

Helping Young People Eat Well at School

Children's diets currently contain too much sugar, fat and salt and not enough fruits and vegetables. This can lead to a higher risk of developing food-related illnesses.



Over **180,000** children in England attend alternative education settings, like special schools and pupil referral units. Little is known about how these schools support students to have a healthy diet.

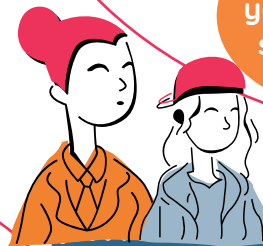


What did we do?

We visited alternative education schools **8**

We asked students, parents and school staff: **90**

"What do you think about school food?"



What were the challenges?

Many schools in this study were serving foods high in fat, sugar, and salt too often during the school day.



7 out of 8 schools were serving too many foods like chips, potato wedges and hashbrowns. 6 out of 8 schools were providing chocolate desserts, cakes, biscuits and pastries too often



Only 3 out of 8 schools had fruit or vegetables available across the whole school day (not just at lunch)



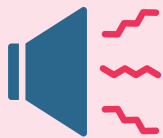
"I don't know if I would like the other meals, so I just would rather be safe."

Schools found it difficult to provide a nutritious menu that students liked. Some students could only eat a small number of foods.

"I understand this is a healthy food school, but I think you could add some spices, herbs, and just a little bit of it, at least a little bit of it."



Students wanted to help design the menus and food options.



"It's too noisy,
I like eating in
peace"

The dining hall was
sometimes too noisy
and busy.



Some students missed out on learning about healthy eating and food preparation. This was because there wasn't enough suitable equipment or resources.



Most schools did not have rules about the food that could be brought from home.



Some schools used food such as sweets and takeaways to reward students' behaviour or progress.



Some thought the portion sizes were too small.



Students eating in classrooms sometimes missed out on socialising.

What changes need to be made?



Alternative education schools need tailored guidance and extra funding to support their students to have a healthy diet.



School food guidance needs to be inclusive so it considers the needs of all students. Schools also need guidance on ways to include students in decisions on school food.



The researchers are now working with students, parents, schools, caterers and other key people to talk about what support is needed.

Want to find out more?

Get in touch at feast@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Webpage: birmingham.ac.uk/research/projects/feast-project

Funding statement:

This study is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Public Health Research programme (NIHR164391). The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

FUNDED BY

NIHR

National Institute for
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