

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 23 MAY 2006

HUNGRY FOR SUCCESS : PROMOTING SCHOOL MEALS

Report by Executive Director of Educational & Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of the further development of Hungry for Success.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The recommendations of the report Hungry for Success - A whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland were formally adopted by the Education Committee at its meeting of 23 March 2004. Hungry for Success has been extended for a further three years to allow the continued implementation of the recommendations, with national funding for financial years 2006/07 to 2007/09 being made available to local authorities through the National Priorities Action Fund for Education. The funding also includes the continuation of a free fruit scheme for Primary 1 and Primary 2 pupils.

- 2.2 The recommendations detailed in the report 'Hungry for Success' are extensive and impact on many aspects relating to the provision of improved nutrition for pupils in schools. A summary of the recommendations is detailed below:

- To achieve the Scottish national nutritional standards for the content of school meals in Primary and Secondary schools:
- Enhancing the nutritional content of school meals;
- To improve the environment in which meals are eaten;
- Ensuring there is no stigma associated with free school meals;
- Working with parents to enhance the healthy eating message; and
- Promoting the message of healthy diets and exercise within the school curriculum embodied in the objectives of Health Promoting Schools.

- 2.3 Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of Hungry for Success has been adopted as part of the HMIE inspection process and the school meals service is now shown as a separate addendum to the published report.

3. DEVELOPMENTS

3.1 Whole Child Ethos

Hungry for Success guidance has a key focus on ensuring that all pupils have access to appropriate food choices within a health promoting environment. All schools in East Ayrshire are working toward Health Promoting Schools status and adopting education programmes which include healthy eating.

3.2 The Hungry for Success Initiative does not operate in isolation. It complements a range of programmes designed to improve the health and well-being of children within the community. It is hoped that the combined impact of these programmes will establish positive attitudes to diet and exercise which will extend throughout young people's lives.

3.3 Consistent with the aim to inform and engage parents, there has been a regular flow of information menus and including a Parents' Information Pack for all children in primary education.

3.4 Partnership Working and Consultation

Partnership working, particularly between Catering Staff and Teaching Staff and with parents, to ensure a consistent message, is important for the successful implementation of Hungry for Success.

3.5 School meals surveys informing parents about the development of the Service as well as seeking the views of parents and pupils have been carried out in 2004 and 2005. Primary School satisfaction remains high at above 90% and Secondary Schools at 88%. The statistical results and written responses received are analysed and incorporated into service development and business planning for the school meals service.

3.6 Eliminating Stigma

Generally the number of pupils entitled to free meals is higher than the number who actually use this benefit. This can be for a wide range of practical and social reasons. In East Ayrshire the uptake is high and above the national average at 82.6% compared to 74% nationally. This figure has increased from 76.3% in 1998 against a reduction in entitlement of 4.2% over this period.

3.7 Cashless meals pilots are operating in 3 secondary schools and 1 primary school to evaluate the benefits of this system.

3.8 Schools are required to review their management arrangements and to ensure that free meal tickets are issued in the most appropriate and sensitive manner and this also forms part of any HMIE inspection process.

3.9 Managing the Process

The social experience of school meals is one which substantially influences a schools' success in attracting pupils to the dining room.

Schools have reviewed their queuing arrangements, and supervision and Ticket allocation practices to ensure that a well ordered and conducive system is implemented.

3.10 Hungry for Success and the promotion of health and diet features in the School Development plan, and this is coherent with the schools drive to achieve Health Promoting School Status by 2007.

3.11 The removal of commercial vending machines replacing them with healthy vending, has been at a cost in the region of £60,000. This is a necessary and proud investment by Educational and Social Services in health improvement in East Ayrshire schools.

Influencing Choice

The ambience of dining rooms is an important feature. Investment in counters and dining areas with the use of promotional material is used to brighten dining areas and counters. There has also been a considerable investment in the upgrading of dining room furniture.

Menus are displayed in schools and 'Tasty Buds' has been used as an East Ayrshire brand to support a promotional campaign. A series of menus and parents' information packs have been issued during the year. A further brand 'Cafe Vogue' is being introduced into secondary schools.

The purpose of this marketing activity is to encourage not only the children that eat the meals but all children in the school and convince more children and their parents of the benefits of taking a school meal.

The campaign will:

- Create an added interest in the service;
- Send school meals information and school recipes home to parents so that they can see how good the menus are;
- Activity sheets and other promotional 'educational' material will be made available which will encourage pupils who would not normally take a school meal to try the menu for a week.

3.12 As part of an extensive promotional campaign Food Tasting Stations are also being introduced into schools and a collaborative initiative with Active Schools Staff to encourage children in the dining room is being developed.

A number of issues connected with the challenge of successfully introducing Hungry for Success with the new Scottish Nutrient Standards coupled with a reducing school roll, has resulted in previous year on year increases in the uptake of school meals is not being achieved and a 2% reduction is apparent during 2005/6. Hungry for Success and the challenge of positively influencing diets is not a quick fix and has to be viewed as a sustained longer term initiative.

3.13 The approach taken in East Ayrshire is to introduce children to a wider range of food than they might usually experience, and by repetition make good healthy food choices normal and acceptable, it is by these efforts that a positive improvement in diet will be achieved.

3.14 Achieving the Scottish Nutrient Standards

The Scottish Nutrient Standards were achieved in Primary Schools by December 2004 as required. Secondary Schools have to achieve the same standard by December 2006 and the service is on track to achieve this.

Well in advance of recent recommendations by the Scottish Executive, carbonated drink and confectionery vending was removed in all schools in 2004/05 and was replaced with healthy vending. Fair Trade confectionery and a small quantity of healthier snacks, proprietary brands of confectionery and non-carbonated drinks, water and fruit juices is offered.

Food for Life, the Soil Association's Gold Standard for Schools using fresh local produce and some organic food has been adopted in 11 schools and has been very successful. This has attracted UK wide interest and has been the subject of case studies and research as an exemplar of best practice; by the Department of Trade and Industry, The Sustainable Development Commission, Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department and University of Cardiff.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

'Hungry for Success' is funded through the National Priorities Action Fund for a period of 3 years.

5. COMMUNITY PLAN

Hungry for Success and the approaches taken by East Ayrshire complements all aspects of the Council's Community Planning particular:

- Improving health
- Elementary Poverty
- Improving the Environment and Sustainability

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) The Committee is asked to approve the approaches taken in the delivery of Hungry for Success
- (ii) Otherwise to note the content of the report.

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23 May 2006

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BACKGROUND PAPERS AND SUPPORTING INITIATIVES

- Hungry for Success- A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland.
- The Health Promoting School Initiative.
- The Active Schools Programme – Let's make Scotland more active!
- Free Fruit in the Primary School.
- Drinking Water in Schools.
- Sport Development Programme.
- Breakfast Club Initiative.
- Scottish Healthy Choices Awards Scheme.
- Safer Routes to School.
- Integrated Community Schools – Links to Health Board
- The Scottish National Priorities for Education
- Education for Citizenship
- Additional Support for Learning
- Social Justice Targets
- Improving Health in Scotland: The Challenge