



Free school meals  
for all children  
in poverty



# Food for thought:

A survey of teachers' views on school meals



# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the young people and teachers who shared their stories and experiences for this report. I would also like to thank the ATL and NUT for working with us on this survey and providing their expertise and advice. I am also grateful for the help of staff from The Children's Society's Genesis project and East Cowes children's centre for supporting the young people to contribute. Other staff we would like to thank include Lynne Woolley, Ellen Broome, Sam Royston, Marsha Lowe and Beth Herzfeld.

This report was written by Laura Rodrigues.

# Executive summary

Currently in England, 1.2 million school-age children in poverty are not getting free school meals – 700,000 of them are not even entitled to this key support. The Children’s Society’s Fair and Square campaign is calling for all children in poverty to receive free school meals.<sup>1</sup>

As part of this campaign, we worked with the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and the National Union of Teachers (NUT) to survey 570 teachers<sup>2</sup> about their views on food in schools covering issues of free school meals, the levels of hunger in schools and the quality of school food. We also undertook a nationally representative poll of teachers and spoke directly to some young people<sup>3</sup> who are entitled to free school meals.

## 1. Poverty and hunger in schools

Our survey of teachers provides evidence that in many schools, children are going hungry:

- Nearly three quarters (72%) of teachers surveyed have experienced pupils coming into school with no lunch and no means to pay for one
- Nearly half (44%) of those surveyed found that children are often or very often hungry during the school day
- Two thirds (66%) of the teachers surveyed stated that staff provide pupils with food or money if they come into school hungry.

This evidence highlights the importance of making sure all children in poverty are able to get free school meals. We also undertook a nationally representative poll<sup>4</sup> that found that 98% of teachers believe that free school meals should be available for all children in poverty, including those in working families.

**Recommendation 1: The government should ensure all children in poverty can get free school meals by extending entitlement to all children in families who receive Universal Credit.<sup>5</sup>**

## 2. The quality of food in schools

Evidence from our survey suggests that many teachers feel that in recent years school food has become more nutritious and improved in quality. The school food standards were introduced in 2006 covering all food and drink served at lunchtime and throughout the school day. However, academies and free schools do not currently have to adhere to the school food standards.

- Over half of the teachers (53%) surveyed stated that the standards have led to improvements in the quality of school food.
- The vast majority (93%) of teachers we spoke to, including 90% of teachers in academies and free schools, thought that all schools, including academies and free schools, should have to adhere to the school food standards.

**Recommendation 2: The government should make sure that all schools, including academies and free schools, adhere to the school food standards.**

## 3. Cashless systems, stigma and free school meals

We welcome the fact that in many schools children on free school meals are not easily identifiable which reduces the risk of stigma. However, we are concerned that nearly half of secondary schools do not have cashless systems, meaning those on free school meals may be singled out.

- More than two thirds (70%) of the teachers surveyed from secondary schools said that all schools should have cashless systems for school meals (most primary schools already have cashless systems).

**Recommendation 3: All local authorities and school providers should introduce cashless systems in order to de-stigmatise the receipt of free school meals.**

# Introduction

In England, 1.2 million school children living in poverty currently do not get free school meals. Of these, 700,000 children are not even entitled to this vital support often because they are from poor, working families.

Free school meals are a crucial entitlement as they provide a hot, nutritious meal during the day that can help children stay healthy and learn. It is important that all children in poverty are able to access this support.

The government will shortly be considering changes to the provision of free school meals following the overhaul of the current benefit system and the introduction of Universal Credit.<sup>6</sup> This presents a unique opportunity to ensure that free school meals are available to all children living in poverty.

The Children's Society's Fair and Square campaign<sup>7</sup> is calling for all children in poverty to be able to get free school meals by extending entitlement to all children in families receiving Universal Credit.

In order to get a clear picture of what is happening in school canteens across the country, we worked with ATL and NUT. Together we surveyed 570 of their members to gain a greater understanding of the reality of school meals today.<sup>8</sup> We also asked a nationally representative sample of teachers who they felt should be entitled to free school meals.<sup>9</sup>

We also wanted to hear from pupils about their experiences of receiving free school meals so we held focus groups with young people across the country.<sup>10</sup>

We spoke to teachers and young people about three main issues:

- 1. Hunger in schools:** including concerns about children coming to school hungry, the link this has with growing up in poverty and the portion sizes of school meals.
- 2. The quality of food in schools:** including how healthy school meals are, the effects of eating a school meal and the school food standards.
- 3. Cashless systems, stigma and free school meals:** including how school meals are provided and whether there is stigma attached to receiving free school meals.



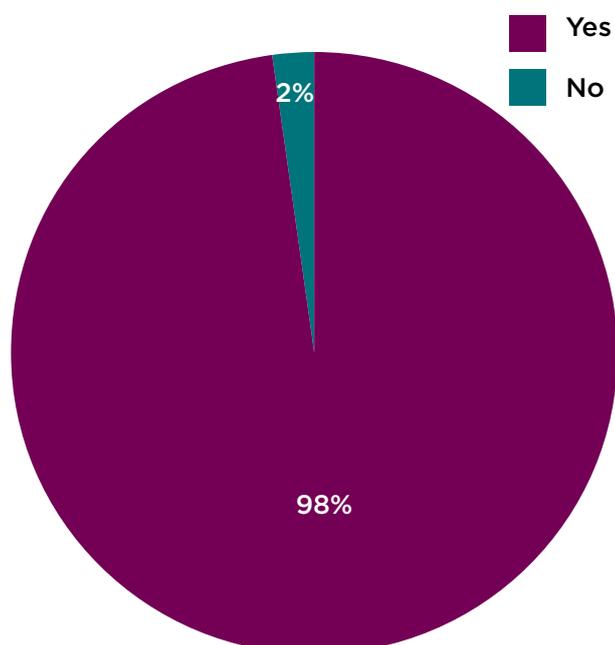
# 1. Poverty and hunger in schools

The Children's Society is very concerned that over half of school children living in poverty in England are not getting free school meals. This is particularly concerning in the context of recent reports about children coming to school hungry. A breakfast-focused survey found that 80% of the teachers surveyed have had pupils arriving at school hungry without having had breakfast.<sup>11</sup> Another survey also found teachers reporting an increase in hunger in schools over the past two years, with 62% stating that general poverty was the reason for this increase.<sup>12</sup>

Our survey of teachers also examined issues of hunger in schools, including whether teachers were concerned about levels of hunger among their pupils, and the portion sizes of meals provided in their school.

Teachers support for Fair and Square  
There is widespread support amongst teachers for allowing children in low income working families to have free school meals. The nationally representative poll, conducted by GFK NOP on behalf of The Children's Society earlier this year, found that more than 98% of teachers believe that free school meals should be available to all children in poverty, including those in working families.

**Figure 1: Percentage of teachers who think that free school meals should be available to all children in poverty**



Base: UK, 500 respondents, 6 Feb 2012

## Young people on the importance of free school meals

The young people were very aware of the financial importance of free school meals for their families:

- One young person outlined the difficulties parents can face: *'Working, paying bills, then having to pay for schools meals'*. She outlined how parents can struggle to provide food at home and clothes for their children as well as having to pay rent and household bills.
- Another young person said that if they did not receive free school meals their families would face difficulties because *'if you ran out of milk... you wouldn't have the money to replace it'*.
- For the young people, free school meals are helpful as they allow the family to budget for necessary items. As one young person said: *'if you need to get new school uniform your parents can afford it'*.

## Hunger in schools

Many of the teachers surveyed were concerned about their pupils' diet at home, especially in families living in poverty:

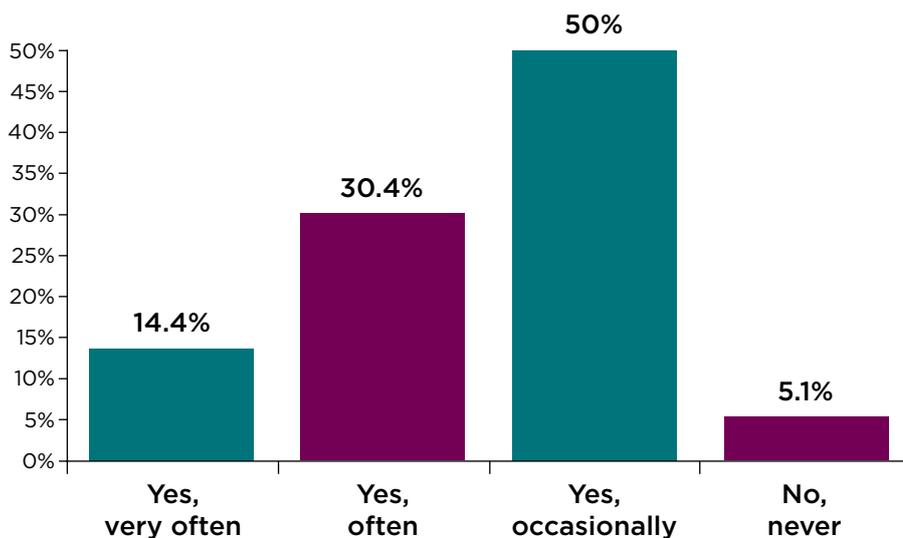
*'I teach in a deprived area and some families find it difficult to provide healthy but cheap food for their children.'*

*'Many of our learners would most probably not get a hot meal at home.'*

*'One of our main aims at our school is to improve children's diets. But it is very difficult when at home no-one eats healthily.'*

Forty-four per cent of teachers told us that they often or very often found children hungry during the school day and only 5% said they never found children to be hungry in school hours.

**Figure 2: Percentage of teachers who have found children going hungry during school**



Teacher survey, question 11, 526 responses

For some teachers we surveyed these were just normal levels of hunger as one put it, *'teenage boys are always hungry'*. However, some of the teachers were very concerned about pupils coming in hungry having not had breakfast and felt that this was linked to poverty at home:

*'For some I feel that they are so hungry they eat everything [at school] as this may be their main meal of the day.'*

*'We all know how hungry some children [are when they] come to school and in what poverty they live.'*

*'They come to school and have not had breakfast. They take toast that they have not paid for because they are so hungry.'*

The teachers were asked what happens at their school if a pupil comes in hungry. Two thirds stated that staff will give them food or money on these occasions.<sup>13</sup> These findings broadly reflect a Guardian survey, in which nearly half of the teachers surveyed said that they had taken in food for their pupils.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the teachers we surveyed said:

*'I personally feed hungry children as I cannot bear the fact that they are hungry.'*

*'Myself and many teachers in other schools feed children with bread or crackers in the morning from their own budget.'*

*'My colleagues and I have and do discreetly provide food or dinner money where possible/appropriate.'*

Some teachers also highlighted the importance of the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme<sup>15</sup> which means all children in Key Stage one (four to six year olds) in state-funded schools are eligible for free fruit. Some staff in primary schools said that when children were hungry they were given some of the leftover fruit. As one teacher put it: *'the free fruit scheme comes to the rescue'*.

Similar to the above findings about hunger in schools, our survey also found that 72% of teachers surveyed have experienced pupils coming to school with no lunch and no means to pay for one.<sup>16</sup> Many teachers felt that this occurred mainly due to parents being unable to afford a proper lunch for their child:

*'I see a significant number of pupils who do not have a mid-day meal because they have no money.'*

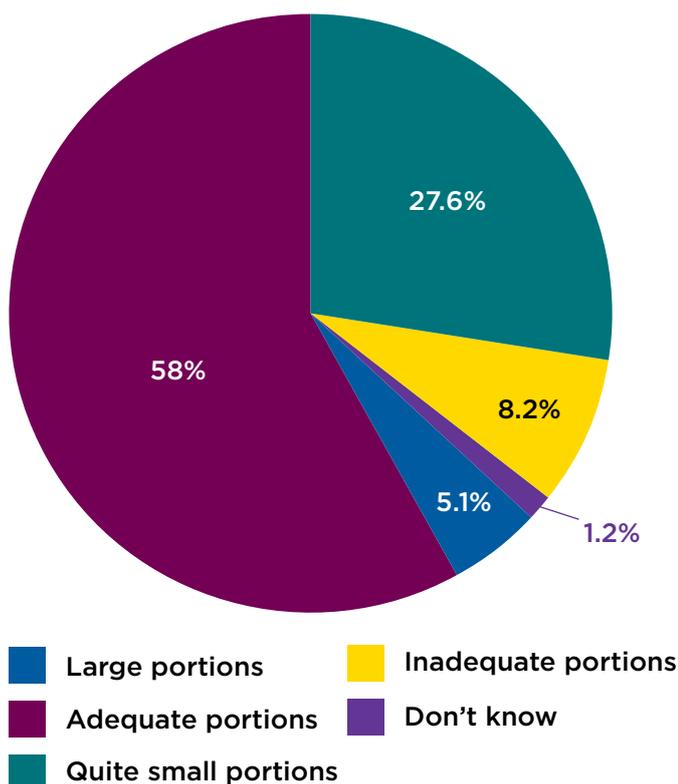
*'I am aware that some pupils do not have food for breakfast/packed lunches, and who survive on their evening meal.'*

'Last month [I] found two girls sat on [the] toilet floor sharing one's packed lunch because other [girl] had no lunch money.'

One teacher said that this rarely happens because at their school; *'the majority (of pupils) are in receipt of free school meals'*. This highlights the importance of eligibility for free school meals for children in more deprived areas.

Another issue raised in this survey is the portion size of the meals provided. Fifty-eight per cent of the teachers surveyed felt that lunches at their school are an adequate size with one teacher noting they are *'just the right size'*. However, nearly one-third thought that the portions at their school were either quite small or inadequate.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 3: Teachers views on the portion sizes of school meals**



Teacher survey, question 6, 533 responses

### Young people's views on portion sizes

All of the young people we spoke to said that their free school meal allowances only cover a main meal and either a drink or a pudding option, but not both. The free school meal allowance also does not cover any food or snack at break time. In one of the schools the young people said they have to wait until 1.30pm for lunch. One boy said that this made him *'get fidgety and rude'* because he was hungry.

Some of the teachers surveyed worried that the small portion sizes may leave some already deprived children hungry:

'Working in a deprived school, a school dinner is often the only cooked food children eat. They are often given not much more than a teaspoon of rice [or] cous cous and... only one or two cubes of meat.'

'Children are often hungry in the afternoon when they have eaten a school meal.'

Many teachers were also concerned that the portion sizes were not always suitable for older children:

'As I'm in a primary school, the size of the child varies tremendously! For the reception children the portion size is often too large, for years one-four it's fairly reasonable but I know that many year five and six leave the table still hungry.'

'The older, bigger students receive the same size meal as the younger, smaller students!'

### Key findings

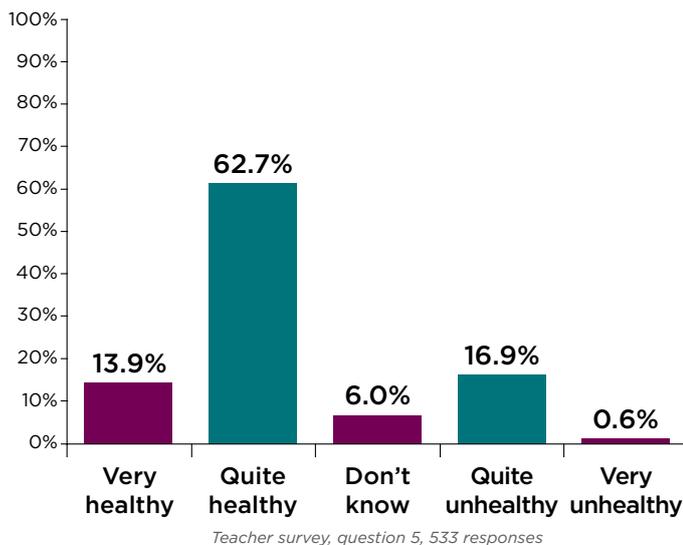
Our survey of teachers provides evidence that in many schools children are going hungry. This ranges from children having no lunch and no means to pay for one, to children not having any breakfast or only a small dinner as that is all the family can afford. This highlights the importance of making sure all children in poverty are able to get free school meals, as called for as part of our Fair and Square campaign.

## 2. The quality of food in schools

The quality of the food served in schools across the country has been the subject of debate for the past few years. Research has shown that healthy school food can have a significantly positive impact on concentration and alertness in the classroom.<sup>18</sup> Our survey explored teachers' views on the quality of the food provided in their schools and whether they had seen any improvements since the introduction of the school food standards in 2006.

The vast majority (77%) of the teachers surveyed felt the meals provided at their school were healthy, with 63% finding them quite healthy and 14% finding them very healthy.

**Figure 4: Teachers views on the quality of school meals**



Some of the teachers described their healthy school meals and the good practice at their schools:

'We have really great, delicious food with a range of at least five options every day.'

'The catering service runs a healthy eating competition where the pupils who have made the healthiest choices win a voucher.'

'Our cook works extremely hard to develop interesting meals that are low in fat. We also grow a lot of produce that our children eat.'

However, some teachers were less impressed with the nutritional value and quality of the food at their schools, with 17% considering their school food to be quite unhealthy. Another issue was that, though there were healthy options, children were mainly choosing the more unhealthy meals:

'Food available is healthy but children combine it in an unhealthy way.'

'Not many fruit and vegetables included in the cooked and fresh meals.'

'Chips are on menu too often. Meals are chicken nuggets and chips, fish fingers and chips, burgers and chips.'

### Young people's views on the quality of their school food

The young people we spoke to had mixed views on the food in their various schools:

- A boy at a primary school said about his school meals: *'I like them because they are tasty'*.
- Other young people at a secondary school said that they liked that their school had food from different countries, like jerk chicken and lasagne. However, these young people did not think the quality of the food at their school was great.
- One teenage girl said that her school meals were simply *'bearable'*.

## Packed lunches

A recent study found that more than a quarter of children entitled to free school meals take packed lunches instead because they fear being stigmatised.<sup>19</sup> However, many of the teachers we surveyed had concerns about the general quality of the packed lunches their pupils bring into school. Over 40% of teachers thought that packed lunches were unhealthy, echoing other recent research that has shown that only 1% of packed lunches meet the nutritional standards set for school lunches.<sup>20</sup> Many teachers commented that the quality of packed lunches varied:

'It is obviously mixed, but on the whole, most things are pre-packaged. As a parent as well as a teacher, I know how hard it is, but at school we often see packed lunches where most of the packed lunch is made up of what I would call treats.'

'10% or less are healthy, 50% unhealthy, 40% absolutely shocking, consisting ONLY of sugar, salt, dairy, fat.'

'I have seen a child with a packet of Haribo sweets for his lunch – we had to arrange for the child to have a sandwich. This is not an isolated case.'

## The impact of having a healthy lunch

Many of the teachers surveyed have found that a healthy school lunch has a significantly positive impact on pupils, with 72% stating that it can improve concentration and behaviour. 18% of the teachers surveyed said a healthy lunch can also improve educational attainment. Only 5% stated that it has no impact at all.

Research by the School Food Trust has also shown that improving the nutritional quality of food provided at lunchtime and the environment can have a positive impact on children's learning-related behaviour in the classroom.<sup>21</sup>

Some of the teachers surveyed outlined the impact that a healthy lunch can have:

'Filling, healthy meals seem to affect alertness...'

'Concentration and behaviour are poor if children do not eat enough or have too many sugary foods. This, in turn, seems to effect attainment.'

'If you have students asking when lunch is and watching the clock because they are hungry how can they focus on their learning?'

## The school food standards

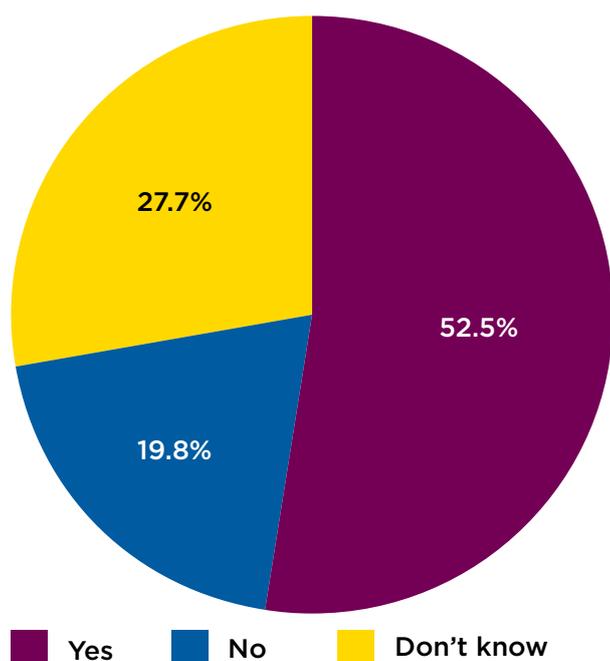
In May 2006, the government announced new standards for school food covering all food sold or served in schools including at breakfast, break times, lunch and in tuck shops, vending machines and after school clubs. These school food standards were phased in to all local authority maintained schools between 2006 and 2009.

Notably, these mandatory school food standards do not apply to academies or free schools. These schools are instead expected to comply with the terms set out in their funding agreements, which vary from academy to academy and do not have to stipulate adherence to the school food standards.

The school food standards include both nutrient-based and food-based standards.<sup>22</sup> The food based standards outline that certain types of unhealthy food are not allowed such as crisps and that certain foods like fruit and vegetables are always provided. The nutrient-based standards aim to make food healthier by increasing the amount of vitamins and minerals while reducing the fat and salt content.

Our survey asked whether the teachers thought that the quality of the meals provided at their school had improved as a result of the introduction of the school food standards. The majority of the teachers (53%) stated that the standards have led to improvements.

**Figure 5: Teachers views on whether the introduction of nutritional standards in 2006 has improved food at their school**



Teacher survey, question 5, 533 responses

Many teachers commented on improvements and some also stated that the banning of certain types of foods has had a positive impact:

'Significantly better and more varied.'

'Food looks and smells much more appetising, greater variety – jacket potatoes, chips only once a week instead of every day.'

'The school had got rid of all vending machines and banned crisps and 'snacks'... Staff commented on how much better afternoon behaviour was since the children (11–18) stopped snacking and consuming all the e-numbers.'

'Since sweets and fizzy drinks were removed from the menu, the [pupils'] behaviour and concentration has improved.'

As part of our Fair and Square campaign, The Children's Society is supporting the Save our School (SOS) Food Standards campaign<sup>23</sup> calling for all academies and free schools to adhere to the school food standards.

Our survey found that 90% of teachers in academies and free schools agreed that their schools should have to adhere to the school food standards, while 93% of all teachers surveyed supported this.

Some teachers in academies and free schools detailed how food standards have declined as a result of becoming academies:

'Standards have slipped since moving from a local authority school to an academy! Seems to be more profit making now.'

'Following conversion to academy status a cheaper provider has been appointed and the quality of food has deteriorated massively. Both staff and students have stopped buying the main meal as it is awful.'

This echoes School Food Trust research,<sup>24</sup> which found that although some academies are providing healthy food and choosing to follow the nutritional standards, many others are not. This research found evidence of academies selling unhealthy food and drink that have been banned under the standards.

Moreover, it is not only teachers who support extending the school food standards to academies; a recent survey by the Local Authority Catering Association found that 92% of the parents polled wanted all schools to abide by the standards.<sup>25</sup>

## Key findings

The evidence from our survey suggests that many teachers feel that in recent years, school food has become more nutritious and better quality particularly when compared to packed lunches. The majority of teachers surveyed thought that school food has improved as a result of the introduction of the school food standards in 2006. However, some teachers are concerned about the food provided in their schools and the vast majority of the teachers surveyed feel academies and free schools should have to adhere to the school food standards.

# 3. Cashless systems, stigma and free school meals

Our Fair and Square report found that 300,000 of the 1.3 million children registered for free school meals are not taking them up on any particular day.<sup>26</sup> Some of the parents we surveyed for the Fair and Square report<sup>27</sup> were concerned about the stigma attached to free school meals. These parents were concerned that in schools where children on free school meals are easily identifiable, their children could be bullied.

Our survey asked teachers whether they had seen or heard of children being teased or bullied as a result of getting free school meals. Some teachers said:

*'In a previous location [school] FSM [free school meals] children did receive a packed lunch from a neighbouring primary school. There was a stigma attached to this.'*

*'Persistently, throughout my whole teaching career [I] have seen bullying associated with free school meals] – no matter how subtle and tactful the school tried to be.'*

Previous research on this issue, found that where pupils entitled to free school meals have to identify themselves to dinner staff through either giving their names or producing tokens, this has been a source of embarrassment and has led to lower take-up of free school meals.<sup>28</sup>

Some teachers we surveyed detailed how in their schools the system of payment for school meals means that pupils receiving them are easily identifiable:

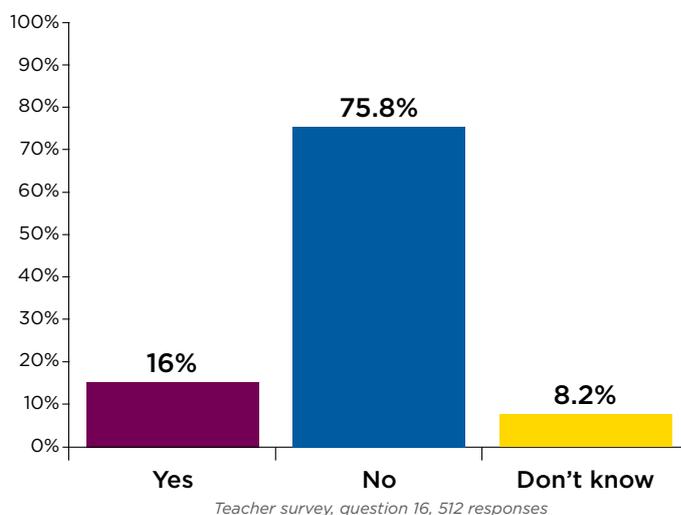
*'FSM [free school meals] pupils queue daily for tickets (during break-time) and use the tickets to pay for lunches at the till.'*

*'Food is served on a tray with different sections rather than on individual plates for pupils who pay.'*

The stigma associated with free school meals is not widespread mainly due to the increase in cashless systems, meaning that those on free school meals are not easily identifiable. As a result our evidence on stigma is not conclusive as the majority of teachers surveyed were in schools using cashless systems and so had not seen any bullying associated with free school meals.

In our survey of teachers, 76% said that at their school, pupils on free school meals were not identified.

**Figure 6: Percentage of teachers who felt that the pupils on free school schools at their school were easily identifiable**



In primary schools, over 80% of the teachers surveyed stated that pupils do not know who receives them, because in most primary schools payment for free school meals is arranged between parents and schools.

In secondary schools, payment systems are more varied. As a result, more of the secondary school teachers (23%) than primary school teachers (12%) said that pupils entitled to free school meals were easily identified. Currently around half of

secondary schools use cashless systems ensuring that pupils who receive free school meals cannot be identified.<sup>29</sup>

### Young people's views on stigma associated with free school meals

All of the young people we spoke to were in schools where pupils on free school meals were not identifiable. In the secondary schools they had cashless systems where cards are automatically updated for those receiving free school meals and in the primary schools payment was arranged between parents and the school. They did not think stigma or bullying associated with free school meals was an issue in their schools.

Many teachers supported the use of cashless systems as a way of ensuring pupils on free school meals were not identified and therefore not stigmatised:

'No one knows who is on free school meals as their cards are topped up. They have the same swipe card as anyone else.'

'Cashless is good if children cannot be identified by peers as having free school meals.'

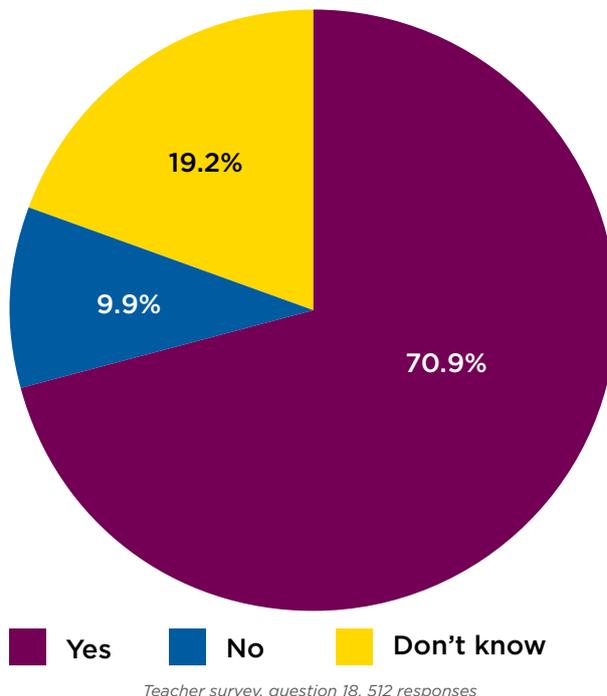
'As a child I had FSM [free school meals] for a while but refused to continue... because it was humiliating queuing up for the 'free' ticket, so I think it's really important not to stigmatise the FSM children.'

### Key findings

We welcome that currently in many schools children on free school meals are not easily identifiable, reducing the risk of stigma. However, we are concerned that nearly half of secondary schools do not have cashless systems when pupils get their meals, so those on free school meals could be singled out bringing a higher risk of stigma and bullying.

The majority (71%) of the teachers surveyed from secondary schools agreed that all schools should have cashless systems for school meals.

Figure 7: Percentage of teachers who felt that all schools should have cashless systems for school meals



# Conclusion and recommendations

Shockingly, only around half of the school children living in poverty in England are receiving free school meals. 1.2 million are missing out on this vital support, with 700,000 children not even entitled to it because their parents are working.

Our report shows there is overwhelming support amongst teachers for changing this, as 98% of teachers in a nationally representative poll believe that free school meals should be available for all children in poverty, including those in working families.

This report also presents compelling evidence that in many schools across the country children are going hungry, with two-thirds of the teachers surveyed stating that staff will provide pupils with food or money if they come into school hungry. We are concerned that those children living in poverty and not getting free school meals could be going without food. In a previous survey, one parent<sup>30</sup> told us that her:

*'Child liked the meals when he was entitled to them. Now he just has a bread roll if I don't have the full money.'*

The Children's Society's Fair and Square campaign is calling for all children in poverty to receive free school meals.<sup>31</sup> With the government introducing the new Universal Credit benefit system in October 2013, the criteria for who is entitled to free school meals is changing. This presents a once in a generation opportunity to ensure that those children in families who are working on a low income are also able to benefit from free school meals.

**Recommendation 1: The government should ensure all children in poverty can get free school meals by extending entitlement to all children in families who receive Universal Credit.**<sup>32</sup>

The report also provides evidence that many teachers have seen better quality school food since the introduction of the mandatory standards in 2006, with over half the teachers surveyed stating that there have been improvements.

Our concern is that the growing numbers of academies and free schools are not bound by the school food standards and can serve food and drinks that are banned in other schools. The overwhelming majority of the teachers we surveyed, even those in academies, believed that all schools should have to adhere to the standards.

**Recommendation 2: The government should make sure that all schools, including academies and free schools, adhere to the school food standards.**

The vast majority of schools in this country have cashless systems so that children on free school meals are not easily identifiable, reducing the risk of stigma. Research has found that where pupils on free school meals had to identify themselves by producing tokens, this caused embarrassment and led to lower take-up of free school meals.<sup>33</sup>

We are concerned that nearly half of all secondary schools still do not have cashless systems and that, in these schools, those on free school meals are at risk of being singled out and bullied. More than two thirds of the teachers surveyed from secondary schools said that all schools should have cashless systems for school meals.

**Recommendation 3: All local authorities and school providers should introduce cashless systems in order to de-stigmatise the receipt of free school meals.**

# Endnotes

1. For more information: [www.childrenssociety.org.uk/fairandsquare](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/fairandsquare)
2. The survey of 570 teachers (all of whom were members of NUT and ATL) and school support staff (members of ATL).
3. We spoke to 13 young people in two focus groups. The young people were all receiving free school meals and are involved with Children's Society projects and children's centres.
4. Poll conducted by GFK NOP on 6 February 2012 for The Children's Society, base respondents 500, UK wide
5. For more information on our Fair and Square campaign asks: [www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/fair\\_and\\_square\\_campaign\\_report.pdf](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/fair_and_square_campaign_report.pdf)
6. The new benefit system Universal Credit will be introduced from October 2013. As a result, the criteria under which children qualify for free school meals will also have to change.
7. For more information: [www.childrenssociety.org.uk/fairandsquare](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/fairandsquare)
8. The survey of 570 teachers (all of whom were members of NUT and ATL) and school support staff (members of ATL).
9. Nationally representative poll conducted by GFK NOP on behalf of The Children's Society. UK, 500 respondents, 6th February 2012
10. We spoke to 13 young people in two focus groups. The young people were all receiving free school meals and are involved with Children's Society projects and children's centres.
11. BBC News (2012) Parents 'failing to give children breakfast'. Available: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-19951590](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-19951590) (Accessed 5 November 2012)
12. 49% of teachers surveyed in the Guardian teacher network survey said that they had taken in food for their pupils and 62% stated that general poverty was the cause of the issue of hunger in schools. Guardian (2012) Pupil hunger: nearly half of teachers have taken food in for their pupil. Available: [www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2012/jun/19/pupil-hunger-survey-result](http://www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2012/jun/19/pupil-hunger-survey-result) (Accessed 5 November 2012)
13. 51% of teachers surveyed said that staff provide them food and 15% said that staff give them money
14. 49% of teachers surveyed in the Guardian teacher network survey said that they had taken in food for their pupils and 62% stated that general poverty was the cause of the issue of hunger in schools. Guardian (2012) Pupil hunger: nearly half of teachers have taken food in for their pupil. Available: [www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2012/jun/19/pupil-hunger-survey-result](http://www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2012/jun/19/pupil-hunger-survey-result) (Accessed 5 November 2012)
15. For more information: [www.nhs.uk/Livewell/5ADAY/Pages/Schoolscheme.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/5ADAY/Pages/Schoolscheme.aspx)
16. 19% of teachers surveyed said that pupils come in with no lunch and no means to pay for lunch often/very often and 54% said that this happens occasionally.
17. 25% thought the portion size of lunches at their school were quite small and 5% thought they were inadequate.
18. Golley et al. School lunch and learning behaviour in primary schools: an intervention study. (2010). *Eur J Clin Nutr.* 2010; 64(11); 1280-8.
19. Holford, A (2012) Take-up of Free School Meals: price effects and peer effects. Institute for Social and Economic Research: working paper series 2012.
20. BBC News (2010) Healthy Lunch Boxes a Rarity. Available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8451828.stm> (Accessed 5 Nov, 2012)
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## How you can help

We want the government to change the criteria for free school meals so all children in poverty can get them. The government is much more likely to listen if they understand how many people think the situation is unfair and should change.

Taking part is easy – it can take as little as five minutes. If thousands of us all do something small, that could add up to a big change for our poorest school children.

- Sign up to support the campaign and find materials and ideas by visiting **[www.childrensociety.org.uk/fairandsquare](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/fairandsquare)**
- Join our Facebook group – **[www.facebook.com/childrensociety](http://www.facebook.com/childrensociety)**
- Then share information about the campaign with friends and family on Facebook, asking them to sign up too
- Spread the word on Twitter. Use #FairandSquare and ask your followers to sign up and follow us **@childrensociety** or **@childsocpol**
- If you are a company, organisation or society and would like to support the campaign, contact us on **[campaigns@childrensociety.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@childrensociety.org.uk)**

**Every action counts. Thank you.**

## The Children's Society

The Children's Society wants to create a world where all children and young people are respected, valued and heard. We believe that childhood should be happy and that young people deserve to reach their full potential.

That's why we work hard to transform the lives of over 48,000 children and young people in England each year.

Our priority is children who have nowhere else to turn. We protect young runaways from the dangers of life on the street. We give disabled children a voice and more control over their lives. Our work helps young refugees start afresh in new communities, and gives young carers time and energy to enjoy their childhood.

With over 75 programmes and children's centres throughout England, we offer care, respite, legal support and mentoring schemes that help turn lives around.

Through our campaigns and research, we seek to influence policy and perceptions at all levels so young people have a better chance in life.

To find out more about what we do visit  
[www.childrensociety.org.uk](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk)



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**A better childhood. For every child.**