

# PARENT LEAFLET

## Information about school meals

As your school meal provider, Sodexo's priority is to provide nutritious and varied meals that young people are excited to eat. This encourages them to take up school meals, whether paid or free.

We know parents are increasingly adventurous and like to experiment with different flavours and are more health-conscious and keen to pass this knowledge on to your family. Yet our greatest challenge is to tackle parent's perception of school food – which is often based on your own past experiences – so we at Sodexo want you to know how much school food has changed, and how it provides you with value for money.

To modernise our menus, in 2017 we talked to children and young people aged 9 - 16 across the country. They told us that they wanted the following from their school food & dining experience:

- To eat their favourite dishes and to try more international foods, like those available on the high street. This fits with the growing interest in global flavours, driven by greater travel and diversity.
- To know what's on the menu before they get to counter and to collect their meal quickly. They don't want to waste time standing in long queues – they want to spend more time with their friends!
- The dining area to be bright, colourful and welcoming so they can relax and socialise with friends.

**This feedback helped us to transform our menus and how we serve food, so students love it!**



Our Catering Managers are passionate about food and produce freshly made meals on site. The three weekly menus are created by our team of chefs who track market trends for new ideas and then test the new dishes with students, to ensure it meets the needs of all our young people. Caribbean spiced vegetable stew, sizzling Mexican fajitas and tasty Peruvian chicken feature on the menu and are served alongside classic favourites such as Spaghetti Bolognese and Fish and Chips.

Each main dish is accompanied by sides such as baked potato wedges, salad, coleslaw and vegetables and a range of spicy sauces to add more flavour. We also serve a variety of healthy items at breakfast and morning break, so that students can access nutritious food throughout the day.





Market trends also show how many young people are reducing the amount of meat they eat and choosing to have some meat free days.

This is linked to growing awareness of the environment and health concerns. In response, our chefs have added more plant-based dishes, such as Beetroot and Carrot Burger, and Courgette Spaghetti Butter Beans and Tomato to the menu, which the students love.

Our meal deal price is set by the Government Free School Meal rate and so all meal deals offer a main dish, two sides, a dessert and access to free water. Government School Food Standards require that foods high in fat, sugar and salt are either restricted or removed from the menu, which means we do not sell carbonated fizzy drinks, crisps or chocolate, and we only serve chips once a week!

In some schools, we have introduced high street style menu boards above the counters and serve food in a recyclable box. This has helped to reduce queuing by 20 minutes, giving students more free time to do other activities and or relax with friends.

Every month we celebrate theme days such as Independence Day, and recently we introduced our FAB 3 promotion that includes healthy hand-held snacks such as Mexican burritos served in a cone - a fun way to eat that has proved popular across all age groups.

Protecting the planet and championing sustainability drives our food sourcing decisions and all aspects of our service delivery. For example, at the majority of our school catering services we use cutlery made of biodegradable plant starch, we've banned plastic straws, and we have reduced plastic bottle waste by introducing hydration stations.

## Get in touch

Our dedicated team welcomes feedback and suggestions from parents. All our food is checked for allergens to meet the current legislation. To learn more about our food service, or if you wish to try our food, or have any questions, please contact your school catering team.

## Do you know about free school meals?

To check if your child is eligible for free school meals in England go to [www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals](http://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals). Eligible children will remain eligible until 31 March 2022. Please tell your school if your child is entitled to free school meals and takes a packed lunch from home. The school is entitled to claim additional money from the Government for eligible children to help boost students' learning outcomes.

