New Term – Schools Catering Update

Happy Holidays!

I hope you all have a wonderful and well-deserved Christmas break! I managed to visit several schools for their Christmas lunches and was blown away by the hard work from the schools and catering teams, working in partnership to deliver a great festive experience to pupils! Your continued support of the catering service throughout 2021 has been most appreciated as we continue to expand the service, deal with the continued impact of Covid and to provide meals to an ever-growing number of pupils.

Free P5 lunches

Since August 2021, we have been delivering lunches to all P4's. In many of our schools' uptake is incredibly high (averaging 90%). The catering team have been working incredibly hard to deliver an additional 2000-3000 meals per day across the city and our current estate is coping well with the increase.

As a result of the Universal Free School Meal (UFSM) expansion programme the council have requested significant capital funding to upgrade kitchen and dining halls to cope with the additional demand. We hope to hear from the Government early in January our capital allocation, so we can commence discussions with those schools surveyed for capital works. If funding is approved it is expected we will deliver the majority of projects by August 2024.

P5 free lunches will start in January 2022 and we expect a continued increase in meal numbers (we forecast, initially around 80% of the P5 roll will take up the offer). Following on from the recent survey you all completed in September, we will begin to distribute additional dining hall furniture early in the new year to those who requested this. For any questions on queries on dining hall furniture or space management please contact Laura.Nisbet@edinburgh.gov.uk

P6/P7 are due to move to free school meals in August 2022. At this point we expect that our total meal capacity will double on numbers reported in 2018 to around 32,000 meals per day.

From August 2022, all special school pupils will also be entitled to a free school meal (inclusive of secondary special school provision)

High Schools – Early discussions suggest that 2023/24 may see the trialling of Universal Free School Meals in high schools, at yet no information is available on this. We will keep you updated of this as we gather more information from the Government.

Menus

January menus are now live for parents to book on ParentPay.
The adjustment to P5 free school meals needs to be completed over the Christmas break so we will be issuing a message on ParentPay advising that P5 parents should wait until the 1st January 2022 until booking meals to ensure they are not charged. For the 2 days in January 6th and 7th we will need to work with schools to forecast P5 numbers before pupils break up, to ensure orders are placed. Our catering supervisors will be in touch with the school office.

Our new menus will launch after the Easter holidays. The catering department use pupil and parental surveys regularly to form the following years menu. A survey for April's menu is now live - https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/foodsch21
Please share this link with you school community and we will use this feedback to help us continually improve our offering.
Annually we re-work familiar foods to pupils to make them healthier and comply with the Scottish Governments school's food standards, which are the most stringent of all UK countries. Items such as cod goujons, a pupil favourite, are non-flash fried and are oven baked at school. Our pizzas are specifically designed to include hidden vegetables and wholemeal bases. It is always such a challenge to design a menu that works for over 100 schools across Edinburgh and balancing pupils' favourites with a continued shift towards healthier recipes.
Combined with the new school food regulations, over the last 5 years we have reduced sugar in our menus by 37%, salt by 44% and halved the saturated fat in recipes.
Our high school menus are now also fully compliant with the school meal standards and Natasha's Law.

Ongoing Supply Chain Issues

You may have noticed that some of our suppliers are experiencing product shortages or a lack of substitute products. Below gives some context into the continued challenges faced by our suppliers. We continue to work with procurement to mitigate supply chain disruptions but it is likely that going into the new year we will see continued price increases and supply shortages, this may result in short notice menu changes at unit level.

"Manufacturer to wholesaler deliveries continue to challenge the wholesalers – previous arrangements were day1 order for day 3 delivery the current lead time is now day 1 for day 10. Wholesalers are on the whole increasing stock holding to up to 10 weeks on some lines to try and address this. Issues are ongoing with McCain products
Scotland Excel are working closely with wholesalers on price reviews and OOS it was asked that we keep them in the loop with local supply issues
Smaller wholesalers are having issues with large manufacturers refusing to supply smaller volumes and this is hampering their ability to respond to demand.
January is the main month for wholesaler and manufacturer negotiations on pricing, we are likely to see impacts as a result – Scotland Excel will continue to update us"

Special Diet Policy

A reminder of the special diet policy is attached with this memo. We have altered the special diet form to comply with GDPR regulations, a doctor's note or signature must accompany a special diet form to ensure our cooks have accurate information and do not place pupils in un-due risk. We publish all our allergens online at: https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/food-clothing/lunch-menus-schools/1 For our new menu update we will update the website prior to the Easter break with the new information and include a copy of the special diet forms and information.

Recruitment

Our service continues to operate in an extremely challenging labour market, all the team are working to increase our workforce by 25% by August 2022, your support in making local vacancies available to parents is extremely helpful. Many of our posts suit parents of pupils within the school community.

We continue looking for passionate, creative, adaptable, and hard-working individuals. If you have a positive attitude, wish to progress your career in stable employment, the council may be for you!
We have great succession planning with varying roles across our service and plenty of opportunity for you to grow within the council, not just in catering but in the 100 other services we provide.

Find out more - https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/work-us/cook-jobs-catering-team/1
or e-mail Catering.Communications@edinburgh.gov.uk

Design our Labels

We are looking for help from our budding artists to help us design a new label for our sandwiches and hope your schools would be keen to take part

The winning designs will feature on our sandwich packaging from PJ's across the estate and the winning entries will receive a special prize!

Guidelines

1. Entries to be in by Friday 25th February 2022
2. Picture should be on A4 and can either be scanned and emailed to me (christopher.ross2@edinburgh.gov.uk) or sent to Chris Ross (catering) Ground Floor C.08 - Waverley Court – EH8 8BG
3. Picture needs to be food related and promote healthy lifestyles

Catering Team Contacts

- **North West Locality**
  Morag Best – Area Manager, morag.best@edinburgh.gov.uk
  Fiona Buckley – Field Supervisor, Fiona.buckley@edinburgh.gov.uk
- **South West Locality**
  Eric Taylor – Area Manager, eric.taylor@edinburgh.gov.uk
  Elaine Robertson – Field Supervisor, elaine.robertson@edinburgh.gov.uk
- **North East Locality**
  Prasun Barman – Area Manager, prasun.barman@edinburgh.gov.uk
  Field Supervisor – Liam Barbour, liam.barbour@edinburgh.gov.uk
- **South East Locality**
  Grace Lambert & Elizabeth Hetherington – Job Share Area Managers – grace.lambert@edinburgh.gov.uk Elizabeth.hetherington@edinburgh.gov.uk

- General Food Enquiries – Admin Team, foodinschools@edinburgh.gov.uk
  Menu Development Officer - Julie Donaldson,
  Julie.donaldson@edinburgh.gov.uk
  Laura Nisbet, Educational link, Food & Health development officer,
  laura.nisbet@edinburgh.gov.uk

Any of our team would be happy to assist and work with your schools to develop the food offer in school. Your catering manager on site, or any of the management team will be happy to attend any pupil council groups or eco groups to discuss the role of the catering service.

As this year comes to an end, I reflect on the hard work by whole school team – the challenges of Covid-19 have certainly played an integral part of this year and the school community have rallied round to support colleagues, pupils, parents and those in the wider community. I wish you, your families and loved ones a wonderful Christmas break. Look out for each other and your community, bring the bells in style! Spend time with those you love, rest, recuperate and prepare for 2022!

Best Wishes and Happy Holidays

Chris Ross
Catering Operations Manager