

Visit: John Donne Primary School, Woods Road, Peckham, SE15 2SW

Date: 28 February 2012

Present: Head Teachers; Nick Tildesley & Evelyn Holdsworth
School Business Manager; Steven Hobbs
Chef; Warren Simpson
Cllr the Right Reverend Emmanuel Oyewole (Vice Chair)
Cllr Sunil Chopra
Colin Elliott
Colin Gale, Universal Free School Meal lead
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Project manager

Catering arrangements

The school has an in-house catering arrangement and directly employs all the catering staff. The school used to have external caterers however they ended this. They identified a good cook as key to providing quality food; and if the external caterers provide one then all is fine. However they found that if the chef is not satisfactory, and it is an external arrangement, then this can cause a problem as it can be very hard to change staff. Moving the service in-house gave more control over staffing and menus. John Donne started in house catering in January 2011.

The school has made a big investment in improving the quality of food. This has combined moving the service in house, input from children and parents and building menus around the school. From a survey from done by the school councillors in the autumn term 68% of pupils liked the improvements to the school menu. There has been an increased take up of school dinners with 371 pupils eating lunches in 2012; up from 321 in 2011.

Colin Gale commented that, in his view, the school is at Silver Food for Life standard. The chef said that he would like to apply for the Gold Food for Life award.

The head teachers reported that measures to improve lunches have resulted in increased pupils concentration and performance, particularly after lunch.

Universal Free School Meals and Packed lunches

The school has received investment from the council to cope with additional demand with the introduction of universal Free Healthy School Meals.

This has enabled the school to:

- Purchase a new dishwasher to help ease the cleaning of plates, cutlery etc
- Purchase a new meat slicer
- Purchase new dinner plates, cutlery and other kitchen sundries.

There is some work done to promote healthy packed lunches.

The school reported that introducing the programme was not hard and the forms were easy to fill in. The number of pupils on FSM (benefit related) is 40%. The school undertook a big promotion of Free Healthy School meals with assemblies and parent days. They have nearly 100 % take up of school lunches for reception and year 1.

Children's and parents input into the menu

The school uses the School Council and surveys (attached) to get feedback from children. The School Council representatives consult with their classroom peers to get views and suggestions for the menu. This is compared with the survey data and evaluated.

There is class cooking.

Parents and teachers are encouraged to bring food in and submit menu ideas. These are then sent off for nutritional evaluation.

There is an international day each month where different food from around the globe is tried out. The school is very ethnically mixed.

Menus are refreshed regularly.

Links to gardening, urban agriculture and farming

The school has a two gardens and a green house and they grow food in the garden.

It was noted that when children grow the vegetables they more keen on eating them.

Serving arrangements

Lunch is served in the school hall with tables and flight trays.

There is staged service.

Children's comments

Children from the School Council shared lunch and showed the members around the garden. They were very positive about the menu, international dishes, their involvement, healthy eating and the garden. The children appeared to be enjoying the food.

Observations

Virtually all the children appeared to be eating a good variety of food including vegetables.

The quality of the food was very high.

All the children were friendly and sociable and the School Council children, in particular, took great pride in the quality of the school dinners and their contribution to the production of the meals, from gardening to testing out different international menu ideas.