

key figures about school dinners

How many schools are there in England?

There are 25,335 schools, with 8.3 million pupils – 17,642 are primary state schools and 3,385 secondary state schools.

How many kids eat school dinners?

Just under half of school kids have school dinners – 42% in primary and 43% in secondary school (both have dropped from 45% last year).

What about free school meals?

17% of primary children and 14% of secondary children are eligible for free school meals.

How many meals get served?

About 3.25 million every day.

How much does an average school meal cost?

£1.54 in primary and £1.62 in secondary school, 4% more than a year ago (in 2004/05). About half of the cost goes on labour.

How much of the cost goes on food?

52p per school dinner in primary school and 68p in secondary.

How much do packed lunches cost?

Parents say between £1.20 and £1.50.

How many schools serve hot dinners?

72% of schools can prepare a meal from scratch. This includes the majority (96%) of secondary schools. 5% can only heat up food (they have "regen" kitchens where the food is cooked off-site and heated up at the school). An estimated 20% (3,500) of all schools, mostly primaries, have no kitchen facilities, eg in Lincolnshire.

Several councils do not have a hot meals service. This includes Dorset, Essex, Herefordshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Somerset, West Sussex, Worcestershire.

How much did the government announce last March for school meals? In total, they pledged **£280 million** over three years (2005/06 – 2007/08):

- £15 million to fund the School Food Trust for three years
- £220 million for schools and local authorities over three years:
 - £130 million for local authorities (£30m in 2005, £50m in 2006 and in 2007)
 - £90 million for schools (£30m per year – primaries get £1070 plus 50p per pupil and secondaries get £1500

plus 50p per pupil). This money is not ring-fenced but to be spent on improving school meals in a sustainable way.

- £65 million from the lottery which has yet to materialise.

How much more has the Department for Education announced this autumn?

- From 2008, a further £240 million over three years for local councils and schools to subsidise ingredients for healthy meals.
- The £2 million which we asked for to set up a network of regional training kitchens for dinner ladies.
- From 2008, an "entitlement" for secondary children to learn to cook at school.
- From 2008, an unspecified fund for building kitchens in local authorities where schools do not have facilities.
- Unspecified support from Defra to help small and local suppliers supply schools with food.

What capital is needed to implement the new school meal standards?

The estimated capital cost of refurbishing school kitchens so they can prepare food from scratch again is £290 million, but this only covers schools that already have a kitchen. The estimated cost of installing new kitchens in schools would be £350 million (roughly 3,500 schools at £100,000 each for a new kitchen, although we estimate a simple kitchen could be built for around £20,000 per build).

Many kitchens (especially those in secondary schools that mainly serve ready-prepared food) are also badly in need of an upgrade and new equipment, like veg prep machines and potato peelers, to enable them to handle fresh ingredients.

SOURCES

- School Food Trust, First Annual Survey of Take-up of School Meals in England, Michael Nelson and Jo Nicholas, 2006.
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- Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food – a report on the development and implementation of nutritional standards for school lunches prepared by the School Meals Review Panel, DfES 2005.
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/conResults.cfm?consultationId=1319>
- Annual School Census.
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