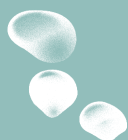


SCHOOL FOOD AMBASSADORS

Guidance



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL



School Wellbeing



School Food Ambassadors - Guidance

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Leeds Youth Council Endorsement



We, the Leeds Youth Council, fully endorse the School Food Ambassadors' plans to create a student led group who evaluate school dinners in their school. A lot of school dinners aren't very good and this leads to students not eating or choosing unhealthy options. It is very important for students to get the full nutrition they need.

Also, a lot of food is wasted due to students buying it and throwing it away or cooks making too much and it not being bought. It's the schools job to provide quality food to pupils, we hear that some teachers said they wouldn't eat the food provided for pupils. This is an issue so the SFA's programme would change this. We really like the idea of the programme and think it is very important.

Leeds Youth Council

Acknowledgements

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Collectively, schools across Leeds have contributed to informing the resources, good practice and guidance presented in this document.

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We would also like to thank Lindy Dark (Graphic Designer) from the Creative Services team at Leeds City Council for her hard work and creativity for the design of the new Guidance and Toolkit.

The people who have provided the most expertise for the School Food Ambassadors' model are the children and young people who have been involved in the programme and have helped to shape school meals across Leeds today. Without them, this evidence-based guidance and toolkit would not have been possible.

Foreword

The School Food Ambassadors' model is a unique and exciting project which I am delighted to support. It demonstrates how Leeds are building on the legacy of being a Child Friendly City and are truly leading the way with the national School Food Plan's action of "giving children what they care about".

By becoming a School Food Ambassador, children and young people can take a proactive role in their school's food provision. Helping to improve its quality, increase the uptake of school meals, and enhance the dining experience for all.

We now know how important healthy eating is to learning, behaviour and quality of life in school and beyond. School Food Ambassadors will be at the forefront of encouraging healthy eating. Working with caterers, school staff and peers, they can improve menus so that healthy, tasty options are always promoted.

School children have to be more involved in decisions affecting them, be it what goes on in the classroom or what is on the menu at lunchtime, so SFA gives them a fantastic opportunity to be heard and change things to benefit the whole school community.

SFA has been really successful, with more and more pupils becoming involved in food choice, dining environment and choosing to eat healthily at school. SFA is becoming an integral part of school life and other authorities are keen to learn from Leeds' example.

This new and revised guidance provides all the information and resources needed to put SFA in place and, with your help, we can work together to help achieve a vision where every single school has a team of School Food Ambassadors supporting caterers to provide a school lunch service that meets the needs of our children and young people.

Well done and thank you to all involved.

Cllr. Jane Dowson

Deputy Executive Member
Children & Families
Leeds City Council



1.0 The School Food Ambassadors' model

The School Food Ambassadors' model (SFA) is all about encouraging pupils to take a proactive role in their school's food provision to help improve its quality, increase uptake of school meals and enhance the dining experience and school food beyond lunch times. A small group of pupils are elected and trained to monitor school food with the support of a key member of staff. They gather feedback from their peers, alongside other evidence from monitoring, and report directly to the school cook and senior leadership to influence change.



"You really need to stop and listen to us; we are the voice of the pupils and we know what we want. We know it is hard work, but this is what we want."

(Primary School Food Ambassador, 2011)

"The school believed we can make a difference; they trusted us."

(Primary School Food Ambassador, 2011)

SFA is a flexible model and, since the initial guidance and training was launched in 2011, we have seen schools adapt it very successfully to meet their own individual needs.

More information and details about the model, including how to elect ambassadors and the types of monitoring they can deliver, can be found in section 6.0 which describes how to put SFA into action.

2.0 Introduction

This completely refreshed School Food Ambassador guidance will enable school staff to implement the well-established School Food Ambassadors' model, which has been running since 2011. It includes an explanation of the model, recognises the amazing benefits it can bring to both school food and pupil voice and provides a simple step by step process to put it into action. There is a handy toolkit section that will ensure that practical aspects of the model are structured, but allow for the creativity that each school will have.

Throughout this guide you will also find useful tips, real life examples and references to what has worked well in the past.

3.0 Background



It is now well understood that better food in schools will increase the uptake of school meals. Additionally, the majority of headteachers are aware of the well-established links between health and attainment¹. If more pupils are eating a school meal and the school can be sure that the food served is nutritious and of high quality, we can make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of pupils and, in turn, improve academic performance.

Since SFA was launched in Leeds in 2011, almost half of all Leeds' schools have attended training to implement the model and SFA is becoming an integral part of school life and educational ethos across the city. Other local authorities have sought information and attended training and there have been numerous requests for permission to implement the model using the Leeds' guidance and toolkit.

The School Food Ambassador Impact Report 2012, investigated the real effects of SFA and we now know that SFA, as a model, works successfully and can encourage innovative changes in a school, beyond just school meals.

More recently, the 2013 School Food Plan² aimed to transform school food culture like never before. This innovative report, supported by the government, sets out key actions to improve school food culture nationally. It has created an ambitious challenge that School Food Ambassadors in many schools are rising to.

This revised guidance and toolkit aims to bring together best practice, practical guidance and lessons learnt from the 2012 Impact Report, backed up by key aspects from the School Food Plan. Together, they are a true recipe for success that will establish a sustainable school food service led by children and young people, getting them ready for learning with the best possible start in life.

"The design is simple and brilliant – it's amazing no one has thought of it before."

(Primary School Teacher, Blackpool)

"It's brilliant and we look forward putting it into place. The training was expertly delivered and we are very impressed with the guide."

(Primary School Teacher, York)

"We changed things we don't like and we turned the upside down frown to happy."

(Primary School Food Ambassador, 2011)

¹ Sorhaingo A, Feinstein L, 'What is the relationship between child nutrition and school outcomes?', Wider Benefits of Learning Research Report No.18, (2006)

² The School Food Plan, Department of Education, July 2013, available at <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/>

4.0 Why is there a need for School Food Ambassadors?



The School Food Plan's first recommendation to school leaders is "to give children what they care about." The School Food Ambassadors' model (SFA) gives pupils a voice by finding out their views. As the School Food Plan states, school meals have come a long way since the turkey twizzler, however, there is still room for improvement. Nationally, only 43% of school children have a school meal.¹ This means many schools are losing money on school meals and many children may be having an unhealthy packed lunch. Without pupil feedback, staff who work in schools can merely be guessing how to improve school meals and increase take up.

We live in a country where the obesity rate is 9.3% for reception children, increasing to 18.9% for year 6 pupils². Food poverty is also a worsening issue. SFA provides children and young people with the skills to influence their own and their peers' ability to make healthier, affordable choices about school food. With the arrival of universal infant free school meals and new school food standards, maintaining a high quality of food is also very important. Who better to ensure this than the customers themselves?

Food is not just about physical health. Many teachers testify that behaviour and learning are affected significantly by what pupils consume at meal times. The Department for Education and Ofsted have also recognised this and aspects of lunchtimes form part of an Ofsted inspection³.

Giving pupils more ownership of their mealtime experience will lead to a whole school approach to food that will support other strategies aimed at preparing all pupils for learning.

¹ The School Food Plan, Department of Education, July 2013, available at <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/>

² The NCMP report is available on <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB13115/nati-chil-meas-prog-eng-2012-2013-rep.pdf>

³ The School Food Plan, Department of Education, July 2013, available at <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/>

5.0 The benefits of School Food Ambassadors



The School Food Ambassadors' model (SFA) brings together a team of people to focus on school food, developing a shared responsibility and whole school approach to school food. Using the asset of pupils giving honest feedback, SFA can act as a catalyst, underpinning good practice and identifying strengths and weaknesses. It therefore works effectively to embed all aspects of the School Food Plan, ultimately improving school food culture.

5.1 Pupil voice

A key question that shapes the School Food Plan (2013) is "how do we excite children about food so that they want to eat it?" SFA can do just that. It can engage pupils in the provision of their school meals and give them a sense of ownership and involvement.

SFA has provided a chance for pupils who may not otherwise have engaged with more common pupil voice initiatives such as the school council, to excel. Opposite is a comment from a high school teacher involved in the impact evaluation who saw SFA as a learning and development opportunity for specific pupils.

"I picked a group of lads and lasses who I knew would get the job done but would never join the School Council because they want something that was focused."

(SFA Project Lead, Temple Moor High School)

For younger pupils, SFA helps build their confidence and encourages a teamwork approach. In one primary school, the team of ambassadors gained so much satisfaction and enjoyment from the role, they monitored their school meals daily throughout the year, without the need for any rewards or incentives. One of the pupils at this school said:



"I know more people and I have made more friends. I like the fact that people look up to you and respect your role."

(Primary School Food Ambassador, 2012)

Key benefits and outcomes for pupils identified from the 2012 follow up study include:

- developing pupil ownership over the lunchtime meal provision and dining environment
- feeling privileged
- making more friends
- increased confidence and self-esteem
- experience and evidence of leadership skills
- fostering relationships between students and the catering provider
- a sense of pride and making a difference
- increased knowledge of food and nutrition
- feeling of being included



5.2 The School Food Plan

The School Food Plan sets out 17 actions for key organisations to achieve. The main three are: bringing cooking back into the curriculum, introducing new food-based standards and a phased roll-out of free school meals to all primary school children. Impressively all of these have been achieved. "The plan is about good food and happiness" (H. Dimbleby & J. Vincent, 2013) and this is precisely what School Food Ambassadors can deliver. The SFA head teacher checklist tool identifies what areas of the School Food Plan the School Food Ambassadors will help achieve. These include: giving children what they care about, the social experience, the environment and the brand. It helps achieve the whole school approach which ensures school food is embedded throughout the school community through teaching and learning, growing, cooking, rewards and school cook involvement.

To find out more about the School Food Plan and download a full copy please visit <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com>



5.3 Supporting Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)

Free school meals for all Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children commenced in September 2014, as advised by the School Food Plan and funded by the government. This has been a very exciting move, but one which has presented many challenges for local authorities and schools to implement. The main challenges that remain are ensuring it is a continued success, without a reduction in food quality, and ensuring that younger pupils continue to take up their offer of a free school meal. SFA can help ensure younger pupils are not daunted by the new dining experience and feel supported by older pupils. They can talk to someone about their likes and dislikes and have SFA support them in discussing their choices with kitchen staff.

5.4 Supporting cooking in the curriculum

The new statutory requirement that sees cooking in the Design and Technology curriculum for all year groups up to year 9, will help transform young people's attitudes to food. The focus is on savoury dishes which will expose many children to new, healthy foods and ensure they know how to prepare dishes for themselves and others. School Food Ambassadors can act as a link between what is being taught in the curriculum and what is being cooked in the school kitchen, so dishes match up or complement each other. Ambassadors can be key participators when staff and resources are limited to help teachers implement a highly successful cooking-filled curriculum.

To find out more about the new curriculum requirements please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>

5.5 The 2015 School Food Standards

The School Food Plan has supported the creation of a clearer set of food-based standards. These have been supplemented by practical guidance that provides caterers with a basis on which to shape exciting, imaginative and nutritionally balanced menus. There is an excellent Checklist for School Lunches and School Food other than Lunch available in the SFA toolkit to ensure your school food is meeting the standards. This can be completed by all pupils and staff.

Ofsted and Healthy Schools may ask for evidence that your school is actively monitoring compliance with the Food Standards to demonstrate that they are being met. Your School Food Ambassadors can directly support your school to meet this requirement.

5.6 Catering and food quality

One of the main aims of the original SFA model was to act as a support mechanism for the caterers. Catering agencies in Leeds have worked in partnership with the SFA model, shaping it into one that meets the needs of everyone.

Monitoring quality and consistency of meals is vital to promote uptake, improve meals and ensure the catering contract is upheld. School Food Ambassadors can work with caterers and allow them to have ownership of what great food should be like without feeling they are being checked up on. Relationships in school between cooks and pupils are also improved, leading to greater trust and job satisfaction. Additionally, the SFA model has been shown to embrace the School Food Plan's ideal of respecting the cooks and exciting them so as they fulfil their abilities to cook delicious, impressive food.



These are some quotes from school cooks who were asked about their experience of being involved in the School Food Ambassadors' model:



'My first thoughts of School Food Ambassadors were that it would involve more interference and possibly result in a loss of control; you know, 'too many cooks'. But it's been good for me as I have built up a relationship with the students and the school and enabled better communication. Now the ambassadors are more likely to ask questions (than the rest of the pupils). I also noticed the ambassadors brought other students to speak to the head cook if they had any problems and felt it enabled students to talk things through.'

(Secondary School Cook, 2012)

"I have seen a change of opinion and the children get more involved. The audits help flag things up and give me chance to sort things out."

(Primary School Cook, 2012)

5.7 Monitoring food waste and championing sustainability

The School Food Ambassadors' programme makes a significant contribution to reducing food waste in schools, contributing to Leeds' aspiration to be a 'zero waste' city (Leeds Waste Strategy 2005-2035). Achieving this inevitably involves reducing the amount of waste, re-using and recycling as much value as possible from our waste. The size of the challenge can be seen in the fact that, every year, more than 8.3 million tonnes of food is thrown away in the UK alone; 5 million tonnes of which is still edible. The average household in Leeds wastes 104kg of food per year – the same weight as a new born baby elephant (Love Food Hate Waste, 2014).

Your ambassadors can monitor how much food is being thrown away by keeping a simple 'tally' of how many of each meal choice goes into the bin and asking pupils why they are choosing to throw their meal away. This information can be recorded by the ambassadors and fed back to catering staff daily or, at the end of each week. Cooks want to know if pupils are enjoying, and actually eating, the food they prepare.



"Focussing on improving school food quality will result in pupils eating more of their meals with less food being thrown away, providing a more sustainable school for everyone"

(Lead Sustainable Schools Consultant, Leeds, 2014)

Ideas for promoting sustainability through SFA:

- Recruiting a sub-team of ambassadors to be your 'school waste recycling advisors' who can also investigate other ways to reduce waste and promote recycling
- Monitor the litter in the dining hall and/or in the playground
- Deliver assemblies on the importance of reducing waste
- Take responsibility for recycling and/or composting
- Create posters to promote the links between better food and less waste

5.8 Contract management

One of the key outcomes for the School Food Plan (2013) is to increase the uptake of school meals which fits perfectly with the overall aim of the School Food Ambassadors' model. Getting the contract with caterers right is of key importance and it all starts with a shared vision of what school food should be like between senior leadership, the catering staff and the all-important customers, the pupils. Creating a project group with these vital members reinforces the shared responsibility. In this way, activities from the action plan can be delegated and fulfilled more successfully.

Key benefits and outcomes for contract management identified include:



- Gather data for contractual agreements such as the service level agreement and/or the school food business plan.
- Foster relationships between the caterer, the school as a whole and the pupils.
- Monitor the food served against the government's mandatory standards.
- Ongoing monitoring to provide evidence of compliance with contracts.
- Act as an expert pupil presence in contractual meetings or even tender bids for a change in catering provider.
- Provide support and evidence to work towards a nationally recognised award such as Food for Life Partnership or the Catering Mark.

5.9 The school and senior leadership

The headteacher and a member of staff passionate about food and health, who can lead on improving school food culture, are essential. For many schools, this can create daunting responsibilities and School Food Ambassadors are ideal candidates to share these duties with. They can help relieve the pressure of certain tasks and, with their many creative ideas, they enrich the process. The School Food Ambassadors' programme can also act as a platform to bring together key stakeholders in school and create a shared responsibility for school food and lunchtimes. The simplicity and flexibility of the model, as well as its strong focus on leadership and democracy, make it a valuable resource for headteachers. With the right leadership, SFA can be adopted by any educational establishment from small infant schools to high schools to specialist inclusive learning centres.



When schools were asked if they had seen any changes as a direct impact of School Food Ambassadors, this is what they said ...

"Changed the less healthy options to healthier options."

"There is an improvement on less waste most of the time."

"The eating area has visibly improved."

"The food looks healthier and is tastier."

"Increased use of the dining hall, less litter and improved behaviour."

"The queuing has improved."

6.0 How to put the School Food Ambassadors model into action



This section gives you an idea of how to put SFA into action in order to achieve maximum benefits. As discussed in section 5, the process for implementation has been developed and improved since the initial guidance. One of the key findings from the evaluation in 2012 is that, the more time and resources put into the earlier stages, for example the recruitment and selection of the ambassadors, the better the outcome of the model.

However, SFA is flexible and not a 'one size fits all' model. Even schools who take on a small team of ambassadors and conduct minimal monitoring can still achieve positive change and measurable impact. Ideally, you will have already achieved step 1 by the time you get to this part of the guidance.

Remember, this process is just guidance and the model will be as successful as you make it.

Step 1 Attend School Food Ambassadors' training or read this guidance

In Leeds, SFA has been most successfully implemented where schools have attended a training course, in addition to reading this guidance. The training course brings this guidance to life and often includes guest speakers and young ambassadors from other schools who share their real experiences of SFA in practice. Full details and course information can be found in the section 9.0.

Step 2 Introduce SFA to key people in school

Full support from your catering provider, school council and senior leadership is key to success. In practice, this model works best when the headteacher is fully committed and engaged with the ambassadors as, ultimately, they will make things happen when it comes to the ambassadors giving feedback.

Catering providers may also be able to offer assistance and expert advice around school food to help get the School Food Ambassadors' model up and running. Catering providers can be reassured of the supporting benefits the model offers and, ultimately, ensure more pupils enjoy the food they cook.



Decide on a project lead

Evidence from the 2012 Impact Evaluation confirmed that the greatest impact was found in schools where there was a project lead supporting and overseeing the ambassadors.

In one primary school, the experience and time spent as project lead was used as part of their middle leader training and contributed towards a promotion within school.



Top tip: *The project lead may need to have some time allocated for SFA from their usual timetable, especially during the set-up phase.*

Key consideration: Who should be the project lead?

Anyone with passion and commitment to improving school food provision can be the project lead. In most cases, this is likely to be the person who is currently reading this guidance or who has attended the training. People who lead the SFA in other schools include:

headteacher, learning mentor, Healthy Schools coordinator, school council chair, school cook, parent volunteer.



Introduce SFA to your school council

The school council is a group of pupils already established in most schools who are used to making decisions and will be able to support the success of SFA. It is important at this stage that the model becomes 'pupil-led' so your pupils are now taking a lead on making the following decisions:

- Set up a school council meeting to propose a way forward
- Discuss the SFA model and how pupils can benefit
- Use the **Tool M** 'session plan 1' from the toolkit (we have done the work for you)
- Discuss your current school meals
 - What is currently going well?
 - What could be better?
- Decide how you will elect your School Food Ambassadors





Top Tip: *Keep a record of what was said in this meeting ... it may help inform your monitoring later on.*



Elect your School Food Ambassadors

How you chose the right pupils for the role is really up to you and your school council but, you may want to think about how you elected your school council. Is this the best way to choose your ambassadors or could you be more creative and encourage pupils to apply for the role or nominate themselves?



Top tip: *You can find lots of tools and resources to support your election process in the Toolkit including: job application forms, nomination slips, voting ballots, job applications, interview questions, job contracts and posters.*

Key consideration: Who should be an ambassador and how many do we select?

This will depend on how big your school is and how many pupils want to be an ambassador. Bigger schools may need more ambassadors. If you sell the model effectively to pupils, you may be inundated with pupils offering their time and skills! Ideally, a cross section of pupils of different ages and abilities will make a good team, including those who eat school meals and packed lunches.

*See **section 10** for case studies and ideas.*

AT THIS STAGE YOU SHOULD HAVE A TEAM OF SCHOOL FOOD AMBASSADORS ELECTED AND IN PLACE



(or step 1): Promoting SFA throughout school

You can start promoting SFA from the very start of your journey. The more you promote School Food Ambassadors at this stage, the more your new ambassadors will be excited about their role.

These are some marketing and promotion ideas other schools have used:

- Display photographs of your ambassadors – this is important so their peers and classmates know who they are
- Whole school assemblies to promote school meals and get the whole school on board with SFA
- Class competitions e.g. designing posters to promote school food
- New menu ideas of the children's favourite meals that also meet the food standards
- Dedicate a notice board to the work of the ambassadors. They can be responsible for keeping this up to date with news and key findings etc.
- Newsletters articles to congratulate the ambassadors on their work or tell the whole school about the changes they have made
- Digital PR through social media such as Twitter, Facebook or blogs
- Curriculum links e.g. cooking activities



Top tip: *You should encourage your new ambassadors to support the project lead with the marketing and promotion and get other pupils and teaching staff involved throughout school, where ever possible.*



Top tip: *Wearing **badges** gives the ambassadors status and ensures they are recognisable by their peers. In Leeds, gold School Food Ambassador badges are given out to schools who attend training. However, you can also order and design your own badges.*





Prepare the ambassadors for monitoring and create your ambassadors' toolkit

At this stage, you and your ambassadors may want to form a small team with other key people who can support you. It is recommended to store and collate all monitoring information safely and this can form an ambassador toolkit.

Below are some ideas for things to include in the toolkit:

- Copies of the school menus
- Photos of individual school meals – these could be taken by the pupils as part of their duties
- Monitoring forms, templates, checklists and surveys
- Job contracts
- Minutes of any meetings relating to school meals/food
- Your Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the school and catering provider
- A timetable for when the ambassadors will conduct monitoring
- Copies of the 2015 School Food Standards



Top tip: As a team, make an action plan to decide what, when and how you will carry out monitoring. See Tool B for an example school food action plan.



Top tip: Save a copy of everything electronically so extra copies can be printed off by the ambassadors or project lead as needed.

Key consideration: How much should we monitor?

This should be a team decision, depending on the capacity of your ambassadors and project lead. Remember, the more you monitor, the more evidence you have and, therefore, the more you can change and improve. It's your School Food Ambassadors' model, so do as much or as little as you are able.





Carry out monitoring

This is where the changes can begin to take place as the magic of SFA begins to unfold. As stated in the School Food Plan, “**what gets measured, gets done.**” Therefore, you may find that things begin to improve merely by having ambassadors in the dining room carrying out monitoring. This was the case for many of the schools in Leeds who gave us their feedback during the impact evaluation. Follow the simple A, B, C guide to monitoring below.



A: Decide what you want to monitor

Consider, as a team, what you would like to monitor. Keep in mind how the ambassadors can help you achieve, for example, improved meals, improved meal uptake or improved relationships with caterers. They can make sure the school food meets the standards, monitor waste or suggest amendments to contracts. You can then use all, or parts, of the toolkit to get you started with monitoring.



B: Choose how to monitor

Discuss the type of monitoring the ambassadors will do. Will it include straightforward tick-lists, conversations and interviews with peers and staff or their own general observations? Think about what the ambassadors' strengths are and how much information you need to make real changes.

Here are some ideas from other schools to help you decide what to monitor:

- Compare the actual food served against the school menu (planned food served)
- Food availability (monitor what runs out first)
- Presentation, appearance, taste
- Portion sizes and quantity (was the meal enough to satisfy pupils' hunger or was the portion too big?)
Click www.schoolfoodplan.com/standards for a guide
- Dining room environment experience, including smell, noise levels, litter
- Food wastage (look at how much and which types of food end up in the bin)
- Pupils' likes, dislikes, opinions, ideas and general feedback





C: Record your findings

The tools will make this straightforward, but make sure the ambassadors know that all information is important, even if it is just informal comments. Often it is these situations where the true opinions about school food are revealed, which can be the school's trump card when it comes to making change.



Keep it fresh!



Make sure you keep it fresh for the ambassadors: regularly review what you are currently monitoring and think of new aspects of lunchtimes to monitor. Any task done repeatedly can become tedious. You might consider having different ambassadors responsible for monitoring different things, rotate ambassadors' roles or have a new focus each term.



Step 9: What did you find out?

It is a good idea to analyse your findings regularly to identify any key issues or successes as they happen. This ensures nothing gets left unnoticed or ignored and you can celebrate the positive aspects of your lunchtimes. This will support the school's work in promoting your lunchtimes and hopefully encourage even more pupils and parents to get on board with school meals!

At Victoria Primary School, Leeds their team of young ambassadors meets with the school cook every Friday, for half an hour, to provide weekly feedback. The cook values this opportunity and knows exactly what is going well and what needs to be better. However, every school is different. Some schools meet once every half term, whilst others provide daily feedback.



Top tip: *It is important to look for the key findings and trends not just one-off mishaps or individuals' opinions. The school council and project lead can help younger ambassadors pick out the right information to feed back.*



Step 10

Step 10: What needs to be changed?

Make sure findings are communicated with senior leadership and the catering team. It is a good idea to create an action plan from this meeting to make sure changes are planned and agreed. **See tool B in the toolkit for a template action plan.** Ensure changes are realistic and achievable. Even the smallest of changes can make a big difference. Schools in Leeds have reported that by making one simple change, like serving more carrots on the menu, pupils felt listened to and valued, knowing changes are happening.



Top tip: *Keep your action plan simple! What did the ambassadors do? What did they find? What needs to change? When will it happen?*



Top tip: *Ensure your ambassadors are involved in sharing their findings - it is empowering when children and young people present the summary report to Headteachers and cooks together.*



Step 11

Step 11: Making sustainable, ongoing changes

Some changes may be quick and easy to action, while others may take more time, planning and resources. The most important point is to communicate with your ambassadors as much as possible so they know their hard work is valued and making a difference.

Remember, you can return to any place in the step-by-step process to recruit more ambassadors and monitor more aspects of school food.

Click here to see more ideas for monitoring and to see how more experienced ambassadors can progress.



Top tip: *Changing policy, practice and behaviour can be challenging and you may not always succeed first time. Utilise the skills and time of your ambassadors effectively and remember to include other key people such as parents, catering staff, school council, community members and governing body.*

Reflect, review, repeat and improve.

**NOW CLICK HERE TO READ CASE STUDIES IN SECTION 10
SHOWING HOW SCHOOLS IN LEEDS HAVE PUT THE
SCHOOL FOOD AMBASSADORS' MODEL INTO PLACE**



7.0 Advanced Ambassadors... what next?

Through regular meetings and communication, you can establish when your ambassadors are ready to progress to carry out more advanced duties. As every school is unique and every child is unique, you will be able to establish when this point is reached.



Top tip: *Start small and think big. Most schools begin by monitoring one thing and keeping it simple, for example, looking at food waste or pupils' likes and dislikes. This will allow the team to grow in confidence and skills.*



Top tip: *Different ambassadors can take on different roles. They can specialise and develop confidence and expertise in a particular aspect of lunchtimes. For example, you could have a team of 10 ambassadors, with pairs of pupils taking on responsibility for monitoring pupils' likes and dislikes, packed lunches, food availability, the quality of the food and marketing and promoting school food.*

Below are some ideas for progression that other schools have adopted. For additional support, or if you have your own ideas, please contact the Health and Wellbeing Service at schoolwellbeing@leeds.gov.uk

Ideas for advanced ambassadors and progression:



- Conducting interviews with catering staff
- Supporting recruitment of new catering staff
- Engaging and working with parents to develop a team of parent ambassadors
- Leading enterprise projects such as launching new dishes or new healthy break-time ideas
- Monitoring packed lunches and supporting a packed lunch policy
- Monitoring breakfast, morning break and after school provision
- Analysing school meals' take-up data and sales figures
- Tackling food waste and promoting a sustainable environment
- Leading on food growing and managing the school allotment
- Monitoring school food and lunchtimes at other schools. This will help pupils to gain new ideas and see school food beyond their own school gates.
- Attending training events and speaking at conferences. Many pupils in Leeds have gained confidence from speaking at new SFA training events.
- Delivering assemblies and campaigns throughout school
- Working with caterers and lunchtime supervisors to support the service and smooth running of lunchtimes for example, serving at the salad bar or helping younger pupils with their meals

7.1 Packed lunches

Whilst the main focus of the School Food Ambassadors' model is school meals, many schools in Leeds have found the model is ideal for monitoring and improving the quality of packed lunches too. Packed lunches can be more challenging to control as food that is brought from home, unlike school meals, is not subject to mandatory standards or regulations. It is recommended that all schools develop a packed lunch policy that is aligned to the 2015 School Food Standards, whilst promoting flexibility and affordability. When pupils take the lead for packed lunch policies, their ideas are more likely to be well-received by parents and schools feel less like 'the food police.'



How SFA could monitor or improve the quality of packed lunches

- Carry out surveys to look at the contents of packed lunches
- Give out rewards or stickers for healthy choices in lunch boxes
- Make posters to promote healthy packed lunches
- Perform surveys and questionnaires with parents to consult and investigate their views on a packed lunch policy
- Produce a packed lunch policy or guidance
- Lead assemblies on the importance of healthy packed lunches
- Give out samples of school meals to pupils eating a packed lunch
- **Encourage those who eat a packed lunch to choose a school meal instead**

Visit www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk for many more resources to support your school to improve the quality of packed lunches and write a policy, utilising your School Food Ambassadors.

8.0 Recommendations and lessons learnt from the School Food Ambassadors' model in action



It has been recognised that SFA is not always an immediate success and, on some occasions, it can be challenging for those involved. Key reasons for this and lessons learnt from participating schools are summarised below.

Key challenges and lessons learnt:



- **The SFA model must be pupil-led.** Some schools found that where the project lead took charge, not giving the pupils enough responsibility or engaging them fully in the decision-making processes, the programme did not succeed.
- **Headteachers must be fully committed and supportive of changes.** Extra time may be required for the project lead and ambassadors may need time out of lessons to complete their duties or attend meetings.
- **Successful ambassadors often rely on the support and motivation from their project lead.** Although the project must be pupil-led, behind every good team there is a strong leader. Project leaders should be committed and inspiring and offer ambassadors opportunities to reflect on their duties. Ambassadors said that they would like an opportunity to be asked 'is there anything I can do to help you with your role?' by their project lead from time to time.
- **Pupils' recommendations may not always be achievable or realistic.** In some cases, your ambassadors could suggest changes that cannot be put in place, possibly due to lack of resources, time constraints or they may not fit with national guidelines or policy. For example, one group of ambassadors requested for ice cream to be served every day!
- **If recommendations or changes cannot be actioned, it is crucial that the reasons for this are fully communicated with ambassadors.**
- **Ambassadors may deliver more success when they are rewarded.** When pupils were asked if there was anything the school could do to help motivate them more, rewards and incentives, such as a free lunch or being able to queue jump, were suggested by some pupils. Many schools offer rewards such as certificates, team points, special mentions in newsletters and on notice boards or day trips.
- **Ambassadors may find the reward of making change happen is enough.** On the other hand, some ambassadors monitored school meals every day with no specific reward and felt the status of being ambassadors, and the difference they were making, was sufficient reward in itself.

9.0 Training available



The training for the School Food Ambassadors' model is designed to provide the knowledge, skills and resources you need to put SFA into action. Schools find the training events a valuable opportunity to share experiences with other schools and hear from schools that have already got the model up and running. The interactive and innovative training events frequently feature guest speakers, including young ambassadors themselves.

The Leeds Health and Wellbeing Service offers two types of courses for both teachers and pupils. Courses are delivered by a registered Nutritionist or Dietitian. To find out when the next courses are available or to book a place please visit: www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk/training_courses

Below you can find comments from a previous training course in 2012:

"Very interesting day,
I feel confident about
implementing it."

"Interesting, clear and
concise - kept momentum
throughout the whole day."

"Brilliant!"

"Very informative and
well delivered."

10.0 Case studies

Abbey Grange Academy

Abbey Grange has a team of 16 Ambassadors from Years 7, 8 and 9 who carry out monitoring every day and share the time and responsibilities across the team. They leave lessons 5 minutes early to check the lunch hall before service begins. The school has also launched a new app so pupils can pre-order their lunch in the morning or the evening before.

Allerton Church of England Primary School

Allerton Church of England Primary School started SFA last year and elected a team of 8 Year 5 pupils, who monitored school lunchtimes twice a week throughout the school year. They developed their own questionnaires and created an action plan in the light of their findings. This year, SFA has gained momentum and the school now has a team of around 30 ambassadors, each with specific duties and responsibilities, including tuck shop ambassadors, food quality ambassadors and packed lunch ambassadors. They will meet each week to share findings, as part of the new School Food Ambassadors after school club.

Bramhope Primary School

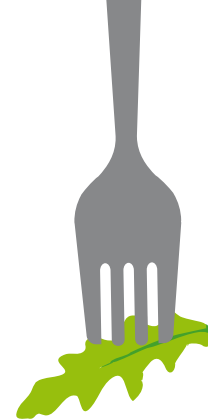
Bramhope Primary School decided to implement SFA as an opportunity to obtain pupils' ideas and opinions about school lunchtimes. A team of 4 ambassadors carry out approximately 2 audits each half term. This involves checking the menu and communicating with the cook if they observe any changes.

"The programme supports many personal and social targets e.g. self-esteem and confidence-building, leadership and the taking of initiative, responsibility and commitment, as well as the ability to put things into context and perspective."

(Learning Mentor, Bramhope)

Harehills Primary School

Harehills' School Food Ambassadors helped to re-design their whole lunchtime experience and played a key role in the decision-making for every detail of their lunches. They tried and tasted their new menu and supported a transformation to a family service style at lunchtimes. A family service usually involves pupils sitting in allocated seats as a 'family' and pupils serve each other to promote a shared responsibility and a more sociable meal time for everyone. You can view a video of their changes at www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk



Temple Moor High School

At Temple Moor, the project lead hand-selected a small team of ambassadors he knew would engage with the programme but, more importantly, would successfully represent and interact with the wider student population. They helped carry out pupil surveys and also gave vital input into the re-design of their canteen and lunchtime systems.

"Putting school meals and nutrition on the whole school agenda is fundamental to the overall success of all children within the school, including free school meals pupils"

(Project Lead, Temple Moor)



Raynville Primary School

Raynville Primary School decided to implement the SFA model because the school leadership team were concerned about the low uptake of free school meals by eligible children. SFA was introduced to the existing health forum that was representative of the whole school community, and it was decided to elect the ambassadors through a job application and interview process.

The ambassadors now monitor their school meals every day with a different focus for each term. As a result, they introduced a pre-ordering system where pupils choose their meals each morning and are given a coloured band to wear to ensure they receive their preferred option every day. This type of banding system has also helped to reduce food wastage, as the cook knows how many portions of each dish to prepare.

The pupils have gone on to monitor the content of packed lunches to help inform the school's healthy packed lunch policy. During an interview, the ambassadors' comments included *"I know more people and I have made more friends"* and *"I like the fact that people look up to you and respect your role,"* evidencing a clear sense of the interpersonal aspects of SFA.

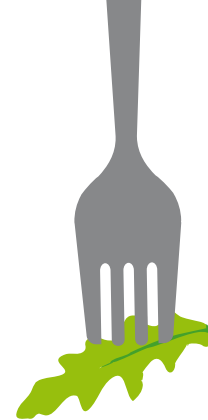
Pudsey Bolton Royd Primary School

Pudsey Bolton Royd Primary School recruited a team of Year 5 pupils who monitored their school meals, with a different focus each term. In the first term, they looked at the availability of choices on the menu and, in the second term, completed pupil satisfaction surveys. The results were presented to the school council in a meeting which was attended by the school cook and catering manager.

"I love being a School Food Ambassador and I love the whole job."

(Ambassador, Pudsey Bolton Royd).

Since implementing the programme, the school has monitored its school meal take up which has increased from 45.6% to 50.3%, with their biggest increase shown in free school meal take up, which had an annual overall increase of 12.3%.



"It is really fun and I feel proud to help our school."

(Ambassador, Pudsey Bolton Royd).

"It's about empowering children - anything that does that is just a bonus. At the end of the day, we are here for the children. Everything we do is for the children and if it is working for them, then we are happy."

(Primary school teacher, Methley).

Methley Primary School

Methley Primary School delivers a family service and their ambassadors play a key role in ensuring the food on the menu meets the needs of the pupils and is cooked to a high standard every day. The family service involves pupils serving the main meals to each other, which supports the children in learning about portion sizes as well as enhancing the social aspects of mealtimes.

Victoria Primary School

In Victoria Primary School, the School Food Ambassadors team is led by the school cook who is the project lead. The team is made up of 2 pupils from each year group, who are selected by their class teachers at the start of the academic year. They meet every Friday for half an hour, when the pupils take time out of lessons to give their feedback from lunchtime observations and recordings.

The cook finds this regular feedback from the ambassadors highly valuable and the team are her eyes and ears in the dining hall. School Food Ambassadors help her to ensure all school food is cooked and served to the best possible standard to meet the needs of everyone in school.

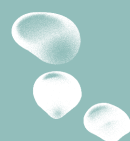
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School Food Ambassadors was first launched in 2011 and revised in 2015.



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