

CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	6 th September 2023
Report Subject	Review of catering facilities –plant-based meals
Cabinet Member	Chief Officer – Education
Report Author	Climate Change Programme Manager
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The provision of meals within school settings is governed by Welsh Government’s ‘Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009’ and the regulations under it.

This legislation gives detail to the requirements of food provision including frequencies of mandatory food categories, portion sizes, and minimum requirements for nutritional value.

Within these requirements there are opportunities to provide plant-based meal options, and recent consultation with school pupil reps, catering managers and the catering provider have led to a redesign of the menu provision. This redesign provides clear vegetarian options for each menu day.

The legislation is currently being reviewed by Welsh Government through Welsh Local Government Association where its task and finish groups will review the latest scientific guidance on food category and nutritional advice, to ensure the reviewed legislation provides options to suit all diet types.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	The Committee notes the content of the report and the ongoing work by WLGA to revise the existing statutory guidance on healthy eating in maintained schools.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE REPORT
1.01	<p>Background Each individual has a carbon footprint. This footprint is made up of emissions from the home you live in, the way you travel, what you spend your money on, the hobbies and pets you own, and the food you eat.</p> <p>There are many ways to reduce your carbon emissions from the food you eat, including: shopping locally, buying fruits and vegetables when they are in season, making responsible food portions to eliminate waste, and reducing the amount of meat you consume.</p>
1.02	<p>Purpose The purpose of this report is to detail the requirements on school meals, as stipulated by Welsh Government, and the work the Council has facilitated within its schools and catering provision to ensure these standards are met and maintained.</p>
1.03	<p>Welsh Government's statutory guidance 'Healthy eating in maintained schools' details the requirements on local authorities and governing bodies in order to comply with the provisions in the Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009 and regulations under it. This Measure was brought into power in 2009 in response to long-standing concerns about the number of children overweight or obese, and the impact this had on health and wellbeing. It was felt that the food and drink provided in schools can make a positive contribution towards giving children and young people a healthy balanced diet and encourage them to develop good eating habits.</p> <p>Section 2 of the Measure puts a duty on the local authority to take action to promote healthy eating and drinking among registered pupils.</p> <p>Section 4 given Welsh Ministers the power to make regulations about food and drink provided by local authorities to pupils.</p>
1.04	<p>The Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013, were made under Section 4 of the Measure in 2013.</p> <p>Regulation 5 and Schedule 2 focusses on lunch provision in maintained nursery schools. The Regulation describes food categories and food from each category 'must form part of the school lunch provided on each school day'. One of these categories is 'fruit and vegetables' in all forms whether fresh, frozen, dried or in the form of juice'. One of these categories is 'Meat, fish and other non-dairy sources of protein'. Food included in this category: meat (including poultry) and fish in all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned or dried including meat or fish products, eggs, nuts, pulses and beans, other than green beans.</p> <p>Regulation 6 and Schedule 3 focusses on lunch in maintained primary and secondary schools. Within Primary setting vegetables and fruits are separate food categories and are unrestricted. At least one portion of</p>

	<p>vegetables/salad must be provided each day, and at least one portion of fruit, fruit salad or fruit juice must be provided each day. Meat cuts must be provided on at least two days each week, and no more than two meat products each week.</p> <p>In Secondary setting, there must be at least two portions of vegetables/salad each day, and at least one portion of fruit, fruit salad or fruit juice per day. Meat cuts must be provided on at least three days each week and no more than two meat products each week.</p> <p>Examples of meat cuts include chicken drumsticks, thighs, breast meat, joints, cooked sliced meat, bacon, mince meat, lamb/pork chops. Examples of meat products include burger, hamburger, chopped meat, corned meat, sausage, sausage meat, sausage roll, meat balls, chipolata, and meat pies, etc.</p> <p>Regulation 6 Schedule 4 focusses on nutritional standards for lunch in maintained primary and secondary schools. This sets out the proportion of nutrients that a pupil should get from an average day's school lunch, analysed across five days. The sources of fat, protein, iron and zinc categories includes the provision of meat and meat products.</p> <p>This regulation also details practical advice on including plant protein as well as animal protein to ensure pupils are eating protein from a variety of sources including cereals, beans, lentils, soya products, eggs, milk and dairy – to suit vegetarian and vegan diets. It also gives advice on iron sources detailing that 'iron from animal sources is more easily absorbed by the body than iron from plant sources, but plant sources are important because they provide most of the iron in the diet'.</p> <p>Annex 1 of the statutory guidance details portion sizes for all foods including meat and meat products.</p>
1.05	<p>The Welsh Government have committed to review the Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations and have been preparing in the background, supported by Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and other partners. The priority is currently the roll-out of universal primary free school meals. Welsh Government are looking to establish task and finish groups in the autumn term 2023 to look at the food and drink standards, the whole-school approach and special diets. The food in schools team will be represented at these. These groups will lead to a wider consultation and maybe pilots, with a view to revising the Regulations and its accompanying Statutory Guidance in around 2 years. An official start time and timeline has not been agreed or shared yet.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the food standards relating to meat will be considered by the task and finish groups and the consultation, in light of scientific recommendations, as per equivalent consultations in Scotland (2019) and Northern Ireland (2020).</p>
1.06	<p>Within Flintshire, the Healthy Schools team play an important role in food provision. As part of the Healthy Schools Scheme there is national criteria outlining best practice in food and nutrition which schools are supported to achieve. The team provide a model Food & Fitness Policy for schools to</p>

	personalise and adopt which reflects the requirements of the Measure and its regulations, and sets minimum standards for physical activity provision.
1.07	<p>Within most schools, catering is provided by NEWydd Catering & Cleaning.</p> <p>Within the last 12 months, consultation has taken place with school reps in Flintshire secondary schools, catering managers and the catering provider, regarding secondary school food menus and compliance with food regulations.</p> <p>In February 2023, school reps (pupils) performed audits within their schools on food and drink provision. This audit reviewed a range of questions regarding menu availability, signage, range, options and canteen space. One question asked 'Are there options for vegetarians and vegans?' 27% recipients said yes, 55% recipients said no, and 18% recipients said they were not sure. The narrative to these responses related to lack of signage/advertisement identifying vegetarian/vegan options, and that they are only available if requested in advance. When asked 'what are areas to focus on about the food and drink provision in your school?', 'reference was made to provision of vegetarian food' and 'labelling things that are vegetarian and telling people what things cost'.</p>
1.08	<p>As a result of this consultation, NEWydd Catering & Cleaning have reviewed the food provision within Flintshire secondary schools. The food menus and offering have been revamped to ensure signage and information is improved, and range and variety of options is also improved. In addition, it was requested that the vegetable choices be increased and salad bar reintroduced (which was removed as a result of the pandemic measures).</p> <p>A follow up workshop was carried out in June 2023 with the same pupils who carried out the audits, where they were able to taste test the new menu choices. Each menu includes a vegetarian option. The feedback from this workshop was very positive.</p>
1.09	<p>As part of the menu revamp, a monthly 'Themed day' has been added for the following academic year. The Themed days are effectively 'free days' that do not need to meet the statutory guidelines as outlined above. The Theme day is once a month and is the same across all schools. In identifying the Themes for the menu, a competition to place within the schools to design their own meal option. Themes chosen included: BBQ, Independence Day, World Food Day, Mexican, Italian, Chinese.</p> <p>The theme for May 2024 is 'Meat-free' where there will be no meat options within the menu but a number of plant-based proteins as an alternative.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	-

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Consultations have been carried out with school reps across Flintshire secondary schools in February and June 2023. These included the current catering provider NEWydd Catering & Cleaning, catering managers and school representatives (pupil).
4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	-
5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None
6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	1. Healthy Eating in Maintained Schools – Statutory guidance for local authorities and governing bodies – Welsh Government
7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
6.01	Contact Officer: Alex Ellis – Climate Change Programme Manager Telephone: 01352 703110 E-mail: alex.ellis@flintshire.gov.uk
7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Carbon emissions: Used interchangeably with greenhouse gas emissions; meaning emissions of carbon dioxide, methane etc from human and natural activities and sources. Wider greenhouse gas emissions are collectively calculated into a ‘carbon dioxide equivalent’ displayed as CO₂e.</p> <p>Carbon footprint: The total amount of greenhouse gases emitted from an individual, activity, product, company or country, usually reported in tons of emissions (CO₂ equivalent).</p> <p>Decarbonisation: Reducing and ultimately eliminating carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>Net Zero Carbon: Balancing carbon emissions with carbon removal or simply eliminating carbon emissions altogether.</p>