

Case Study - Lingfield College Prep School



Project Title:

To increase our pupils understanding of Healthy Eating and, in particular, the impact of too much sugar in the diet and how this can be addressed and demonstrated in improved diet choices.

Healthy Schools Theme:

Healthy Eating

School Context:

- Our School is an independent junior prep school situated on the border of Surrey, Sussex and Kent.
- We have 320 pupils in our Prep School which caters for children from 2 to 11.
- Although tests are not externally moderated, pupils complete written assessments twice a year which inform progress.
- We have a SEND coordinator and support staff. Although only 1 child has a statement there are more pupils receiving one to one support each week.

Identified Priority:

It was felt that although our school meals offered a wide choice of desserts they did contain puddings with heavier sugar content than desirable. We wanted the children to make informed choices about their food and to be more aware of the implications of eating too much sugar in our daily diets.

A survey (Survey Monkey) completed at the start of the project revealed that although 41.8% of our children understood a little about how much sugar was in the food they ate, 34.5% were not aware of the sugar content of any of the food they ate. Some pupils (23.4%) said they did understand how much sugar was in their food. It was felt that these percentages could be improved and that it was very important to educate the children further.

Outcomes:

After the project was completed a further survey took place asking the same questions as at the start. It was extremely pleasing to see that 90% of the pupils taking part were more aware of the importance of eating less sugar in their diets and could understand how it affected behaviour and health. 70% of the children were more aware of the government guidelines for the amount of sugar a child of their age should eat. This was a huge improvement which, it was felt, was due to the interventions and education put in place during the project.

Activities / Interventions:

- Assemblies have been held to show the children how much sugar is in the food they eat and the impact it has on mental and physical health through PowerPoint presentations and interactive involvement to guess and count sugar content.
- We have had a visit from a nutritionist who held workshops to ask the children to guess how many sugar cubes were in different food. Low sugar recipes were sampled
- Visiting nutritionist spoke to parents about diet issues.
- Held a meeting with our school caterers where we discussed changes to the menus. As a result it was agreed that we would offer fresh fruit and yoghurt only 3 times per week and recipes that included at least a 25% reduction in sugar. The children have willingly accepted this change and their parents have been pleased to note the menu changes.
- The curriculum has included specific teaching on food choices in key year groups.
- A competition was held to ask the pupils (age related) to design low sugar menus and posters outlining the dangers of a sugar heavy diet.
- Low sugar recipes provided by staff and pupils were published in our school newsletter to inspire pupils and their parents to make changes.
- Surveys were completed to monitor progress and judge effectiveness of the project.
- School Councillors have been involved in discussing, reviewing and putting forward ideas for menus. They have asked their peers for their views and reported back within meetings.
- Year 6 held a 'low sugar' Enterprise week to raise money for our school charity

Results from this initiative show greater pupil knowledge and awareness of links between healthy eating and healthy minds.

Impact:

The impact of this project, due to the support of the school catering department, pupils, School Council, staff and governors has been great. It has made the children far more aware of the health implications of eating too much sugar through the activities they have participated in and the curriculum they have followed. This has resulted in a gradual change in outlook and the pupils beginning to make sensible choices for themselves. For example a recently overheard remark from a 7 year old – 'that's not healthy for you, this is much better'.

Liaising with the School Council has enabled pupil voice. They feel they can express their opinions on the school meals and know that some of their suggestions have merit and can influence the menus. For instance, the children themselves, as an eco friendly measure decided that they would take their own water bottles on school trips and forgo juice boxes; very positive step forward.

The school catering team have supported our initiative completely. They are always open to suggestions and improvements and were willing to devise low sugar treats and to provide fruit and yoghurt as the main pudding choices. We are extremely grateful for their help throughout the project. A recent mental health week saw a special cycle installed in the dining room which mixed fruit smoothies when pedalled. This is one example of the support we have received.

Next Steps:

We are, as a school, proud of the steps forward we have made but there is still much we can do to educate the children and raise further their understanding and knowledge of the sugar content in the food they eat. The curriculum will continue to develop to include many opportunities to discuss and understand the importance of eating a healthy diet and making good food choices. Food preparation opportunities continue to become embedded in the curriculum such as preparing a 'healthy lunchbox' in Year 2.

At present we are working towards gaining an award for developing understanding of mental health issues. The link between exercise and diet in promoting a healthy mind will continue to be explored, as in the 'smoothie' making bike. A mental health week is now a permanent event on the calendar.

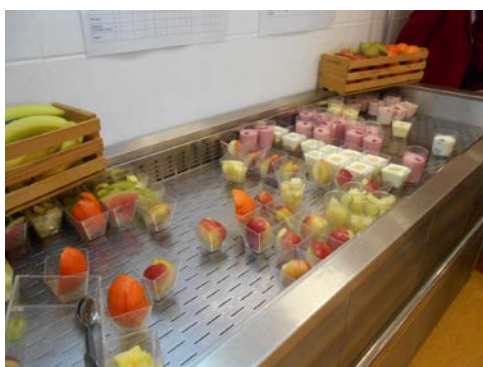
Year 6 will continue to participate in an Enterprise week where, for the first time, this year the focus was on low sugar food such as lollies, fruit kebabs and homemade lemonade. The younger children enjoyed sampling and buying these items.

The school will continue to liaise with the caterers to ensure healthy meals and low sugar recipes are part of the lunches provided.

We will continue to ensure the pupils develop awareness of the amount of sugar in the food they eat. There is a permanent Healthy School display in school showing government guidelines. This will be reinforced during future teaching and initiatives.

Senior Leader Quote:

'The Healthy Schools Project to make children aware of hidden sugar and to encourage them to reduce their sugar intake has made a real impact across our school. We have worked with our caterers to encourage them to cut down on the amount of refined sugar used in our desserts and replaced sugary puddings with fresh fruit and yoghurts 3 times per week. The impact of the initiative has been seen during the Head of Prep's discussions with pupils during our pupil focus groups, where the children have discussed the changes in puddings and the reasons for them in a very positive way. A number of parents have also commented positively about the changes in our parent focus groups. The initiative has been fully supported by our Prep School Governors' Committee who have been interested to hear about our work towards the Healthy Schools Gold Award in our regular Governors' meetings.'



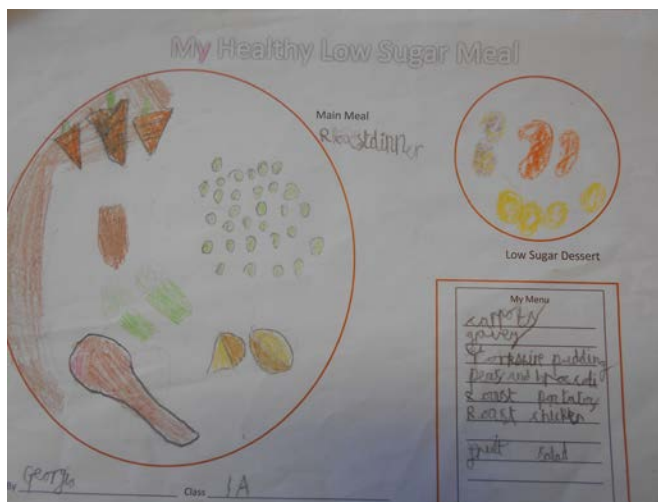
School lunch



Nutritionist visit



Winning poster



Low sugar meal design