4	14	63.3	28.0
East of England	10	81.6	32.0	10	63.2	31.2
Inner London	12	79.9	44.1	8	69.3	31.2
Outer London	20	79.7	29.8	17	68.9	33.2
South East	18	75.9	22.2	18	66.0	27.6
South West	15	78.9	22.4	15	67.9	22.4
Total	145	79.5	31.0	138	65.7	30.6

Base (unweighted): 145 LAs reporting for primary, 138 LAs reporting for secondary (one LA did not separate secondary take up into paid and FSM).

Analysis: weighted by number of pupils attending schools reported on

* Take up of FSM is reported here as a percentage of the children on roll registered for FSM

** Take up of paid-for meals is reported here as a percentage of the children on roll not eligible for FSM who are paying.

When overall take up of school lunches is partitioned into the contributions by the paid and free elements, (Figure 1 and Figure 2) the proportion of the take up accounted for by FSM in primary schools is generally somewhat higher (13.5%) than in secondary schools (8.6%). The split between paid for and FSMs varies between LAs and hence between regions, with Inner London having the greatest contribution to overall take from FSM, and the South East the lowest in primary schools and the East of England the lowest in secondary schools. This generally reflects the levels of deprivation within the regions.

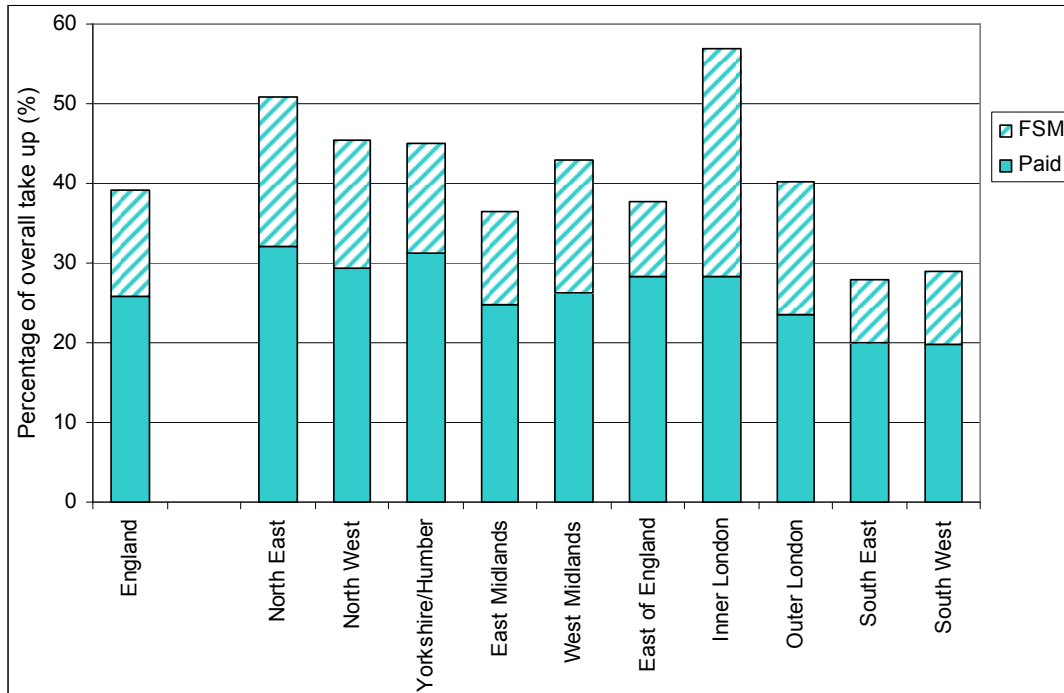


Figure 1: The percentage contribution of paid and free school lunches to overall take up in all primary & special schools in England, by region, 2008-2009

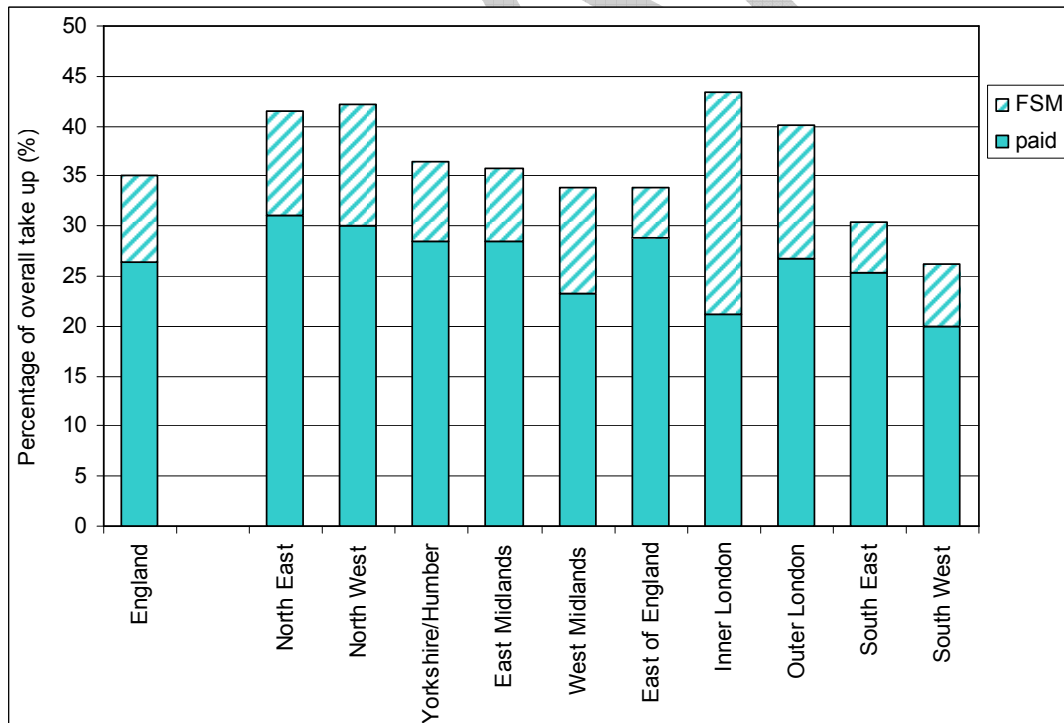


Figure 2: The percentage contribution of paid and free school lunches to overall take up in all secondary schools in England, by region, 2008-2009

3.5 Cost of school meals

The average lunch price in LA catered primary schools was £1.77, and £1.88 in LA catered secondary schools (Table 10). This represents a 6% increase on 2007-2008. Costs in special schools were similar in both sectors, but the increase in price was slightly greater (7%-8%). Variations in mean prices were small between regions, but the minimum and maximum prices varied substantially both within and between regions, ranging from £1.40 to £2.43 in primary schools, £1.34 to £2.62 in secondary schools and £1.37 to £3.50 in primary special schools and £0.84 to £3.50 in secondary special schools.

An estimate of the balance sheet for the elements of the school meals service is shown in Section 3.11.3.

Region	Charge out price per meal				% increase in price per meal, 2007-2008 to 2008-2009
	mean £	min £	max £	mean £	
Primary		<i>n=118</i>		<i>n=92</i>	
North East	1.72	1.60	1.90	1.67	3.2
North West	1.79	1.55	2.00	1.70	5.1
Yorkshire/Humber	1.71	1.40	2.43	1.55	10.5
East Midlands	1.77	1.55	2.23	1.65	7.4
West Midlands	1.72	1.60	1.85	1.64	4.6
East of England	1.81	1.58	1.95	1.73	4.8
Inner London	1.69	1.40	2.10	1.61	5.2
Outer London	1.82	1.60	2.10	1.74	4.5
South East	1.86	1.70	2.00	1.75	6.1
South West	1.87	1.55	2.30	1.74	7.6
All primary	1.77	1.40	2.43	1.67	6.1
Secondary		<i>n=98</i>		<i>n=76</i>	%
North East	1.86	1.60	2.09	1.74	6.7
North West	1.90	1.55	2.13	1.71	10.9
Yorkshire/Humber	1.85	1.47	2.15	1.76	5.3
East Midlands	1.84	1.60	2.05	1.83	0.8
West Midlands	1.87	1.65	2.25	1.78	5.0
East of England	1.91	1.75	2.05	1.78	7.1
Inner London	1.82	1.60	2.23	1.82	0.0
Outer London	1.90	1.60	2.20	1.80	5.7
South East	1.86	1.79	2.04	1.77	5.3
South West	1.97	1.34	2.62	2.08	-5.2
All secondary	1.88	1.34	2.62	1.77	6.0
Special (primary)		<i>n=97</i>		<i>n=69</i>	%
North East	1.75	1.60	2.05	1.68	3.9
North West	1.91	1.55	3.50	1.74	10.1
Yorkshire/Humber	1.71	1.40	2.43	1.49	14.6
East Midlands	1.69	1.37	2.23	1.57	7.5
West Midlands	1.81	1.65	2.06	1.70	6.5
East of England	1.84	1.60	1.95	1.73	6.1
Inner London	1.65	1.40	2.10	1.88	-12.1
Outer London	1.80	1.60	1.95	1.72	4.7
South East	1.81	1.60	1.93	1.73	4.7
South West	1.86	1.55	2.10	1.66	12.3
All special (primary)	1.80	1.37	3.50	1.68	7.2

Table 10 (cont'd). Difference in mean charge out price of a two course meal between 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, in LA catered primary, secondary and special schools in England, by region

Region	Charge out price per meal			2007-2008 mean £	% increase in price per meal, 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 %
	mean £	min £	max £		
		<i>n=65</i>		<i>n=48</i>	Error! Reference source not found.
Special (secondary)					
North East	1.73	1.65	1.80	1.71	1.0
North West	1.94	1.55	3.50	1.71	13.7
Yorkshire/Humber	1.87	1.50	2.43	1.58	18.2
East Midlands	1.74	1.60	1.80	1.80	-3.1
West Midlands	1.87	1.73	2.06	1.77	5.4
East of England	1.92	1.75	2.05	1.70	12.7
Inner London	1.72	1.40	2.10	1.65	4.4
Outer London	1.81	1.60	1.90	1.70	6.6
South East	1.79	0.84	2.00	1.75	2.1
South West	1.93	1.70	2.15	1.71	13.0
All special (secondary)	1.85	0.84	3.50	1.71	8.1

Base (unweighted): Primary: 118, 106, 93, 54, 92; secondary: 98, 77, 67, 42, 76; special (primary): 97, 86, 77, 69,; special (secondary): 65, 51, 46, 48 - for Price per meal 2008-2009, ingredient cost, labour cost and price per meal 2007-2008, respectively

Analysis: weighted by number of meals provided by caterers

- Information not available for special schools

3.6 Facilities for food preparation

Table 11 shows, by region, the proportion of schools with different types of food preparation facilities. Information on facilities in LA-catered and non-LA catered provision is shown in Table 12 and Table 13, respectively.

About three-quarters of primary schools had full production kitchens. Six percent had either regeneration or mini kitchens, and 13.5% had no facilities, with hot food transported from another school or other source. Three percent had no facilities and supplied cold food only or had a FSM only service, which is an improvement compared with the 5% reported in 2007-2008.

In secondary schools, 94% had a full production kitchen. The values were little different from last year, except for an increase in the number of 'unknown' (because of a higher response rate and the inclusion of non-LA catering provision).

Table 11. Facilities for food preparation in primary and secondary schools in England (percent of schools reported on), by region

Region	Full production kitchen	Regen or mini kitchen	No facilities – hot food transported from another school	No Facilities – hot food transported from another source	No facilities: sandwich/ cold food only	FSM only	Unknown
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Primary</i>							
North East	92.0	4.2	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
North West	89.4	4.7	5.7	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2
Yorkshire/Humber	70.4	13.1	14.5	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.1
East Midlands	71.7	3.0	19.6	0.1	4.7	0.0	0.9
West Midlands	63.2	14.2	15.7	1.7	0.0	0.8	4.4
East of England	75.3	6.0	10.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.5
Inner London	78.1	8.1	11.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
Outer London	75.0	3.7	12.2	0.7	0.0	7.1	1.3
South East	77.1	3.3	15.9	0.2	1.2	1.0	1.6
South West	46.6	5.4	22.3	4.8	7.2	5.2	8.6
All primary	74.8	6.5	12.8	0.7	1.4	1.6	2.3
<i>Secondary</i>							
North East	99.8	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
North West	92.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	6.7
Yorkshire/Humber	96.4	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.3
East Midlands	97.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	1.9
West Midlands	78.7	0.9	0.8	0.2	0.0	0.0	19.4
East of England	92.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.0
Inner London	95.6	0.0	1.4	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.8
Outer London	95.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	3.7
South East	92.0	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.8
South West	99.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
All secondary	93.7	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.1	5.3

Base (unweighted): primary: 132; secondary: 132

Table 12. Facilities for food preparation in schools with LA catering or LA contracted provider in primary and secondary schools in England (percent of schools reported on), by region

Region	Full production kitchen	Regen or mini kitchen	No facilities – hot food transported from another school	No Facilities – hot food transported from another source	No facilities: sandwich/ cold food only	FSM only	Unknown
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Primary</i>							
North East	92.0	4.2	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
North West	88.8	4.9	6.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2
Yorkshire/Humber	70.3	13.1	14.5	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.1
East Midlands	68.5	3.4	22.4	0.0	5.4	0.0	0.4
West Midlands	67.9	17.2	12.9	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.1
East of England	80.5	6.9	11.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8
Inner London	75.7	9.0	13.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2
Outer London	74.5	4.0	12.8	0.8	0.0	7.3	0.6
South East	73.2	3.8	18.8	0.2	1.4	1.3	1.8
South West	41.7	6.1	25.0	5.5	6.4	5.9	9.5
All primary	74.3	7.0	13.5	0.8	1.3	1.7	1.4
<i>Secondary</i>							
North East	99.8	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
North West	97.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1
Yorkshire/Humber	92.9	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
East Midlands	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
West Midlands	74.8	1.1	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.7
East of England	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Inner London	95.4	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6
Outer London	98.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0
South East	92.7	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.5
South West	98.4	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
All secondary	94.3	1.4	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	3.8

Base (unweighted): primary: 122; secondary: 101

Table 13. Facilities for food preparation in schools with non-LA catering in primary and secondary schools in England (percent of schools reported on), by region

Region	Full production kitchen	Regen or mini kitchen	No facilities – hot food transported from another school	No Facilities – hot food transported from another source	No facilities: sandwich/ cold food only	FSM only	Unknown
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Primary</i>							
North East	97.1	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
North West	80.8	0.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	10.0	6.7
Yorkshire/Humber	88.6	1.3	2.6	0.0	0.0	7.5	0.0
East Midlands	63.7	0.5	7.5	9.8	0.8	7.4	10.3
West Midlands	60.7	7.1	12.8	2.4	0.0	7.9	9.0
East of England	63.5	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	34.7
Inner London	79.7	2.6	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.0	16.7
Outer London	73.1	1.7	8.5	4.2	0.0	3.5	8.9
South East	72.2	2.9	12.5	1.0	0.9	2.8	7.6
South West	60.2	0.0	10.8	15.1	1.8	10.2	2.1
All primary	72.7	1.9	7.0	3.7	0.4	5.4	8.9
<i>Secondary</i>							
North East	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
North West	84.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	14.7
Yorkshire/Humber	95.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0
East Midlands	93.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	6.0
West Midlands	86.2	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	13.2
East of England	78.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.6
Inner London	98.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0
Outer London	93.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.7
South East	90.8	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.1
South West	99.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0
All secondary	92.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	7.4

Base (unweighted): primary: 78; secondary: 101

3.7 Improving the take up of free school meals

Respondents were asked what steps were being taken within LAs to improve the take up of free school meals amongst those who are eligible Table 14. Twelve of the 129 responding LAs reported that no steps were being taken, whilst half said that they were working to reduce the identification of pupils eligible for free school meals. Compared with 2007-2008, more LAs were sending letters to parents to encourage FSM registration (48% vs 33%), more were using the DCSF “Hub” (54% vs 25%), and more were supporting schools with suggestions to increase FSM take up (48% vs 40%). Of the 117 LAs taking some steps, most were undertaking more than one action. The majority of the 68 ‘other’ replies detailed a marketing strategy, 16 of which involved advertising on posters and plasma screens in local public areas, 11 LAs wrote articles for school websites and newsletters, 5 LAs held tasting sessions for parents and new starters. Six LAs responded that they were trying to increase the ease for parents to sign up for free school meals and five LAs reported trialling their own eligibility checking system.

Table 14. Steps taken to improve take up of FSM among those who are eligible

	Number of LAs planning to use method
No steps being taken	12
Sending letters to all parents encouraging take up of FSM entitlement	48
Sending letters to selected parents encouraging take up of FSM entitlement	21
Sending letters to all head teachers encouraging take up of FSM entitlement	45
Changing arrangements relating to payment for FSM to reduce identification of FSM children (e.g. cashless catering, removal of tokens)	50
Supporting schools with suggestions to increase FSM take up in schools (e.g. having dedicated administrative staff in schools)	48
Using the new DCSF 'hub' to check entitlement to FSMs	54
Other (up to three other initiatives allowed)*	68

Base (unweighted): 129

* 52 LAs gave one 'other' answer; 11 LAs gave two 'other' answers; five LAs gave three 'other' answers.

3.8 Change in demand

Catering providers were asked to think about factors thought to be responsible for either the fall or the sustained or rising demand compared with last year. The findings are shown in Table 15 and Table 16 respectively. The reasons are listed in descending order of frequency as reported for primary schools.

Fall in demand (Table 15)

In primary schools, the most common reasons given by LA's for the fall in demand was the provision of packed lunches (partly as a result of the provision of healthier options) and an increase in price. In secondary schools, the fall in demand was attributed to the introduction of healthier options and a consequent increase in the number of pupils bringing a packed lunch or buying lunch elsewhere (coupled with an increase in the number of locally available options for pupils outside of school). As last year, *shorter* lunch hours and poor organisation of the meal service were also considered relatively important factors in contributing to a fall in demand for school meals.

Steady or increasing demand (Table 16)

In both primary and secondary schools, school policy, marketing of meals to pupils, and improved dining facilities were cited as key reasons for a steady or increasing demand. In primary schools, marketing to parents, better kitchens and better trained staff were all seen as important. In secondary schools, introduction of a stay-on-site policy and better queuing arrangements were also seen as key factors.

Table 15. Percentage of caterers identifying particular reasons believed to have contributed to a fall in demand for school meals in 2008-2009, primary and secondary schools in England

Reason	Percent of caterers											
	Primary						Secondary					
	Number of LAs identifying reason as contributing to fall in demand	% of those LAs responding	Importance				Number of LAs identifying reason as contributing to fall in demand	% of those LAs responding	Importance			
Low			High	Low	High							
Parents providing packed lunches	73	71.6	3	20	28	22	40	42.1	8	12	16	4
Increase in prices charged due to inflation (wages etc)	64	62.7	4	15	18	27	58	61.1	4	17	17	20
Provision of more healthy options in the last year resulting in pupils bringing in packed lunches	61	59.8	6	18	23	14	68	71.6	5	20	22	21
Number of pupils buying meals has gone down	53	52.0	7	14	12	20	61	64.2	4	13	12	32
Increase in prices charged due to use of better quality ingredients	43	42.2	6	6	13	18	38	40.0	4	16	10	8
A fall in pupil numbers on roll who would pay for their meals	40	39.2	10	14	10	6	28	29.5	6	9	5	8
Parents perception of poor quality provision	39	38.2	10	11	13	5	19	20.0	3	9	5	2
Provision of more healthy options in the last year resulting in pupils buying meals elsewhere	37	36.3	6	11	7	13	76	80.0	2	9	20	45
Organisation of meals acts as a deterrent (e.g. longer queues, change in timetable)	35	34.3	5	15	8	7	68	71.6	3	10	29	26
Increase in prices charged due to increases in quantity of labour required for meal provision	34	33.3	6	11	9	8	24	25.3	5	10	3	6
Pupil numbers have stayed about the same, but pupils are purchasing meals less frequently than last year	34	33.3	6	11	10	7	35	36.8	7	10	13	5
Shorter lunch hours	32	31.4	6	10	9	7	58	61.1	4	9	18	27
Disruption in facilities for provision (for example, kitchen refurbishment)	29	28.4	16	5	3	5	19	20.0	11	4	1	3
Media coverage of school dinners	29	28.4	3	12	5	9	26	27.4	5	9	10	2
A fall in pupil numbers eligible for FSM	27	26.5	4	12	4	7	22	23.2	7	6	7	2
Pupils perception of poor quality provision	25	24.5	7	6	12	0	34	35.8	4	14	11	5
Reduced choice or less variety	23	22.5	4	9	7	3	29	30.5	4	3	8	14
Lack of skills to prepare meals that meet the new standards	20	19.6	4	7	5	4	9	9.5	5	4	0	0
Lack of pupil involvement	19	18.6	4	7	7	1						
Increase in prices charged due to increased training provision	17	16.7	9	2	2	4	11	11.6	6	2	1	2
Meal quality has fallen	17	16.7	10	2	3	2	9	9.5	5	3	1	0
Changes in food provision as a result of formal consultation with schools, heads and staff, governors, LAs	15	14.7	5	4	3	3	14	14.7	7	3	2	2
Changes in food provision as a result of formal consultation with parents	11	10.8	6	3	2	0	8	8.4	6	1	1	0
Changes in food provision as a result of formal consultation with pupils	11	10.8	4	3	1	3	11	11.6	4	3	1	3
Increase in locally available options for pupils to buy food (e.g. food vans, local shops)	10	9.8	3	5	1	1	48	50.5	2	8	12	26
Introduction of a stay-on-site policy							17	17.9	5	4	2	6
Introduction of vending machines							4	4.2	2	2	0	0
Other	46*	45.1	3	5	11	27	31**	32.6	0	4	7	20

Base (unweighted): 102 primary; 95 secondary *46 respondents in total: 33 respondents gave one 'other' reason, nine gave two 'other' reasons, and four gave three 'other' reasons for decreased demand in primary schools (i.e. 33*1 + 9*2 + 4*3 reasons). **95 respondents in total: 22 respondents gave one 'other' reason, six gave two 'other' reasons, and three gave three 'other' reasons for decreased demand in secondary schools (i.e. 22*1 + 6*2 + 3*3).

Table 16. Percentage of caterers identifying particular reasons believed to have contributed to a steady or increased demand for school meals in 2008-2009, primary and secondary schools in England

Reason	Percent of caterers											
	Primary						Secondary					
	Number identifying reason as contributing to constant/rising demand	% of those LAs responding	Importance				Number identifying reason as contributing to constant/rising demand	% of those LAs responding	Importance			
Low					High	Low					High	
School policy	77	75.5	4	18	24	31	63	69.2	9	21	17	16
Marketing of school meals to pupils	74	72.5	5	21	26	22	64	70.3	8	21	26	9
Marketing of school meals to parents	72	70.6	3	14	28	27	36	39.6	6	14	11	5
Improvement in preparation facilities for provision (for example, new kitchen/work area)	54	52.9	2	14	18	20	28	30.8	3	7	12	6
Improvement in dining facilities for provision (for example, new serving area, furniture)	54	52.9	6	17	18	13	47	51.6	3	12	15	17
Better trained staff	51	50.0	3	17	16	15	27	29.7	6	13	7	1
Provision of more healthy options	46	45.1	3	11	18	14	36	39.6	8	15	9	4
Media coverage of school meals'	46	45.1	5	15	14	12	18	19.8	3	6	6	3
Increased eligibility for or take up of FSM	37	36.3	5	16	6	10	22	24.2	3	10	4	5
Changes in food provision as a result of formal consultation with schools, heads and staff, governors, LAs	33	32.4	4	13	5	11	17	18.7	5	6	3	3
Increased choice or more variety	30	29.4	3	12	9	6	27	29.7	4	9	9	5
Changes in food provision as a result of formal consultation with parents	28	27.5	6	9	5	8	9	9.9	6	2	1	0
Improved meal quality offset by prices being held constant	26	25.5	0	8	8	10	28	30.8	4	8	9	7
No change in prices	23	22.5	4	4	6	9	23	25.3	3	9	1	10
Increased pupil involvement	23	22.5	1	6	9	7						
Reorganisation of arrangements for meals (e.g. shorter queues, change in timetable)	22	21.6	3	7	6	6	43	47.3	5	14	11	13
Increase in pupil numbers on roll who pay for meals	21	20.6	6	5	5	5	14	15.4	4	4	4	2
Changes in food provision as a result of formal consultation with pupils	20	19.6	5	9	3	3	22	24.2	3	9	6	4
Provision of healthy options only	19	18.6	6	6	3	4	11	12.1	5	4	1	1
More staff	11	10.8	4	4	2	1	14	15.4	5	4	4	1
Removal of vending machines							16	17.6	3	9	2	2
Introduction of a stay on site policy							53	58.2	8	12	9	24
Other	36*	35.3	1	3	6	26	19**	20.9	1	5	7	6

Base (unweighted):102 primary; 91 secondary; *36 respondents in total: 29 respondents gave one 'other' reason, six gave two 'other' reasons, and one gave three 'other' reasons for increased demand in primary schools (i.e. 29*1 + 6*2 + 1*3 reasons). **19 respondents in total: 12 respondents gave one 'other' reason, and five gave two 'other' reasons and two gave one 'other' reason for increased demand in secondary schools (i.e. 12*1 +5*2 +2*1).

3.9 Food-based and nutrient-based standards: compliance and support

3.9.1 Meeting the standards

In primary schools with LA catering provision, responses suggest that 95% of schools were compliant with both the food-based and nutrient-based standards (Table 17). For non-LA catered provision, half of the LAs were not able to report information about whether or not the standards had been met in the primary sector. In those that could be reported on, almost all were reported to be compliant with the standards.

In the secondary sector with LA catering provision, about 35% were said to meet the standards and almost half did not. In non-LA catered, three-quarters were 'not known', and only 14% were reported to be compliant, but it is difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions because of the high proportion of 'Not known'. These values for compliance were expected to be higher from September 2009 when secondary schools have to comply with the nutrient-based standards

Table 17. Percentage of LAs meeting school food standards, by catering provision, school sector and region.

Region	LA catered				Non-LA catered			
	LAs responding	Meeting standards			LAs responding	Meeting standards		
		Met	Not Met	Not known		Met	Not met	Not known
	<i>n</i>	%	%	%	<i>n</i>	%	%	%
<i>Primary</i>								
North East	12	99.2	0.0	0.8	7	67.3	0.0	32.7
North West	20	95.4	0.0	4.6	13	28.5	1.2	70.2
Yorkshire/Humber	15	93.5	0.0	6.5	10	32.4	1.4	66.2
East Midlands	8	94.1	0.0	5.9	9	72.2	9.1	18.7
West Midlands	12	89.0	7.7	3.3	9	67.6	0.0	32.4
East of England	7	97.5	0.0	2.5	8	69.1	0.0	30.9
Inner London	9	85.2	0.0	14.8	10	31.1	0.8	68.1
Outer London	16	97.5	1.1	1.4	15	50.0	6.0	44.0
South East	17	100.0	0.0	0.0	17	29.5	0.9	69.7
South West	10	84.3	1.7	14.1	8	5.4	1.0	93.6
Total	126	94.5	1.1	4.4	106	47.8	2.2	49.9
<i>Secondary</i>								
North East	11	39.5	60.5	0.0	11	0.0	4.9	95.1
North West	16	20.7	78.8	0.5	18	8.8	13.0	78.2
Yorkshire/Humber	14	38.5	37.5	24.0	14	12.2	7.3	80.5
East Midlands	6	36.4	35.5	28.2	9	21.1	50.3	28.6
West Midlands	12	42.2	28.7	29.1	13	7.3	3.6	89.1
East of England	6	36.9	63.1	0.0	8	27.2	0.0	72.8
Inner London	7	65.3	12.2	22.4	10	13.8	1.7	84.5
Outer London	10	25.9	65.9	8.3	18	11.0	4.4	84.6
South East	12	28.5	51.0	20.5	17	19.1	9.9	71.0
South West	6	34.8	26.1	39.1	9	0.0	0.0	100.0
Total	100	35.3	48.2	16.5	127	13.8	10.9	75.3

Base (weighted by total number of schools in LA) Primary LA catered: 12158; Primary non-LA catered: 2792; Secondary LA catered: 1259; Secondary non-LA catered: 1666
Percentages are row percentages.

Table 18. Secondary schools expected to be compliant by September 2009

Region	Schools reported on	Schools expected to be compliant		Schools where predicted compliant status is unknown	
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>LA catered schools</i>					
North East	119	106	89.1	13	10.9
North West	193	132	68.4	61	31.6
Yorkshire/Humber	192	136	70.8	56	29.2
East Midlands	110	93	84.5	17	15.5
West Midlands	223	168	75.3	55	24.7
East of England	111	100	90.1	11	9.9
Inner London	49	32	65.3	17	34.7
Outer London	65	57	87.7	8	12.3
South East	151	107	70.9	44	29.1
South West	46	41	89.1	5	10.9
Total LA catered	1259	972	77.2	287	22.8
<i>Non-LA catered schools</i>					
North East	82	40	48.8	42	51.2
North West	216	19	8.8	197	91.2
Yorkshire/Humber	123	27	22.0	96	78.0
East Midlands	185	102	55.1	83	44.9
West Midlands	165	67	40.6	98	59.4
East of England	126	0	0.0	126	100.0
Inner London	58	12	20.7	46	79.3
Outer London	182	61	33.5	121	66.5
South East	324	71	21.9	253	78.1
South West	129	0	0.0	129	100.0
Total non-LA catered	1590	399	25.1	1191	74.9

Base (unweighted) LA catered: 143; non-LA catered: 144

3.9.2 Types of evidence

Table 19 shows the types of evidence quoted by LAs used to justify their views regarding levels of compliance with the nutrient based standards. In LA catered provision, the majority had evidence from nutrient-analysis software or the menu cycle, although many relied also on assurances from catering providers or nutritionists. A small number simply 'assumed' that they were compliant. In the secondary sector, the proportions were similar, although a higher proportion said they had 'no evidence'.

Table 19. Types of evidence regarding compliance with school food standards, by catering provision, school sector and region.

Region	No evidence <i>n</i>	Table from software <i>n</i>	Menu cycle <i>n</i>	Other analysis <i>n</i>	Assurance from catering provider <i>n</i>	Assurance from nutritionist <i>n</i>	Assumed <i>n</i>
LA catered							
<i>Primary</i>							
North East	0	9	12	1	3	1	0
North West	0	18	17	2	6	4	0
Yorkshire/Humber	1	13	13	0	5	3	3
East Midlands	0	7	5	0	2	0	1
West Midlands	0	11	8	0	4	4	1
East of England	0	7	6	0	4	1	1
Inner London	0	8	9	3	6	6	1
Outer London	0	11	11	1	8	6	1
South East	0	16	8	5	11	8	4
South West	0	9	6	3	1	0	4
Total	1	109	95	15	50	33	16
<i>Secondary</i>							
North East	1	6	7	1	0	0	0
North West	0	8	10	0	3	1	0
Yorkshire/Humber	5	4	4	0	0	1	3
East Midlands	0	4	1	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	0	6	6	0	3	3	1
East of England	1	3	3	0	1	1	0
Inner London	0	4	4	1	4	3	1
Outer London	1	7	5	0	5	3	1
South East	0	8	7	2	6	4	3
South West	2	2	3	0	0	0	0
Total	10	52	50	4	22	16	9
Non-LA catered							
<i>Primary</i>							
North East	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
North West	1	4	2	0	2	1	2
Yorkshire/Humber	3	0	0	0	1	0	1
East Midlands	1	4	2	1	1	1	0
West Midlands	1	1	1	0	2	0	1
East of England	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Inner London	1	3	2	0	3	0	0
Outer London	2	4	3	0	4	2	2
South East	2	5	2	0	1	1	0
South West	1	4	3	2	1	1	1
Total	13	25	17	4	15	7	9

Base (unweighted) Primary LA catered: 124; Primary Non-LA catered: 43 ; Secondary LA catered: 73; Secondary Non-LA catered: 34

10 Schools gave 1 other reason for primary LA catered

3 Schools gave 2 other reasons for primary LA catered

1 School gave 1 other reason for primary non-LA catered.

3 schools gave one other reason for secondary LA catered.

2 schools gave one other reason for secondary non-LA catered.

Table 19 (cont'd). Types of evidence regarding compliance with school food standards, by catering provision, school sector and region.

	No evidence	Table from software	Menu cycle	Other analysis	Assurance from catering provider	Assurance from nutritionist	Assumed
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>Secondary</i>							
North East	2	0	0	0	1	0	1
North West	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
Yorkshire/Humber	4	0	0	0	0	0	1
East Midlands	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	1	0	1	0	2	1	2
East of England	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Inner London	2	1	1	0	1	1	0
Outer London	3	3	3	0	5	3	1
South East	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
South West	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	21	7	5	0	10	5	6

Base (unweighted) Primary LA catered: 124; Primary Non-LA catered: 43 ; Secondary LA catered: 73; Secondary Non-LA catered: 34

10 Schools gave 1 other reason for primary LA catered

3 Schools gave 2 other reasons for primary LA catered

1 School gave 1 other reason for primary non-LA catered.

3 schools gave one other reason for secondary LA catered.

2 schools gave one other reason for secondary non-LA catered.

3.9.3 Monitoring compliance

Just under half of LAs monitored compliance in schools where provision is not provided by the LA (Table 20), although this appeared to vary markedly by region which may be partially explained by the fact that LAs are not legally required to monitor compliance.

Table 20. Number and percentage of LAs that monitor compliance with school food standards in schools where catering services are not provided by the LA

	Responding	LAs monitoring compliance	% within region
North East	12	6	50.0
North West	19	7	36.8
Yorkshire/Humber	13	4	30.8
East Midlands	9	5	55.6
West Midlands	12	6	50.0
East of England	7	1	14.3
Inner London	12	3	25.0
Outer London	17	10	58.8
South East	18	10	55.6
South West	11	8	72.7
Total	130	60	46.2

Base: 130 LAs

3.9.4 Use of professional support

Of 146 LAs that responded to the question about use of professional support, 85 said that they had had help from a professional (a nutritionist or dietician) to carry out analyses in relation to the nutrient-based standards. Of these 85, 45 said that the help was provided as part of their school food catering team, and 24 said the help was provided by the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Some had help from more than one

source: a further 14 said that they used the services of freelance consultant, nine had services provided by a catering company consultant, and a further 19 obtained support from other sources.

3.9.5 LA purchases of software

Of 136 responding LAs, 109 had purchased menu planning and nutrient analysis software. Of these 109, 18 shared the software with all schools in their LA, but 66 used it only with schools with LA provision. 25 had other arrangements, typically sharing with in-house catering services plus one or more other sectors specified such as nurseries or schools providing their own catering services.

3.10 Healthier meals: attitude and support

3.10.1 Pupil attitudes to healthier meals

About two-thirds of LA respondents thought that primary pupil attitudes to healthier school meals had improved in the last year, and none thought that it was worse (Table 20). In the secondary sector, about one-quarter thought the attitudes had improved and 60% had remained about the same, but 15% thought that attitudes were worse, especially in the East, South East and London.

Table 21. Pupil attitudes to eating healthier meals: change over one year to April 2009

Region	Responding		Better		Same		Worse	
	<i>n</i>		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Primary</i>								
North East	12		7	58.3	5	41.7	0	0.0
North West	20		14	70.0	6	30.0	0	0.0
Yorkshire/Humber	15		10	66.7	5	33.3	0	0.0
East Midlands	8		3	37.5	5	62.5	0	0.0
West Midlands	12		7	58.3	5	41.7	0	0.0
East of England	8		7	87.5	1	12.5	0	0.0
Inner London	11		8	72.7	3	27.3	0	0.0
Outer London	16		10	62.5	6	37.5	0	0.0
South East	17		11	64.7	6	35.3	0	0.0
South West	11		6	54.5	5	45.5	0	0.0
England	130		83	63.8	47	36.2	0	0.0
<i>Secondary</i>								
North East	11		2	18.2	7	63.6	2	18.2
North West	17		6	35.3	8	47.1	3	17.6
Yorkshire/Humber	14		4	28.6	8	57.1	2	14.3
East Midlands	8		2	25.0	6	75.0	0	0.0
West Midlands	12		6	50.0	6	50.0	0	0.0
East of England	7		0	0.0	5	71.4	2	28.6
Inner London	8		2	25.0	4	50.0	2	25.0
Outer London	12		2	16.7	10	83.3	0	0.0
South East	15		2	13.3	8	53.3	5	33.3
South West	11		3	27.3	7	63.6	1	9.1
England	115		29	25.2	69	60.0	17	14.8

Base (unweighted): Primary 130 LAs, secondary 115 LAs

3.10.2 Level of support for healthier meals

Providers were asked to indicate how keen primary and secondary schools were to develop healthier school meal services and about the level of political support for such development (Table 22). In about one-fifth of secondary school services, support for healthier meals was felt to be low or very low. About one-sixth felt that political support among elected council members was also low or very low.

Table 22. Support for the development of a healthier school meals service

	Number of LAs responding	Level							
		Low		High					
Level of keenness shown by									
• primary schools	129	0	0	28	69	32			
• secondary schools	123	4	22	48	34	15			
Level of political support from elected members	126	5	14	26	38	43			

Base (unweighted); 129 LAs

3.11 Finance

3.11.1 Operating expectations

In principle, almost 80% of LA caterers were expected to break even (Table 23), and only 14% were expected to operate at a deficit. In practice, 33% said they broke even and a further 20% made a profit, with 40% in deficit. This was a substantial improvement from the previous year, however, in which over half were in deficit and only 45% broke even or made a profit. However, of the 36 LAs that indicated that their catering service broke even in 2008-2009, four commented that this was achieved by including the School Lunch Grant or an agreed LA subsidy. It is also important to note that the additional information given by LAs suggests that there is considerable variation in the method used to calculate financial outcomes and although Table 23 reflects accurately the information reported by LAs, the information may not be directly comparable between all these authorities.

Table 23. Expected financial outcome of LA catering service – in principle, actual 2007-2008 and actual 2008-2009

Region	LAs	Operate at deficit		Break even		Make a surplus		Other	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>In principle</i>									
North East	10	3	30.0	7	70.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
North West	19	4	21.1	14	73.7	1	5.3	0	0.0
Yorkshire/Humber	14	2	14.3	11	78.6	1	7.1	0	0.0
East Midlands	6	1	16.7	4	66.7	1	16.7	0	0.0
West Midlands	11	0	0.0	11	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
East of England	5	0	0.0	4	80.0	1	20.0	0	0.0
Inner London	6	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Outer London	14	1	7.1	10	71.4	3	21.4	0	0.0
South East	12	2	16.7	8	66.7	0	0.0	2	16.7
South West	7	1	14.3	6	85.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
All in principle	104	14	13.5	81	77.9	7	6.7	2	1.9

Table 23 (cont'd). Expected financial outcome of LA catering service – in principle, actual 2007-2008 and actual 2008-2009

Region	LAs	Operate at deficit		Break even		Make a surplus		Other	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Actual 2008-2009									
North East	10	8	80.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	0	0.0
North West	20	7	35.0	7	35.0	5	25.0	1	5.0
Yorkshire/Humber	15	5	33.3	5	33.3	3	20.0	2	13.3
East Midlands	7	4	57.1	1	14.3	2	28.6	0	0.0
West Midlands	10	2	20.0	4	40.0	4	40.0	0	0.0
East of England	7	2	28.6	3	42.9	2	28.6	0	0.0
Inner London	7	4	57.1	3	42.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Outer London	13	3	23.1	6	46.2	4	30.8	0	0.0
South East	13	6	46.2	4	30.8	1	7.7	2	15.4
South West	7	5	71.4	2	28.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
All actual 2008-2009	109	46	42.2	36	33.0	22	20.2	5	4.6
Actual 2007-2008									
North East	10	7	70.0	1	10.0	2	20.0	0	0.0
North West	20	13	65.0	3	15.0	4	20.0	0	0.0
Yorkshire/Humber	15	7	46.7	5	33.3	2	13.3	1	6.7
East Midlands	7	3	42.9	1	14.3	3	42.9	0	0.0
West Midlands	10	6	60.0	4	40.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
East of England	7	2	28.6	4	57.1	1	14.3	0	0.0
Inner London	7	4	57.1	3	42.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Outer London	13	2	15.4	6	46.2	5	38.5	0	0.0
South East	13	8	61.5	3	23.1	0	0.0	2	15.4
South West	7	5	71.4	2	28.6	0	0.0	0	0.0
All actual 2007-2008	109	57	52.3	32	29.4	17	15.6	3	2.8

Base (unweighted): 104 LAs In principle; 109 Actual for 2007/08; 109 Actual for 2008/09

3.11.2 Delegation of budgets to primary schools

LAs delegate the catering budgets to all secondary schools. The majority (88%) of LAs now also delegate the catering budgets to primary schools (Table 24), although this varied from 69% in the South West to 100% in East of England and Inner London. Of the schools to which the budgets were delegated, over half (57%) returned the money to the LA to provide the service, while just over a quarter retained the budget under their own management, although again this varied considerably by region.

Table 24. Organisation of catering budget by primary schools

	LAs responding		Percentage of schools with delegated budgets				
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	Return to LA	Manage their own budgets	Don't know	Other
North East	12	11	91.7	45.0	5.8	0.4	48.9
North West	21	19	90.5	49.9	33.5	0.6	11.4
Yorkshire/Humber	15	14	93.3	47.6	19.2	0.2	28.3
East Midlands	9	7	77.8	77.9	21.5	0.6	0.0
West Midlands	12	11	91.7	43.7	18.4	0.0	25.0
East of England	8	8	100	44.9	27.5	0.0	0.0
Inner London	10	10	100	42.1	47.1	0.2	0.2
Outer London	19	16	84.2	52.4	25.9	0.0	10.1
South East	18	16	88.9	52.2	8.5	0.0	4.0
South West	13	9	69.2	13.5	34.0	1.2	13.4
England	137	121	88.3	47.1	22.9	0.3	12.7

Base (unweighted): 137 LAs. 14926 schools.

3.11.3 Use of Central government funding

Government allocated £240m to school food for 2008-2011. The money was ring-fenced to cover the cost of food ingredients, labour to support healthier meal preparation, menu planning and nutrient analysis software and professional support, and small pieces of equipment. In 2008-2009, most LAs put the money towards the cost of ingredients and small pieces of equipment, as well as labour and menu planning (Table 25). For next year, the intention again was to spend the grant on the cost of ingredients, but could also be used for extra labour and equipment.

Table 25. Allocation of Government school food grant, 2008-2011. Percentage of LAs allocating grant in 2008-2009, and intended allocation 2009-2010

GOR code	LAs <i>n</i>	Cost of food	Extra labour	Equipment	Menu planning	Professional support	Other	Not decided
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
North East	10	100	50	30	40	20	-	-
North West	20	95	70	70	65	25	-	-
Yorkshire/Humber	12	100	50	50	33	17	-	-
East Midlands	9	78	56	67	78	56	-	-
West Midlands	12	100	58	67	58	25	-	-
East of England	7	100	43	29	71	29	-	-
Inner London	10	40	30	90	50	40	-	-
Outer London	19	84	63	68	53	58	-	-
South East	16	100	63	63	44	31	-	-
South West	12	100	83	83	67	50	-	-
<i>Number of LAs</i>	<i>127</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>45</i>	-	-
Government grant intended allocation 2009-2010								
North East	12	92	50	33	42	17	25	8
North West	19	95	53	47	53	26	16	5
Yorkshire/Humber	14	71	36	36	29	7	14	21
East Midlands	9	56	44	67	67	56	0	11
West Midlands	12	92	58	50	50	25	17	17
East of England	7	86	29	29	71	43	14	0
Inner London	11	55	36	64	27	36	45	0
Outer London	19	68	53	63	42	37	5	16
South East	17	82	59	47	18	35	12	12
South West	12	67	50	50	50	25	33	0
<i>Number of LAs</i>	<i>132</i>	<i>102</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>13</i>

Base (unweighted): 2008-2009: 127; 2009-2010: 132

Of the 74 LAs that indicated when the funding was distributed to schools, two-fifths did so at the start of the financial year, a further quarter in September, and the remainder throughout the year or to settle the end of year budgets.

Balance sheets were computed for those LAs that were able to provide information on ingredients costs, labour costs and overheads. In all government regions the production costs exceeded the charge out price of a school meal, suggesting that in order to break even schools must be relying on subsidies and LA grants. The results should be treated cautiously as responses to this section of the questionnaires have not been verified by the Trust and the different elements might have been provided by different people within an authority without being cross checked internally. Also, in the secondary sector, the charge out price is based on the value in the dining room of

a FSM and thus is may not be identical to the average amount actually being spent per paying pupil.

Table 26 Production costs and charge out prices per school meal in 2008-2009 by type of school, by region.

Region	LAs responding <i>n</i>	Production cost per meal				Charge out price		
		Ingredients £	Labour £	Overheads £	Total £	FSM £	infant 2	junior 2
							course meal £	course meal £
<i>Primary</i>								
North East	8	0.65	1.26	0.59	2.49	1.74	1.74	1.74
North West	14	0.65	1.03	0.38	2.07	1.75	1.75	1.75
Yorkshire/Humber	5	0.68	1.31	0.38	2.37	1.72	1.71	1.72
East Midlands	5	0.67	1.14	0.59	2.40	1.70	1.73	1.73
West Midlands	7	0.68	1.03	0.26	1.97	1.72	1.72	1.72
East of England	3	0.66	1.17	0.25	2.08	1.78	1.78	1.82
Inner London	1	0.98	1.07	0.13	2.18	2.10	2.10	2.10
Outer London	4	0.62	1.30	0.32	2.24	1.79	1.74	1.74
South East	8	0.74	0.88	0.39	2.01	1.82	1.83	1.83
South West	8	0.76	1.17	0.42	2.36	1.96	1.94	1.96
England	63	0.69	1.11	0.40	2.20	1.78	1.78	1.79
<i>Secondary</i>								
North East	8	0.88	1.20	0.55	2.63	1.84	-	-
North West	12	0.85	0.99	0.36	2.20	1.82	-	-
Yorkshire/Humber	4	0.87	1.20	0.59	2.66	1.97	-	-
East Midlands	6	0.84	1.07	0.49	2.40	1.84	-	-
West Midlands	7	0.83	0.98	0.22	2.03	1.89	-	-
East of England	4	0.78	1.03	0.25	2.06	1.86	-	-
Inner London	1	1.39	1.38	0.06	2.83	2.10	-	-
Outer London	5	0.77	1.06	0.31	2.14	1.89	-	-
South East	6	0.79	0.82	0.36	1.97	1.81	-	-
South West	3	0.87	1.21	0.39	2.47	1.88	-	-
England	56	0.84	1.05	0.38	2.28	1.86	-	-

Base (unweighted): Primary: 63 LAs; Secondary: 56 LAs

3.12 Staffing and pay rates

3.12.1 Staffing

Eighty-nine LAs reported on the numbers of catering staff employed (Table 27). Compared with January 2008,¹¹ the average number of staff directly employed in delivering the catering service in schools has decreased slightly, from 486 to 465. Despite this apparent decrease in actual staff, the number of cooks hours and primary school head cooks hours increased compared with last year (Table 28).

Table 27. Numbers of catering staff, by job description and region

Region	LAs responding <i>n</i>	General Assistants <i>n=82</i>	Assistant Cooks <i>n=68</i>	Cooks <i>n=40</i>	Primary Head Cooks <i>n=77</i>	Secondary head cooks <i>n=75</i>
North East	12	3119	280	50	641	127
North West	21	6120	681	488	1879	208
Yorkshire/Humber	8	3769.2	396	300	641	101.3
East Midlands	6	2981	202	67	768	117
West Midlands	9	3649	272	22	935	153
East of England	7	3314	276	289	987	96
Inner London	4	1052	60	64	86	17
Outer London	11	1853	216	50	459	54
South East	6	1923	69	143	708	81
South West	5	1337	27	54	184	21
Total	89	29117.2	2479	1527	7288	975.3

Base: 89 LAs

29 LAs provided information about one other job title; 13 LAs provided information about two other job titles and five LAs provided information about three other job titles.

Table 28. Changes in the total number of staffing hours, by job description, by region

Region	LA's responding	Increased		Decreased		Stayed the same	
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>General assistants</i>							
North East	12	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0
North West	18	3	16.7	4	22.2	11	61.1
Yorkshire/Humber	9	1	11.1	4	44.4	4	44.4
East Midlands	6	2	33.3	2	33.3	2	33.3
West Midlands	8	1	12.5	2	25.0	5	62.5
East of England	6	2	33.3	0	0.0	4	66.7
Inner London	7	3	42.9	1	14.3	3	42.9
Outer London	12	3	25.0	1	8.3	8	66.7
South East	9	4	44.4	0	0.0	5	55.6
South West	6	1	16.7	1	16.7	4	66.7
Total	93	23	24.7	21	22.6	49	52.7
<i>Assistant Cooks</i>							
North East	9	1	11.1	4	44.4	4	44.4
North West	16	1	6.3	1	6.3	14	87.5
Yorkshire/Humber	8	1	12.5	3	37.5	4	50.0
East Midlands	6	0	0.0	3	50.0	3	50.0
West Midlands	7	0	0.0	1	14.3	6	85.7
East of England	4	2	50.0	0	0.0	2	50.0
Inner London	7	2	28.6	0	0.0	5	71.4
Outer London	7	1	14.3	1	14.3	5	71.4
South East	6	3	50.0	1	16.7	2	33.3
South West	4	1	25.0	0	0.0	3	75.0
Total	74	12	16.2	14	18.9	48	64.9
<i>Cooks</i>							
North East	5	1	20.0	2	40.0	2	40.0
North West	12	1	8.3	1	8.3	10	83.3
Yorkshire/Humber	8	2	25.0	1	12.5	5	62.5
East Midlands	5	1	20.0	1	20.0	3	60.0
West Midlands	2	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	100.0
East of England	6	1	16.7	0	0.0	5	83.3
Inner London	6	3	50.0	0	0.0	3	50.0
Outer London	4	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	100.0
South East	5	1	20.0	1	20.0	3	60.0
South West	4	1	25.0	0	0.0	3	75.0
Total	57	11	19.3	6	10.5	40	70.2
<i>Primary head cooks</i>							
North East	11	2	18.2	2	18.2	7	63.6
North West	16	1	6.3	2	12.5	13	81.3
Yorkshire/Humber	8	1	12.5	2	25.0	5	62.5
East Midlands	7	1	14.3	2	28.6	4	57.1
West Midlands	8	2	25.0	1	12.5	5	62.5
East of England	7	2	28.6	0	0.0	5	71.4
Inner London	6	3	50.0	0	0.0	3	50.0
Outer London	12	2	16.7	1	8.3	9	75.0
South East	6	3	50.0	0	0.0	3	50.0
South West	4	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	100.0
Total	85	17	20.0	10	11.8	58	68.2

Table 28 (cont'd). Changes in the total number of staffing hours, by job description, by region

Region	LAs responding	Increased	Decreased	Stayed the same
<i>Secondary head cooks</i>				
North East	12	2	16.7	8
North West	17	1	5.9	14
Yorkshire/Humber	7	0	0.0	5
East Midlands	6	1	16.7	4
West Midlands	8	1	12.5	6
East of England	5	1	20.0	4
Inner London	5	1	20.0	3
Outer London	8	1	12.5	7
South East	7	2	28.6	4
South West	4	0	0.0	4
Total	79	10	12.7	59
			10	12.7
				74.7

Base (unweighted) 17 LAs provided information about one other job title; seven LAs provided information about two other job titles; three LAs provided information about three other job titles. Percentages are row percentages.

3.12.2 Pay rates

The figures presented in Table 29 show average hourly rates of pay for different grades of catering staff. The number of responses for each element varied due to some LAs operating different staffing structures, and some being unable to provide the detailed information requested. A number of LAs provided contextual information, for example that rates were *pre* or *post* single status awards, that additional benefits such as retainer pay were offered, and that pay depended on the number of meals produced. Rates increased since last year by as much as 8.9% (the minimum point on the pay scale for a primary school head cook) and as little as 4.1% (for a 'cook'). There were some regional variations, with the highest pay rates seen, as expected, in London. Pay rates may not be comparable across LAs as there is not a universal job/pay structure.

Table 29. Pay scales of catering staff (£), average, by region															
	General assistant			Assistant cook			Cook			Primary school head cook			Secondary school head cook/catering manager		
	Pay scale min <i>n=91</i>	Pay scale max <i>n=82</i>	Number of increments <i>n=75</i>	Pay scale min <i>n=70</i>	Pay scale max <i>n=64</i>	Number of increments <i>n=61</i>	Pay scale min <i>n=52</i>	Pay scale max <i>n=46</i>	Number of increments <i>n=37</i>	Pay scale min <i>n=82</i>	Pay scale max <i>n=79</i>	Number of increments <i>n=69</i>	Pay scale min <i>n=77</i>	Pay scale max <i>n=73</i>	Number of increments <i>n=61</i>
North East	6.62	7.05	2.6	7.42	8.05	2.8	7.86	8.92	3.0	9.09	9.69	3.0	9.71	10.69	3.3
North West	6.34	6.66	2.7	6.70	7.11	2.8	7.22	8.01	4.1	7.53	8.16	3.4	8.37	9.20	3.5
Yorkshire / Humber	6.24	6.35	1.2	6.66	7.12	2.6	7.10	7.40	1.9	7.80	8.35	2.7	9.17	10.41	3.4
East Midlands	6.21	6.51	1.8	6.45	6.77	2.2	6.61	6.78	1.0	7.00	7.44	2.2	7.49	8.00	2.0
West Midlands	6.36	6.80	3.4	7.09	7.92	4.4	6.94	7.79	4.0	7.77	8.57	3.6	8.55	9.67	4.7
East of England	6.11	6.99	5.3	6.63	7.51	4.0	7.10	8.22	6.0	7.86	9.55	6.5	9.02	11.18	5.7
Inner London	7.21	7.75	1.5	7.81	8.40	1.5	8.14	9.86	1.3	9.60	10.02	1.3	11.52	12.66	1.0
Outer London	7.66	8.31	3.3	8.31	9.01	1.8	9.09	10.52	2.5	9.83	11.47	4.4	11.24	12.77	2.8
South East	6.33	6.75	2.5	6.47	7.52	5.3	7.73	8.07	5.0	7.35	8.41	4.8	8.28	9.92	6.8
South West	6.43	6.75	2.0	7.75	8.71	4.3	7.81	8.17	2.5	8.49	9.28	3.8	9.02	10.13	3.7
England															
2008-2009 £	6.57	6.96	2.6	7.08	7.65	3.0	7.43	8.21	3.1	8.21	9.06	3.5	9.14	10.25	3.6
2007-2008 £	6.21	6.54	3.0	6.65	7.23	3.0	7.14	7.76	3.0	7.54	8.45	3.5	8.43	9.87	4.0
Percentage change (%)	5.7	6.5		6.4	5.8		4.1	5.8		8.9	7.2		8.5	3.9	

Base (unweighted) 2008-2009: general assistant 91, 82, 75; assistant cook 70, 64, 61; cook 52, 46, 37; primary school head cook 82, 79, 69; secondary school head cook/catering manager 77, 73, 61; for pay scale minimum, pay scale maximum, and number of increments respectively.

3.13 Policy and Strategy

3.13.1 LA food strategies

Just over one-half of LAs reported that they had a food strategy plan (Table 30). 85% of those responding said that school meals featured in their LA's Children and Young People Plan. Only 15% of LAs responding reported having a policy restricting unhealthy food outlets near to schools.

Table 30. Policy and school strategy by policy and region.

Region	LAs with food strategy plan		LAs with school meals featuring in Children and Young People Plan		LAs with policies restricting unhealthy food outlets nearby	
	LAs responding	% of those responding	LAs responding	% of those responding	LAs responding	% of those responding
	<i>n=128</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n=127</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n=128</i>	<i>%</i>
North East	7	63.6	11	100.0	2	18.2
North West	15	71.4	17	81.0	4	19.0
Yorkshire/Humber	4	28.6	9	69.2	3	21.4
East Midlands	6	66.7	4	50.0	2	22.2
West Midlands	8	61.5	11	84.6	0	0.0
East of England	3	50.0	5	83.3	0	0.0
Inner London	8	80.0	10	100.0	0	0.0
Outer London	10	55.6	16	94.1	3	16.7
South East	5	33.3	15	88.2	4	26.7
South West	7	63.6	10	90.9	1	9.1
Total	73	57.0	108	85.0	19	14.8

Base (unweighted) 128 responded: 'Food strategy plan'; 127 responded: 'Children and Young People Plan'; and 128 responded: 'Restricting unhealthy food outlets'.

3.13.2 Stay on site policies in secondary schools

Sixty-one of 107 LAs with LA catering provision reported having some form of stay on site policy for secondary schools. The policy applied to about half of the schools in these 61 LAs. In contrast, in the non-LA catered sector, only 28 out of 123 LAs reported having a stay on site policy, although this applied to 64% of schools in these 28 LAs (Table 31).

Base (unweighted): catered for by LA 107 LAs; not catered for by LA 123 LAs

Region	Catered for by LA					Not catered for by LA				
	LAs responding	LAs with schools with stay on site policy	Schools in LA	Schools with stay on site policy		LAs responding	LAs with schools with stay on site policy	Schools in LA	Schools with stay on site policy	
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%
North East	11	7	98	64	65.3	11	2	8	4	50.0
North West	16	16	180	77	42.8	19	5	54	19	35.2
Yorkshire/Humber	14	9	110	47	42.7	14	1	16	16	100.0
East Midlands	6	2	36	4	11.1	9	2	17	4	23.5
West Midlands	12	5	60	33	55.0	12	1	4	1	25.0
East of England	7	3	59	21	35.6	7	0	0	0	0.0
Inner London	7	5	41	41	100.0	8	4	11	11	100.0
Outer London	11	8	52	36	69.2	17	6	60	54	90.0
South East	15	3	14	6	42.9	16	6	151	92	60.9
South West	8	3	15	8	53.3	10	1	8	8	100.0
Total	107	61	665	337	50.7	123	28	329	209	63.5

3.13.3 Cashless systems in secondary schools

Just over two-fifths (44%) of LA catering providers reported using cashless systems in secondary schools, although this varied from as low as 25% in outer London to 74% in North East (Table 32). Fewer schools in the non-LA catered sector reported using cashless systems (37%).

Table 32. Number of secondary schools operating a cashless catering system.

Region	Catered for by LA					Not catered for by LA				
	LAs responding	LAs with schools with cashless systems	Schools in LA	Schools with cashless system	%	LAs responding	LAs with schools with cashless systems	Schools in LA	Schools with cashless system	%
North East	10	8	104	77	74.0	12	7	59	29	49.2
North West	17	15	171	87	50.9	19	5	58	30	51.7
Yorkshire/Humber	13	12	140	68	48.6	14	5	42	22	52.4
East Midlands	6	6	110	38	34.5	9	6	150	26	17.3
West Midlands	11	7	165	54	32.7	12	4	61	16	26.2
East of England	7	5	109	47	43.1	7	0	0	0	0.0
Inner London	6	5	35	14	40.0	8	5	29	12	41.4
Outer London	11	6	44	11	25.0	18	10	107	53	49.5
South East	15	5	106	38	35.8	17	6	152	53	34.9
South West	8	5	40	16	40.0	12	4	37	19	51.4
Total	104	74	1024	450	43.9	128	52	695	260	37.4

Base (unweighted): catered by LAs: 104; not catered by LA: 128.

3.14 Training

Of the 98 LAs that responded, at least three-quarters provided in-house training for all categories of staff except cooks, for whom 56% provided in-house training (Table 33). External training was provided less frequently. The precise focus of the training (both internal and external) was not specified, whether it was food hygiene based, related to cooking skills, or covered other topics e.g. manual handling and fire safety.

3.14.1 Use of FEAST network

91 LAs said that they were aware of the FEAST network. Of these, 19 LAs that said had used FEAST for training (including three that were FEAST centres themselves).

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Table 33. Training of catering staff, by job description and region

Region	Number of LAs responding	Number and percentage of LAs who provided training for:									
		General Assistants		Assistant Cooks		Cooks		Primary Head Cooks		Secondary Head Cooks	
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>In house training</i>											
North East	12	12	100.0	9	75.0	4	33.3	11	91.7	12	100.0
North West	19	17	89.5	16	84.2	12	63.2	17	89.5	16	84.2
Yorkshire/Humber	10	10	100.0	9	90.0	8	80.0	10	100.0	9	90.0
East Midlands	7	6	85.7	6	85.7	5	71.4	7	100.0	6	85.7
West Midlands	11	10	90.9	9	81.8	4	36.4	10	90.9	10	90.9
East of England	7	6	85.7	5	71.4	6	85.7	7	100.0	5	71.4
Inner London	6	6	100.0	6	100.0	5	83.3	5	83.3	4	66.7
Outer London	12	12	100.0	8	66.7	4	33.3	11	91.7	8	66.7
South East	9	8	88.9	4	44.4	4	44.4	5	55.6	6	66.7
South West	5	5	100.0	4	80.0	3	60.0	3	60.0	3	60.0
Total	98	92	93.9	76	77.6	55	56.1	86	87.8	79	80.6
<i>External training</i>											
North East	12	8	66.7	5	41.7	1	8.3	10	83.3	7	58.3
North West	19	11	57.9	10	52.6	10	52.6	16	84.2	17	89.5
Yorkshire/Humber	10	6	60.0	7	70.0	5	50.0	8	80.0	9	90.0
East Midlands	7	4	57.1	4	57.1	4	57.1	5	71.4	4	57.1
West Midlands	11	8	72.7	7	63.6	3	27.3	8	72.7	8	72.7
East of England	5	4	80.0	2	40.0	3	60.0	4	80.0	3	60.0
Inner London	7	5	71.4	5	71.4	5	71.4	5	71.4	3	42.9
Outer London	12	6	50.0	5	41.7	1	8.3	8	66.7	5	41.7
South East	9	4	44.4	2	22.2	4	44.4	4	44.4	5	55.6
South West	5	4	80.0	4	80.0	2	40.0	3	60.0	2	40.0
Total	97	60	61.9	51	52.6	38	39.2	71	73.2	63	64.9

Base (unweighted) 98 LAs responded for 'in house' training. 97 LAs responded for External training. 17 LAs provided in house training to 1 other group of employees, 5 LAs to 2 other groups of employees and 3 LAs to 3 other groups of employees. 11 LAs provided external training to 1 other group of employees, 7 LAs to 2 other groups of employees and 2 LAs to 3 other groups of employees. Note: the precise focus of the training (either internal and external) was not specified, and would include that which is food hygiene based, related to cooking skills, or other areas such as manual handling and fire safety

4 Discussion

4.1 Data quality and sample representativeness

The introduction of NI 52 as a national indicator means that, for the first time, all LAs are required to report take up for schools both within local authority catering contracted provision, and those who have opted out of such provision and organise their own catering. While there have been some difficulties, the majority of LAs have risen to the challenge with the result that estimates for the take up of school lunches are based on much higher coverage than in previous years, leading to greater generalisability of results. In addition, the remainder of the questionnaire has also benefitted from this improved response rate, although the completeness of the returns varied between LAs which accounts for the variations in the bases quoted for each table. This also affects coverage (percentage of schools in LAs for which data are reported) for each section and this is clearly stated where appropriate.

The change in reporting of school lunch take up, as a result of the introduction of NI 52, means that the results reported here (and in July's First Statistical Release⁹) are not comparable with figures published in previous years. It does mean, however, that all subsequent estimates will be comparable, albeit based on different coverage. The extent to which this affects the estimate depends on how biased the sample of schools is. For example, if the non-reporting is random and not associated with any school characteristic, the reported take up should be a good estimate of the overall take up. If, however, there is some systematic non-reporting by schools that have either high or low take up, the estimate reported in this report will be slightly biased.

Despite the improvement in response rate and coverage it is evident from the responses that, as in previous years, authorities with an in-house provider are more likely to have access to detailed management accounts than those authorities that are more remote from meal provision. The Trust will continue to work closely with LACA and all local authorities to improve the reporting of this more complex information. In the meantime, however, we are confident that the findings presented here are representative of LA school meal provision in England and also offer the best indication to date of school meal provision in schools that have opted out of LA meal provision.

4.2 Findings

The findings indicate that take up of school lunches in primary schools, using the standardised NI 52 method, is 39.3%, which reflects the take up of 39.9% in schools with LA catering provision to a greater extent than that in the fewer non-LA catered primary schools where it was 35.8%. In contrast, take up in LA catered secondary schools is slightly lower, at 34.1%, than in schools that have opted out of LA catering (36.1%). Overall secondary school take up is 35.0%, indicating the fairly even levels of take up between both types of provision. Due to the change in method, it is not possible to make comparisons with previous years. Although the coverage (the number of schools reporting take up) has increased considerably compared with previous years, there is still some under-reporting in schools with non-LA catering. This applies in particular to the secondary sector. However, it is anticipated that in

future years the coverage for secondary schools will more accurately reflect the proportional split between LA catered and non-LA catered schools. The introduction of the food-based, and latterly the nutrient-based, standards for school food, means that all pupils who are taking school lunches now have the opportunity to eat a healthy meal that provides a balanced element of their daily nutrient requirement.

An important element in the drive to increase take up of school lunches is to improve knowledge of entitlement for free school meals, and subsequently to encourage take up by those who meet the entitlement requirements and are classed as eligible. This is particularly important in the current economic climate as it ensures that pupils who might be at particular risk of a poor diet have access to at least one nutritionally balanced meal each day. It is encouraging that more LAs recognise the importance of FSMs and are actively promoting them compared with 2007-08, with the majority of LAs reporting taking more than one action to highlight the availability of free school meals.

As in previous years, the driving factors for increasing the take up of school lunches include embedding school food within the school policy. To maximise take up, schools should continue to work closely with parents (particularly in the primary sector) and pupils, and The Trust's continued work around modifying the dining room should also be of particular benefit to secondary schools. It is encouraging to note that two-thirds of primary pupils were considered to have an improved attitude to eating healthier school meals compared with April 2008..

There is no real evidence that the predicted challenges around the introduction, in September 2008, of the nutrient-based standards in primary schools has had a negative effect on take up, but this will become clearer as the standards become embedded into the school lunch service. The coming year will see the introduction of the same standards in special and secondary schools where it will be particularly important to maintain the impetus in marketing healthy school lunches to pupils to minimise any negative effect in take up associated with these changes. Although there has been some concern that secondary schools will struggle to comply with the nutrient-based standards, the results from our survey suggest that, where information is available, this is not likely to be such a challenge as predicted, since it was reported over a third of secondary schools already complied with the nutrient-based standards. However, it remains essential to work with schools in all phases of education to ensure that adequate evidence is produced to confirm compliance with both the food-based and nutrient-based standards. Future publication on the Trust's website of the Audits and Inspections Toolkit will enable schools to monitor their own evidence of compliance.

The current economic climate also has implications for school meals in terms of providing a viable service despite increasing material and staffing costs. Although there was a slight increase in the proportion of LAs reporting that they broke even, compared with 2007-08, some LAs commented that this was achieved only through the use of a subsidy. Detailed study of the returns suggest that there was inconsistent reporting with other LAs who had used a subsidy to break even actually reported operating at a deficit. An increase in the price of school meals is still considered, by LAs, to be a major contributor factor in the fall in demand for school lunches. This might be particularly relevant as the average increase in the price of

both a primary and secondary meal was 6% compared with 2007-08 whereas the previous yearly increase was just under 3%. With this level of price rise required to at least partly cover increases in ingredients and staffing costs it is important that schools and LAs continue to work together and with the Trust to offer value-for-money nutritious meals in an increasingly competitive market.

The importance of having adequate food preparation facilities cannot be underestimated, and it is reassuring to note the decrease in the proportion of schools that have no facilities and either have to transport food from another school or another source or offer only cold food or sandwiches. This continues the trend seen in 2007-08 and is in line with initiatives in a number of authorities to re-introduce a hot meal service.

During the coming year the Trust will continue to work with all stakeholders to maintain the move towards improving the profile of school food, not only in schools but among the wider beneficiaries. These include pupils who will benefit from an improved diet, parents who can potentially gain financially, and teachers who will be able to teach in a calmer classroom. In order to achieve these objectives the Trust is planning to ensure as many schools as possible take advantage of the support and advice available building on its range of existing programmes, all of which have the common themes of increasing take up, improving quality, and promoting healthier eating in schools.

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