

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 04/19

Date: April 2019

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: To provide a briefing note on the requirements on suppliers to schools to provide healthy food

School food catering contracts

The updated guidance on the standards for planning and providing food in schools was published in March 2019. The guidance is for governing boards of:

- all local-authority-maintained schools
- pupil referral units (these provide education for children who cannot go to a mainstream school)
- academies and free schools
- non-maintained special schools (a school for children with special educational needs that the Secretary of State for Education has approved under section 342 of the Education Act 1996)

It includes information on:

- planning and provision of school food
- the school food plan
- the provision of milk
- the free fruit and vegetables scheme

The government encourages all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink. Compliance with the School Food Standards is mandatory for all maintained schools. We also expect all academies and free schools to comply with the standards, and since 2014 we have made this an explicit requirement in their funding agreements. These school food standards are to ensure that food provided to pupils in school is nutritious and of high quality; to promote good nutritional health in all pupils; protect those who are nutritionally vulnerable and to promote good eating behaviour.

The revised standards for school food came into force on 1 January 2015 and are set out in the requirements for School Food Regulations 2014. The full guidance can be found at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/788884/School-food-in-England-April2019-FINAL.pdf

School catering commissioning in Medway is currently led by MCG Education, who support local schools to commission and contract manage the school catering provider. Schools have two choices available to them, and can either join the block contract commissioning process, with a fixed price per meal negotiated by MCG Education, or separately commission from the range of providers that meet the basic criteria for school catering, identified by MCG Education.

Medway Public Health team have been working with MCG Education for over 5 years to embed healthy eating to the contract procurement process (prior to becoming MCG Education, the team were an in house service) and working collaboratively with the catering providers for the duration of the contracts.

The evidence is ever growing in terms of the impact on healthy eating at school on children and young people's health, behaviour and attainment. With the government food buying standards, healthy eating references within the curriculum, the focus of Public Health England and other sources of encouragement, school food is considerably healthier than in previous years.

All school contractors working across Medway are consciously working with the school, commissioners, parents and public health teams to improve the food offer even further. The block contract provider for Medway (Chartwells) plays an active role in supporting the Medway Healthy Weight Strategy Group.

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