



## **Looking through the eyes of the child to deliver great food**

Morningside Primary School is a two form entry school in Hackney, London with over 400 pupils. We manage our catering service in-house which has given us the flexibility and enabled us to improve the pupil dining experience. Working with our catering adviser, Dominic Green from [Health Education Partnership](#) we have embedded the School Food Plan's philosophy from the start by looking through the eyes of the child, after all the pupils are the customer! We listen to children and ask what we can do to improve the food, no longer governed by restricted supplier lists and contract only food ingredients we are free to use our choice of suppliers and in turn use the freshest ingredients available. When Ben, our new chef was asked for "what works well" he replied. "Making sure the food looks attractive is important, we all know the customer eats with their eyes, a school favourite is my sponge decorated with juicy and colourful blueberries and pomegranate seeds, I have also started to experiment with micro herbs for garnishing and adding the important finishing touches."

A vacant catering manager position originally provided us with the opportunity to totally rethink how we cater for our pupils and raise the bar to create a catering service we can be proud of. Health Education Partnership guided us through the recruitment minefield to find an experienced chef to lead our catering team, finding the right person with experience outside of education was important because we wanted to move away from the institutional school food of years gone by. Finding a trained chef to cater for our pupils has been a success and pupils comment daily on the new taste and colourful appearance of their meals. The pupils are not the only ones to benefit; we can now also offer high end hospitality for our training space now open to other schools in the area.

Over the past few months, there have been changes implemented in the lunch hall. These changes have had a positive effect on the atmosphere and the well-being of children. There has been a salad bar introduced for example which has been well received by pupils and staff alike. Pupils in year five and six take the lead with serving the salad and this has given them a sense of ownership and responsibility. Instrumental and classical music has also been introduced which has had a positive effect on noise levels in the hall and has promoted a sense of order and calm. Children are now given stickers for using their knives and forks correctly and some are rewarded with stickers for finishing all the food on their plate. This positive reinforcement has encouraged children to both understand the importance of completing these tasks and give their utmost to succeeding in these areas.

When asked about their experience of the lunch hall, children imparted various thoughts which conveyed that the dining hall experience was a positive one overall. Here are some of the comments made:

Pupil in year 2

“I love everything. I wouldn’t change anything and I like the new menu”.

Pupil in year 4

“There is a great atmosphere. Music makes the noise calm down. Before the music started it was noisy”.



Pupil in year 5

“I enjoy coming to school because it’s calm in the dinner hall and I like the food”.

Pupil in year 5

“Most of the time I love the food. The music is peaceful and people are helpful. They talk to each other nicely and it’s calm”.

Pupil in year 5

“I like the food because it is so tasty. I wouldn’t change anything”.

We are looking forward to adding some more changes over the next few months. We are going to introduce a ‘special table’ to reward children for their efforts. We are also going

to provide children with a chance to formally apply for a role in the lunch hall. This will be an advertised role which they will have to attend interviews for and undertake a hygiene course as part of their training. This will give children a taste of the world of work, provide



the opportunity to promote their independence and further provide them with a sense of ownership over their dining hall.

The changes we have implemented have made a real difference to life here at the school and it is clear to see that the children are benefiting from their new lunch time experience.

<http://www.morningside.hackney.sch.uk/>