

## Food for Life Catering Mark in Bristol Secondary Schools

In July 2013, school meals providers ISS Facility services Education achieved the Food for Life Bronze Catering Mark for four secondary schools in Bristol.

The Catering Mark provides an independent endorsement that food providers are taking steps to improve the food they serve, using fresh ingredients which are free from trans fats, harmful additives and GM, and better for animal welfare. Caterers are audited to ensure they meet high standards of provenance and traceability, providing reassurance to customers that meals are freshly prepared using environmentally-sustainable and seasonal ingredients.



Since this accomplishment, all four of the accredited schools have seen an increase in school meal uptake. Most notably, those students eligible for free school meals opting to ditch their packed lunches has risen by an average of 18%.

Whilst ISS Education was already providing over 250 primary schools with Catering Mark accredited lunches, this was the first group of secondary schools which they achieved the accreditation for.

Adapting the secondary service to accommodate the Catering Mark Standards did present some challenges but, with a committed catering team, a strong supply chain and the support of the Soil Association, it was achievable.

Five things to remember when working towards the Bronze Catering Mark in secondary schools:

- 1) At least 75% of the dishes on the menu must be freshly prepared
- 2) All meat must be from farms which satisfy UK welfare standards – including cooked products such as sandwich fillings, meat salad accompaniments and pizza toppings
- 3) Break time items must also meet the Standards, as well as the main lunch offer
- 4) Catering teams must be trained to prepare fresh, seasonal food and understand what it means to be a Food for Life Catering Mark holder
- 5) Food provenance information must be readily available and shared with students regularly

These are all great steps in improving the quality of food served in schools and all were accomplished without raising the meal price or cost to the schools!

The ISS Education catering teams in Bristol have noticed a lot more interest in their school meals since they achieved the Catering Mark. The new accreditation has encouraged students to ask questions about where their food comes from and the cooks have attended student meetings and held discussions around the sourcing and procurement of their ingredients.

To further raise the profile of school meals, one school enjoyed a visit from Celebrity chef, Mark Sargeant, during LACA's National School Meals Week where he showed students just how easy it is to prepare simple, healthy food.