

August 2018

I am delighted to be able to write to you to introduce our new catering offer - Food & Co. Food & Co is part of a suite of services we have developed within our Schools by Sodexo facilities management offer & is the result of 12 months' worth of research, market insights and our commitment to truly understand the needs of the pupils we serve. The new menu for primary schools is called 'Five Foodie Days'.

Fundamentally this new menu is part of our commitment to continually improve the services we provide to schools. It responds to findings from our 'Voice of Client' feedback programme which told us that our clients and customers want to see more innovation, pupil involvement, staff training, and consistency in our food offer.

To this end, we were determined to create a new menu that is healthy and meets the needs of both our Clients (you) and our customers (the young people in your schools). To achieve this we've conducted focus groups over the last 12 months with pupils aged 7-16 across the UK. We asked them about the food they want to eat and why, when & how they want to eat it. We also received some really interesting feedback about how they'd like to see their dining experience improved. The message was clear, pupils told us they would like to:

- Eat high street style food that included their favourite choices;
- Enjoy a 'high street' experience with food served in a box or similar offering a more 'grown up' feel;
- Try new foods from different countries and cultures, and
- Be able to choose tasty sauces to add extra flavour and customise their menu choices.

Our research also emulates the latest insights into market trends showing how pupils today ('Generation Z')<sup>i</sup>. are brand-savvy and active consumers of high-street food. The evidence shows they have more sophisticated palates than ever before (Mintel 2017):

- 72% of children aged 7-15 want to try food they haven't eaten before.
- 68% agree that they would like to eat food they have seen in adverts and the high street.
- 33% read food labels, and are actively choosing to make healthier choices; doing so is perceived to be "cool".
- 93% of children think that it is important to have a healthy diet & look out for food that is nutritious.

This market research and our own insights instructed our Craft Chefs and Nutritionists to shift away from the traditional and instead create a menu to meet the changing expectations of Generation Z pupils. The menu needed to also meet the government school food standards, be affordable, and encourage new skills to allow our cooks to reach their full potential

**So, what are the 'Five Foodie Days' & what changes can I expect?**

- Each day is themed: Street Food, World Food, Originals, Friday Favourites and Planet Earth Day.<sup>ii</sup>
- Dishes on our menu reflect high street trends and favourites, and are linked to the relevant theme.
- KS2 pupils experience 'grown-up/ high-street'' days, when food is served in a box twice per week.

We have piloted our new menu at Oasis Academy Pinewood and based on feedback from pupils, school staff, our cooks, and parents underpinned by our sales data, we are confident we have got it right. We also engaged pupils to help implement the new menu - a programme we call 'Agents for Change<sup>iii</sup>', where pupils provide feedback to our cooks and encourage KS2 and KS1 pupils to taste and learn about the new foods e.g. Halloumi -*Cheese from Cyprus, contains calcium, good for bones!*

Our evaluation framework included surveys and interviews. Just some of the feedback captured by pupils, from pupils is summarised below:

About the Food - pupils liked nearly everything; it was tastier, and yummiier.

- About the Box - pupils felt special, posh and it was fun.
- About the Five Foodie Days -pupils enjoyed trying new foods from around the world.
  - o Staff said it created an interest when talking about the menu in class & curriculum links
- About the Agents for Change - pupils liked the idea, it made them feel happy, special, proud, and they enjoyed talking to different people.
  - o Staff said it's important as pupils tend to listen to pupils.

In addition Ms Jenni Elliot, the Principal at Pinewood said that she herself, the pupils and staff all welcomed the change, pupils enjoyed it. There were some initial concerns expressed about the increased use of disposable items (e.g. the box), but ultimately the school appreciated that pupils wanted a new experience and were satisfied with Sodexo's commitment to work towards a fully compostable waste solution. Ms Elliot endorsed the role of Agents for Change, confirming it was really important, and recommended engaging with parents as early as possible in the process.

We have mobilised back of house training programmes and support systems to ensure our cooks are skilled, prepared and confident to take the new menu forward. We have set up a 'support help line' to access our Craft Chefs, and have trained our staff in setting up 'Agents for Change'. Our Public Health Nutritionist and Marketing Manager is creating literature to support schools, engage pupils and inform parents of our development programme, and to enable our cooks to celebrate and educate pupils about good food and nutrition in schools.

We respect that parents have the final say in what their children eat at school, and a role of leadership is to ensure a good school meal service is available to meet the diverse needs of pupils, promoting healthy eating and meets government's school food standards. We believe we have gone that extra mile to create a new menu that promotes health and wellbeing and establishes a fully inclusive dining experience for today's generation of young people.

Our commitment is to continue to monitor our sales and uptake data, keep gathering feedback, and review the menu accordingly to inform the seasonal menu refresh in Spring 2019.

To aid your communications, I have sent this letter via email should you wish to forward to your families.

I hope you enjoy your new school food menu. Please do not hesitate to contact your local account manager or me should you have any further questions.

Kind regards



Matt Garner  
Managing Director Government Schools

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<sup>i</sup> Generation Z - denotes children ages 0-18yrs. Also known as iGeneration

<sup>ii</sup> Planet Earth Day (Monday) - A focus on plant based food with the opportunity to try new and interesting vegetables.

Street Food Day - Taking high street favourites that pupil said they would like to try.

World Food Day - Offers an opportunity for pupils to explore foods from different countries such as Mexico & America.

Originals Food Day - This is about traditional, familiar and favourite foods.

Favourite Friday - More than just fish and chips; includes a range of favourites for fun Fridays.

NOTE The days rotate to create a shift from traditional 'roast on a Wednesday & Fish on Friday' service.

<sup>iii</sup> When Pupils given the opportunity to be involved in their dining experience they are more likely to take ownership and respect the environment, and will help towards creating a positive and enjoyable relationship with the food they eat & encourage healthy eating into adulthood (DCSF 2007, Sahota 2013).