

## Target audience & purpose

This case study provides an informative example to caterers in the public or private sector looking to make the food on their menu better for health, the environment, animal welfare and the local economy. More specifically it is useful for those interested in gaining the Soil Association's Food for Life Catering Mark (see box below).

### BRONZE:

- No undesirable additives or hydrogenated fats
- 75% of dishes freshly prepared
- Meat is farm assured
- Eggs from cage free hens
- Menu is seasonal
- Training of catering staff
- No GM ingredients

### SILVER - in addition to the Bronze criteria:

- Locally sourced items on the menu
- Certified organic **OR** Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) items on the menu
- Poultry, eggs and pork is Freedom Food assured **OR** 10% of ingredients certified organic or MSC
- No fish from Marine Conservation Society 'Fish to Avoid' list
- Information on display about provenance of foods
- At least one product is Fair Trade

### GOLD - in addition to the Bronze and Silver criteria:

- 30% of ingredients certified organic **OR** MSC
- 50% of ingredients are locally sourced
- Meat, dairy products and eggs are certified organic
- Steps taken to increase up-take of non-meat dishes to promote a more sustainable diet

## Context

In 2002 the Scottish Executive launched Hungry for Success which was designed to raise

nutritional standards of school meals and encourage nutrition education in the classroom<sup>1</sup>. This led to the passing of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007 which sets nutritional standards and is now enforced in primary and secondary schools throughout Scotland. The development of a food and drink policy for Scotland<sup>2</sup> together with the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence<sup>3</sup> has extended the scope of food education in schools from an appreciation of nutrition and healthy choices, to an understanding of the whole food chain and the links between food, health, the environment and the economy.

The Soil Association's Food for Life programme of work was launched in 2003 to improve the quality of school meals by introducing targets for food sourcing and food education. In Scotland the Food for Life programme of work is currently funded by the Scottish Government and includes catering services in the public and private sectors. The Food for Life Catering Mark has been developed to support caterers to achieve the Food for Life core targets of 75% fresh, 50% local and 30% organic.

## Case study background

The Edinburgh Steiner School is an independent school for pupils aged 3 ½ – 18 years. The school has no official catering service and the majority of pupils bring packed lunches. The top class in the school, Class 12, has for some years run a simple school lunch service as their own self-sustaining business. This academic year (2010-11) Class 12 has 14 pupils who are supported by some parents to prepare the lunches in the school kitchen. Lunch is served four days per week and costs £2 per child per meal. Profits are used to pay the supporting parent, for upkeep of the kitchen, to buy-in

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supplies, and to fund a cultural trip for Class 12 students. While the Class 12 teacher, Barrie Scott, helps to supervise the enterprise most of the responsibility lies with the pupils and parents. The school was awarded a Gold FFL Catering Mark in June 2010.

In addition, Class 8 pupils have now started to provide a lunch service every Thursday, again as a self-sustaining business. They prepare pizzas in an outdoor pizza oven and profits are used to fund exchange visits to Germany.



Preparing lunch in the school kitchen

## The menu

The Class 12 lunch menu is very simple. It offers a limited choice and remains the same each week:

<b>Monday</b>	Soup and roll Fresh fruit
<b>Tuesday</b>	Baked potatoes and butter with choice of fillings (tuna, cheese, baked beans) Fresh fruit
<b>Wednesday</b>	Pasta with tomato sauce and cheese Fresh fruit
<b>Friday</b>	Sausages (meat or vegetarian) and roll Fresh fruit

Wherever possible, all the ingredients are organic or biodynamic which is important to the ethos of the school. The school sources their ingredients from five main suppliers:

- Garvald Home Farm, West Linton, Scottish Borders – biodynamic sausages
- Findlays of Portobello, Edinburgh – free range sausages (when Garvald Farm unable to supply)
- Garvald Bakery, Edinburgh – organic bread
- Oxenfoord Organics, Pathhead, East Lothian – organic vegetables
- Waitrose – other organic ingredients

It has been possible to keep the price of the lunches affordable due to a number of key factors:

- Having a very simple menu
- Direct sourcing from local producers (reduces costs incurred from delivery, middlemen and excessive packaging)
- Minimising waste through careful monitoring of the number of meals required each day and offering no or a very limited choice

## Food education

The Steiner School curriculum puts particular emphasis on the importance of children respecting and understanding where their food comes from, and requires children to learn practical land-based skills. The school has a strong educational link with Garvald Home Farm which is used as a base for teaching subjects such as agriculture, building and mechanics. The children learn about how animals are reared, killed and processed into meat products (e.g. sausages), with the emphasis very much on respecting the whole process.

In addition, the school now has a close relationship with a local community garden in Myreside, less than a mile away from the school grounds. All classes make regular visits to the garden to learn about growing and harvesting vegetables. There may be an opportunity for the children to plant and harvest enough vegetables to supply the school lunch business.



Farming lessons at Garvald Home Farm

The school also has a small school garden and compost system within the school grounds, currently for educational purposes only. There are aspirations to expand the school garden so that it may supply the school kitchen, but space is an issue.

On Friday lunchtimes a market is held within the school grounds. Oxenfoord Organics and Garvald bakery attend. Parents come to buy vegetable boxes and bread, thus linking the children's experiences at home and at school.



Gardening at the community garden

## Problems

**Irregular supply** of sausages from Garvald Home Farm has resulted in the school having to switch to Findlays of Portobello for sausages. The small size of the farm means that they are not always able to meet demand.

**Minimum orders** of £100 for dry goods from Green City Wholefoods (a workers cooperative in Glasgow) have proven difficult for the small

size of the school lunch business. The school now use Waitrose instead.

**Time constraints** have resulted in changes being made to the original menu. As food preparation relies solely on students and parents, time is limited. Although shepherd's pie was a popular menu item, it was time-consuming to make and has now been taken off the menu and replaced with pasta, tomato sauce and cheese.

**Low uptake** of the school lunches has persisted. Currently 40 pupils take lunch on Mondays Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and 60 on Fridays. This represents between a quarter and a fifth of the total number of pupils in the school. This is partly because the facilities for food preparation are limited and the school does not actively encourage pupils to start taking school lunches. It is probable that many children are put off the school lunches because of the lack of choice. Low uptake may also be due to the lack of flexibility - parents must fill in a form saying when their child would like lunch and pay for the lunches half a term in advance - which does not allow children to try out the lunches, but is necessary for the purposes of planning food supply and food preparation.

## Replication in state schools - challenges

**Curriculum and ethos.** The Steiner School model is unique, and relies heavily on the Schools' alternative and independent curriculum and ethos which is not present in state schools.

**Support.** The model depends on a considerable amount of support from parents and teachers, and voluntary labour from pupils which may not be realistic in state schools.

**Size.** In larger state schools this poses a challenge in terms of finding local producers of high quality ingredients who could meet the considerable demand.

**Simplicity.** The simple menu with little or no choice is something that most school children in Scotland are not used to, but would be necessary if schools were to be able to provide affordable, healthy school meals using fresh, high quality, local ingredients. Creativity and perhaps student involvement in menu design

would be paramount if such a change was to be successful in terms of student up-take of lunches.

**Budget cuts.** Current cuts in the public sector budget, including school meals services, will pose a real challenge to schools if they are to provide fresh, healthy and enjoyable lunches using local, high quality produce.

**Centralised procurement.** Food purchasing in Local Authority schools is done through centralised contracts which makes it difficult for individual schools to have control over their choice of food suppliers.

## Replication in state schools – strengths

**Low cost.** The ability of the Steiner School model to maintain affordable lunches at the same time as using high quality, locally produced ingredients is a real strength. In particular this model could be the answer for schools in remote areas of Scotland. They currently depend on centralised menu planning and delivery systems which make school lunches costly to produce. Farming and crofting in these areas, coupled with the tendency for small school size, provides a good basis for localising school food supply.

**Simple good food.** When offered a packed-lunch style meal, up take of school meals in remote primary schools on Arran dropped and wastage increased. This experience indicates that some children, perhaps especially those living in rural areas are more likely to accept a cooked simple meal, similar to those offered at the Edinburgh Steiner School.

**Children with special needs.** The Edinburgh Steiner School model could be well replicated in schools for children with special needs. The catering service in these schools is usually in-house and the schools tend to be well resourced. The potential benefits of links with local food producers to the children are numerous. Soil Association Scotland is currently working with two grant-aided special schools to introduce FFL.

**Policy shift.** There is a growing realisation at government level that food plays a vital role in the education and health of children, and that

localising food supply has real benefits for the economy, health and environmental sustainability of our society. This shift in thinking may mean that more support will become available for models similar to that of the Edinburgh Steiner School in state schools across Scotland. Scotland's new national curriculum is evidence of this policy shift. 'Curriculum for Excellence' is encouraging all schools to include farm visits and school farmers markets as part of their food education programmes.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government (2002) *Hungry for Success: A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland*. The Scottish Government. Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47032/0023961.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government (2009) *Recipe for Success – Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy*. The Scottish Government. Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/277346/0083283.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> The Scottish Executive (2004) *A Curriculum for Excellence – The Curriculum Review Group*. The Scottish Executive. Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/26800/0023690.pdf>