



A taste of things to come!

"The health of Scotland's school children matters more than Government timetables" said Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive of APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) welcoming the announcement by Scottish Minister for Schools and Skills, Maureen Watt MSP, that will allow school caterers in Scotland a longer lead-in to the implementation of new school meal standards.

Councils in Scotland will now be given until August 2009 to implement new stricter nutritional standards for school meals in secondary schools, instead of the original proposals which would have seen rapid changes to school menus being introduced as early as August 2008. APSE has taken a lead role in lobbying the Scottish Government on behalf of local authority caterers in Scotland, raising concerns that rapid changes to menus could drive pupils away from healthy school meals, creating more reliance on junk food alternatives.

Commenting on the proposals APSE Principal Advisor for Scotland Pat Taggart said **"Those councils that are in a position to introduce the new standards for school meals earlier than August 2009 will be encouraged to do so, but the phasing of implementation until August 2009 will allow councils to do more on a whole school approach to health and nutrition."** Adding **"As well as educating pupils about healthier eating and physical activity the longer timetable will allow pupils to experiment with new tastes and caterers to develop menus that will encourage healthier choices. The last thing that school caterers needed was rapidly enforced changes which could have led to pupils voting with their feet and opting for the local chip shop instead of a nutritious school meal"**

Ends

Notes to editors

1. APSE is the Association for Public Service Excellence. A not for profit organisation representing local authorities throughout the UK. APSE Scotland has worked with Scottish local authority caterers in the development of healthier school meals and lobbies on behalf of those local councils in Scotland providing school meals services. APSE has all 32 local authorities in Scotland in membership.
2. The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2008 will place duties on local authorities and managers of grant aided schools to ensure that all food and drinks provided in schools comply with new national requirements

3. The delay to the commencement of the regulations until 3 August 2009 will give those secondary schools that need it, more time to make a phased transition to the new regulations.

4. The Minister has however encouraged those schools who are able to implement changes from 4 August 2008 with others to follow no later than August 2009

5. Under the new regulations being introduced in Parliament this week, primary schools will:

Offer at least two portions of fruit and vegetables every lunchtime

Provide free drinking water to pupils throughout the day

Limit deep fried food to three items each week

Sweets and fizzy drinks will be removed from schools and chips will only be served as part of an overall balanced and nutritional meal.

6. The nutritional regulations were created with input from a group of nutrition, child health, dental and education experts who gave their advice on what should be served up in school canteens and vending machines. The new nutritional guidelines for Scottish schools be written into the legislation.

7. The new legislation will come into force in secondary schools from August 3, 2009 to allow them more time to make a phased transition to the healthier menus.

8. Government and Learning Teaching Scotland are also publishing new guidelines on teaching health and wellbeing in schools as part of Curriculum for Excellence - and Physical Education is a major focus. Under Curriculum for Excellence, Scottish schools will be expected to offer young people a minimum of two hours of quality physical education every week

9. To arrange for interview please contact Mo Baines on mbaines@apse.org.uk or mobile 07971 843515