

Tower Hamlets -Fantastic Food in Schools

Working to make Tower Hamlets school food environment a healthy, happy place for pupils and staff

APSE Education Catering Network
11th March 2025



1. Whole School Approach

2. Pupil & Staff Engagement

3. Parent & Family Engagement

4. Lunchtime Structure

Tower Hamlets Fantastic Food in Schools Programme

- Dedicated programme
- All primary schools
- Healthy food throughout the school day
- Create a healthy, whole school food environment

5. Family Style Dining

6. Caterer – Food Service & Offer

7. Packed Lunches

8. Food Growing



Why are we doing this work?



Obesity / Overweight Figures in Tower Hamlets

- **20.5%** of children in reception and **41.7%** Year 6 children are overweight or obese
 - 37.7% London, 35.8% England;

[National Child Measurement Programme - NHS Digital data 2023/2024](#)

Oral Health in Tower Hamlets

- Almost 30% of five-year olds have visually obvious dental decay

(Tower Hamlets Child Health Profile, Public Health England, <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>)



What does tooth decay look like?



← Healthy teeth



Tooth decay starts as whitish lines across the gum (Plaque)



This hardens (Tartar) and becomes brown or yellow spots on teeth.



If not treated it can lead to really bad decay

Tooth decay may not always cause pain

- but holes (**Cavities**) can lead to:
- Toothache
- bad breath
- sensitive teeth
- Fillings
- tooth loss/extraction.



Why is the school food environment important?

48% of children in TH live in poverty

48% of LL pupils eligible for FSM

- might be their only exposure to healthy eating messages and their main meal of the day
- opportunity to learn vital social skills

AND

- promotes a positive learning atmosphere for the rest of the day

School food memories can last a lifetime



Wellington Primary – mixed year groups



AIMS

- **Increase attainment**
 - **Improve classroom behaviour**
 - **Support improved health outcomes**
 - **Develop healthy eating habits for life**
 - **Help children reach their full potential**



Whole School Food
Policy

Online
Resources

Staff
Training

Dedicated
1-to-1
Support

Support
with School
Events

Pupil
Assemblies

Work with
Caterers

Share Best
Practice



Dessert Policy

Tower Hamlets has a Borough Wide policy for Primary Schools:



Family Style Dining

- Change the atmosphere and format of lunchtimes
- Serve food around the table rather than children lining up for their lunch
- Children feel more relaxed and more comfortable to try different foods
- Children become more confident in their social skills



Family Style Dining

- A lovely, sociable space where children are offered a nutritious meal
- Children sit together for a fixed time to encourage them to eat and be sociable
- the longer the children sit and eat the more chance there is of trying new things.



St Pauls Whitechapel Primary – family style dining



Family Style Dining

- Consult all staff and some pupils
- Equipment audit
- Logistics
 - how we prepare and serve the food directly to the table?
 - How we transition between sittings?
- Setting out the table/seating plan
- Discussions with the children
- Timings, safety, putting the food out on the tables
- Rewards



A calmer eating environment, with food being served and eaten at a steadier pace, will result in more food being eaten and being better digested.

Memories of school lunchtimes can last a lifetime

NO pressure on children to eat

Keep offering a variety of foods



**Early intervention can reduce health inequalities -
generation to generation**

Introduce healthy habits from a young age

Focus on improving quality of health in life





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