

## Catering Management

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“By wasting less food, we can combat climate change”.

Liz Goodwin

The DfE's [Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy](#), a strategy for the education and children's services systems, aims to embed sustainability across the organisation and within schools. Provision of school meals forms a significant element in the operation and supply chains strand of the strategy. In support of this, School Food Standards will be updated to include the impact of food emissions on the environment.

In the meantime, there are many ways to reduce the impact of the food we prepare and serve in our schools. Think about your food waste in three different strands - production waste, plate waste and counter waste. At each stage there might be strategies you could employ to reduce food waste.

### Change the menu

- **Better Meal Planning**  
Accurately predicting meal demand and planning can help reduce overproduction and waste. Can primary school students order in advance? Menu planning to avoid production waste can reduce overall food waste and reduce energy requirements to cook and serve food.
- **Source food sustainably and ethically**  
Are menus created with seasonal and locally sourced ingredients in mind?
- **Portion Control**  
Providing appropriate portion sizes can help reduce food waste and promote healthy eating habits. Are staff trained in using the proper serving utensils and understand the food volume they should serve? Are pupils encouraged to take only what they need? Are they encouraged to try before they take when new foods are offered? This can help avoid unnecessary plate waste.
- **Ugly / Wonky veg**  
Usually cheaper to buy and, once prepared, no different from prettier versions.
- **Understand the global impact**  
Do those planning menus understand the impact of agriculture worldwide? For example, the impact of avocados on water scarcity and deforestation.

### Waste reduction

- **Sort your waste**  
Ensure waste is disposed of correctly in line with local arrangements and legislation. Do staff understand the importance of sorting waste?
- **Weigh your waste**  
Weighing both production and plate waste can identify trends, helping you refine menu planning to avoid unnecessary waste and implement initiatives to prevent plate waste. Getting pupils involved in this can dramatically impact plate waste reduction. You could record food waste using the Food waste calculator or survey pupils using the pupil survey.
- **Donation Programmes**

Donating excess food (counter waste) to local charities and food banks can help reduce food waste while supporting the local community. Reduce counter waste in secondary schools by offering it at a discounted price at the end of the school day.

- **Ditch the disposables**

Eliminating single-use plastics from service can significantly reduce the generated waste. For example, pump dispensers could be used for condiments instead of plastic sachets. Encouraging re-fillable water bottles and providing refill stations can eliminate single-use plastic bottles. Aluminium cans are much better than plastic bottles, where soft drink sales are required. Compostable packaging is readily available, although education surrounding disposal may be required.

## Power and water usage

- **Kitchen setup**

Investment in energy-efficient appliances will reduce energy consumption and costs.

- **Active labelling**

Ensure kitchen appliances are labelled like the rest of the school. So staff are clear about what must be switched off.

- **Check the positioning of appliances**

Make sure the temperatures of cooking appliances are not increasing the workload of fridges and freezers.

- **Keep things clean**

Clean appliances don't have to work as hard as those with residue or ice build-up.

- **Keep things well maintained**

This ensures appliances run as efficiently as possible.

- **Think about energy efficiency**

Energy-efficient appliances use less energy. Models can be compared using Energy Star.

- **Washing up**

Dishwashers and washing machines use the same amount of water for 1 or 2 items as they do for a full load.

## Collaboration

- **Suppliers**

Engaging with suppliers to ensure your vision for sustainable catering is shared will improve outcomes. They might also have some great ideas that have worked in their other settings.

- **Pupils**

Feedback on menus, portion sizes, and eating arrangements may offer insights into food waste trends you notice. Involving pupils in plate waste monitoring may help increase pupil awareness of the issue.

- **Teachers**

Encouraging teachers and catering staff to work together on food technology projects may utilise their experience and skills and encourage positive relationships.

- **Families**

- Featuring school meals at parent consultation evenings, open days, and school events may help raise the profile of your sustainable catering efforts, building trust and confidence in the wider school community.

## Additional guidance and resources

- <https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/catering/green-kitchen-standard>
- <https://proveg.com/uk/>
- <https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/food-waste-schools>
- <https://www.kings-foundation.org/education/farm-to-fork/school-day-visit#:~:text=Our%20day%20visit%20programme%20for,%2C%20turkeys%2C%20hens%20and%20pigs.>
- [Food waste calculator](#)