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Hillingdon Primary School Food Survey – Executive Summary

School Food Matters

exists to teach children about food and to improve access to healthy, sustainable food during their time at school.



Our work together

We are working together to understand the current picture in Hillingdon primaries, and how schools can best be supported to improve their food offer.

- Survey (Completed)
- In-person audit of 20 schools (Autumn term)
- Reporting back (Dec)





In June 2024, we sent out an online survey to all primary heads in Hillingdon.

The survey was designed by SFM and distributed and promoted by the schools improvement team.

We received responses from 54 individuals in **45 primary schools** (66% of all primaries in the borough).

42 primaries were mainstream; **3** were SEND.

Responses were deduped and cleaned before analysis.



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Summary of findings

- The vast majority of schools (93%) are using external caterers, with the remainder managing catering in-house. The most commonly used external caterer is The Pantry, which held individual and group contracts across 18 primaries.
- The second most commonly used caterer was a school with an in-house kitchen team – Colham Manor.
- All but one school was providing some form of wraparound. Club provision has to be compliant with School Food Standards, so finding out more about what is being served will be a priority for the in-person visits.
- Not many Hillingdon primaries reported having a governor, a named member of staff, or an up-to-date food policy – but these are areas that can quickly be improved upon with support to schools.
- Almost all mainstream schools (93%) reported providing SEND students with additional support around food. The audits will explore what support is being given.



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Summary of findings (continued)

- Few schools (31%) were offering children with cultural or religious dietary restrictions a daily hot meal option. This has important implications for equal access to nutrition, since fewer than 2% of packed lunches meet SFS.
- Currently, all primary-age children in Hillingdon are eligible for free school meals under the Mayor's Universal Primary Free School Meals initiative. However, just 35% of schools said that they were actively encouraging families to take up this entitlement.
- Around one in three (36%) of Hillingdon primaries are not offering any practical cooking, and even more (47%) are not offering practical gardening.
- There was little to no support being provided to schools other than paid-for procurement support (4 schools of the 45).
- Most schools (63%) expressed an interest in support to improve their school food. Help with policy writing, picky eating, and teacher training around food education were the top three requests for support. Governance and leadership training, and help with procurement were also indicated as useful areas for support from the survey data received.



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Further investigation required

- How/is the picture different in SEND schools?
- To what extent are schools aware of their statutory responsibilities around school food?
- To what extent does the offer meet school food standards?
- What food is being served in wraparound, by schools and external providers?
- What kind of food education is being delivered in schools?
- Why is there so little provision for cultural/ dietary requirements?
- Are schools maximising the benefit of the GLA's UPFSM offer?
- Are there good practice examples of group contracting, and of schools providing schools with catering?
- What opportunities are there to support consistency in quality of food served?



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Hillingdon Primary School Food Survey – Full report

1. Who is providing food in schools?





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Who is providing food in schools?

- The vast majority of schools (93%) are using external caterers, with the remainder managing catering in-house. The most commonly used external caterer is The Pantry, which held individual and group contracts across 18 primaries.
- The second most commonly used caterer was a school with an in-house kitchen team – Colham Manor.

Name of caterer	Number of schools
Culinera	1
HCL Catering	1
Innovate Food Group	1
Radish	1
Taylor Shaw	1
Pabulum	2
Dolce	2
Chartwells	3
Colham Manor Catering	5
The Pantry	18

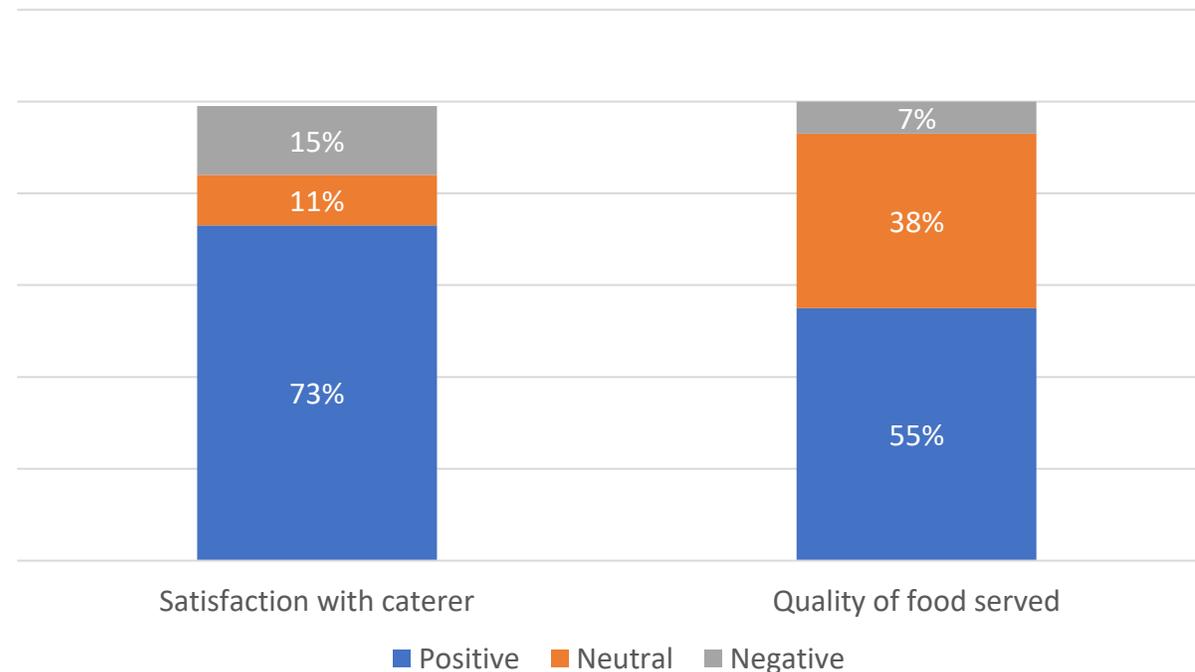


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Satisfaction with catering

- Schools were, in the main, satisfied with their caterer and with the quality of food served (in-house schools were more satisfied on both counts than those with external provision).



- The Pantry seems to be no worse or better than other caterers in terms of overall satisfaction, but it is worth noting that satisfaction varies between the 18 sites.



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Wraparound

Name of Provider	Number of schools
Aktiva	1
Be Active	1
Active Early Years Academy	1
FunZone	1
Fit for Sport	1
School Friends	1
Junior Adventure Group	2
PSD	3
Smarty's	4

- All but one school was providing some form of wraparound. Most schools (82%) provided breakfast and after school provision, and the remainder provided breakfast only.
- Most schools managed their wraparound provision internally, with 38% bringing in an external provider. Schools were more likely to use external providers for after school clubs than for breakfast.
- There were a wide range of providers.



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Just what is being served in wraparound?

- We don't know!
- Club provision has to be compliant with School Food Standards, so finding out more about what is being served will be a priority for the in-person visits.
- Knowing more about breakfast in Hillingdon schools will help prepare for the rollout of universal primary breakfast provision in 2025.

2. What do we know about practice in schools?





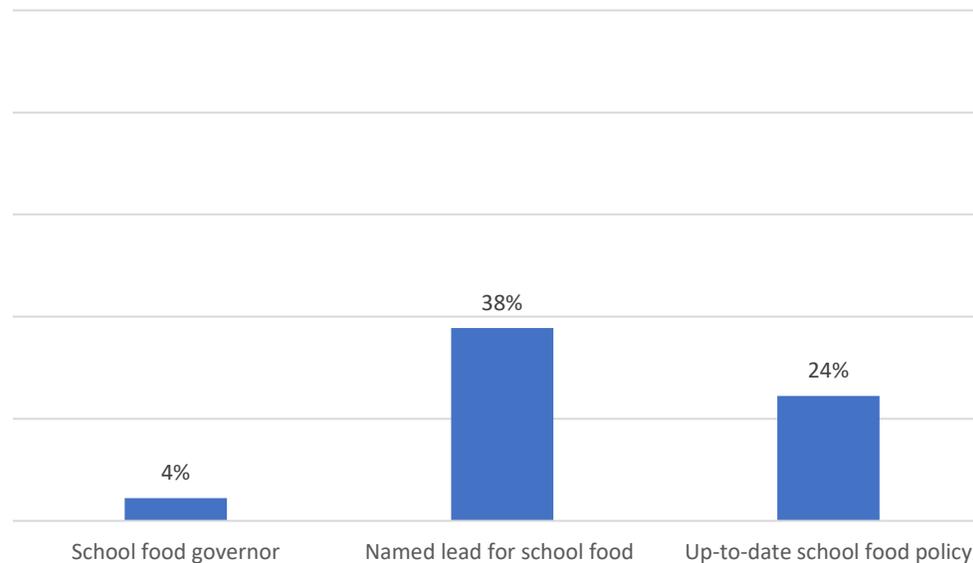
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Statutory requirements around school food

- Schools are obliged to have a named school food governor, and a named member of staff responsible for school food standards compliance. They're also strongly encouraged to have a school food policy.
- Not many Hillingdon primaries reported having a governor, a named member of staff, or an up-to-date food policy – but these are areas that can quickly be improved upon with support to schools.

Compliance with statutory requirements/ guidance





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Dining environment

- The vast majority of Hillingdon primary students are eating their lunch in a purpose-built dining hall, within a 30-minute slot.
- Just four schools used a multi-purpose space or supported children to eat in the classroom (one of these was a SEND school).
- 71% of schools allowed a 15-30 minute slot for children to eat lunch in. (This is quick, but unfortunately not unusual.)



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Equity of access to nutritious food at school

- Almost all mainstream schools (93%) reported providing SEND students with additional support around food. This seems great – the audits will explore what support is being given.
- Few schools, however, (31%) were offering children with cultural or religious dietary restrictions with a daily hot meal option.
- This has important implications for equal access to nutrition, since fewer than 2% of packed lunches meet SFS.
- All but one of the 18 schools using The Pantry reported that they *did* provide a daily hot lunch option for these students, so there may be useful learning here to disseminate amongst other schools and caterers.



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UPFSM

- Currently, all primary-age children in Hillingdon are eligible for free school meals under the Mayor's Universal Primary Free School Meals initiative.
- However, just 35% of schools said that they were actively encouraging families to take up this entitlement.
- This finding links to the question around equity, as research on autoenrollment indicates that take-up among BAMER families and some marginalised groups is disproportionately low.



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Food education

- Cooking is part of the national curriculum for children in KS2. This means that children in maintained schools should be learning about practical cookery and nutrition through the preparation of a variety of (mainly savoury) dishes.
- Around one in three (36%) of Hillingdon primaries are not offering any practical cooking, and even more (47%) are not offering practical gardening.
- There was appetite from schools for support with food education – help with picky eating and teacher training on cooking and gardening were both in the top three responses for desired support.



3. What kind of support do schools want and need?





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Most schools want support to improve

- There was little to no support being provided to schools other than paid-for procurement support (4 schools of the 45).
- Most schools (63%) expressed an interest in support to improve their school food.

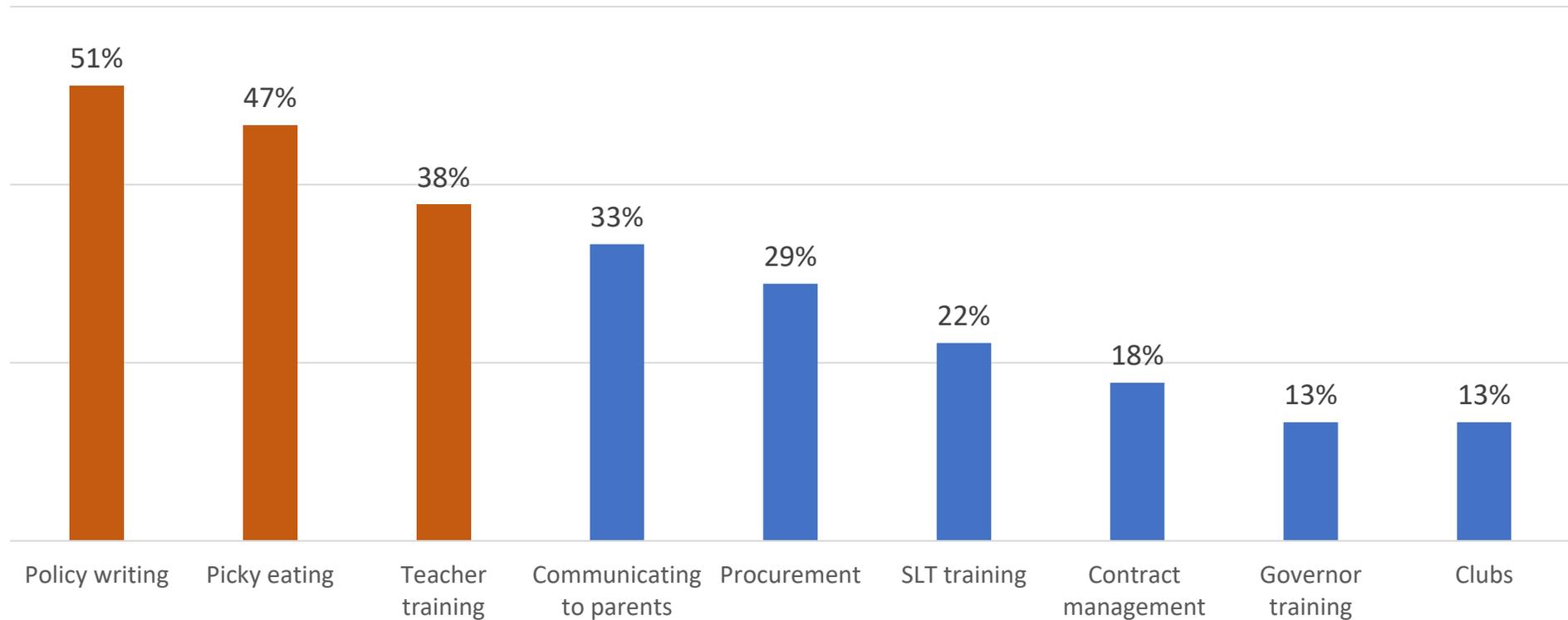


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Schools were clear on what support they wanted

Type of support desired, ranked by popularity





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Other requests

Food ed

“Developing more field to table projects so that children can grow , cook and eat their own food.”

“Supporting families of children with ASC to encourage a wider range of food for their children rather than 'beige food’”

Help with parents

“More parental signposting - healthy options for different cultures”

Help with ops

“It would be interesting to know if the borough could facilitate a group of schools coming together to pool resource and share costs for the operational elements of school food delivery.”



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Zooming in on procurement

- Four schools had paid for support around procurement – this was the most common external support reported in the survey.
- Unsurprisingly, schools with external catering contracts were more interested in support around procurement and contract management.
- Schools with a contract due to expire in the coming year were more interested in support in this area too.
- Schools who didn't know when their contract was up were also more interested in procurement and contract management support.
- Hillingdon has some interesting models for procurement, including school-to-school catering and this can be explored in the audits.



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4. What do we still not know?



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