

Visit: Albion Primary School, Albion Street, Rotherhithe, SE16 7JD
Date: 17 April 2012

Present: Head teacher Penny White
Cllr David Hubber (Chair)
Cllr the Right Reverend Emmanuel Oyewole (Vice Chair)
Cllr Adele Morris
Julie Timbrell, Scrutiny Project manager

Catering arrangement

The school uses an external caterer; ISS. The food is prepared in the school kitchen and is 95% cooked from scratch. The head explained that they have considered moving the catering in house on several occasions but decided what matters most is the quality of the cook. This is monitored closely and if standards drop then the caterer is contacted. The head is also very satisfied with the highly level of input into the menu. It was also explained that catering company can make use of economies of scale and the school does not have the catering responsibilities of ordering food.

Lunchtime arrangements

The head teacher explained that lunch is served for nursery school children in the class room. Each table has family sized serving bowls and they eat in social groups around tables.

Universal Free School Meals

The head explained that the school had almost 100 % take up because the school discouraged packed lunches because of the social and nutritional benefits of school dinners. This was achieved through lots of engagement with parents and this was easier as Albion is a small school. A high percentage, around 50 %, claim free school meals. The head was asked if the new arrangement to provide free school meals to younger years had increased the take up of both free school meals and school meals generally. The head responded that because the school policy was to encourage 100 % uptake through relationships built with parents and carers , most parents and carers had already been claiming free school meals, however there might have been one or two who were not claiming but were entitled . The free policy had helped to promote take up and in persuading a few parents to switch from packed lunch to school dinners, but uptake was already very high because the school policy.

The catering arrangements have not changed of with the introduction of the Free School meal offer.

The head praised the free school initiative.

The head teacher did not raise any concerns over costs.

Children's input into the menu

The caterers do menus three times a year. These go to school council – year 6 only are members

Links to gardening, urban agriculture and farming

The school has a garden, but does not grow food. The school has links to Surry Farm.

Serving arrangements

Traditional tables are used with cutlery and bowls and the school is moving to china and glass next year.

There is continuous service, with the little ones coming in first, which the Head said works as quite a small school

Year 6 helpers help serve the children salad and with seating arrangements. All year 6 contribute to this in a rota system. There are also lots other adult supervisors in attendance.

The children sit in tables of different age groups and are assisted by adult helpers. Each table has a year 6 helper or adult sitting at the head.

The school has an ethos that children should eat two servings of either vegetables or salad and this is actively promoted by the Head. The serving arrangements also promote this with year 6 monitors encouraging children to eat salad and supervised table arrangements, whereby the children need to ask to leave the table.

The head teacher eats in the canteen.

Children's comments

The children made lots of positive comment about healthy eating and complimented many of the menu items; chicken, fruit salad, cake etc. There were a few comments about undercooked food, for example carrots. There were also one or two comments that the taste could be improved.

Observations

Virtually all the children appeared to be eating a large amount of vegetables; although not all were eating the protein option.

The quality of the food was good.

The children were very positive and the social atmosphere was of a very high quality and well integrated.