

Radleys Lunchtime Observation.

Walsall Local Programme team, visited Radleys Primary School on 2/2/23 to gather a snapshot of lunchtime. Lunches are provided and cooked in-house. Radleys have achieved their Bronze Food for Life award and are quickly working towards Silver. The school has embedded Food for Life into their school life. We spoke to the catering team, staff supervising lunchtime, Vicky Hollender Family Support, and children from Reception age up to year 6.

Atmosphere. Lunch at Radleys Primary school is held in the school hall, which is well-lit and bright with colourful, artwork displayed on the walls. The lunchroom smells of homecooked roast dinner which is both pleasant and appetising. Food was displayed attractively at an appropriate height for children to make their choices. The room is full of children chatting as they eat but is not too loud that they are unable to hear each other. The room feels friendly, lively, and well-organised. The school have tried music in the lunchroom but found it made the children talk louder and lunchtime too noisy. This has been similar in other schools in Walsall.

Layout



Photos of lunchroom

There are 10 tables in the lunchroom: 5 larger size tables seating 12, 5 smaller size tables seating 16. Lunchtime is well organised, and the children know the routine well. Each year group has their own tables where they sit when they enter the room. Children that have school lunches and children that bring packed lunches all sit together. There is no distinction between FSM children and others. Each year group goes up individually to queue for food at the serving hatch, the order is rotated. The children sit and chat with their friends whilst waiting. The lunchroom is full but still spacious with plenty of room to move about.

There are 3 sessions at lunch: nursery first sit and eat their packed lunches or school meals. This is followed by 2 sessions for the remaining children.

Social interactions

The nursery children sit with their teacher at the table and chat whilst they are eating. The nursery teacher collects the lunches for the children and brings to the table. Lunchtime is calm. The staff are friendly chatting with pupils. The older children chat with their friends whilst they eat lunch and there is a nice sociable atmosphere.

Support for Healthy and Sustainable diets

There are posters on display about healthy eating and a display showing where the food is sourced from.



Image showing display in lunchroom showing food provenance.

Pupils are supervised at lunchtime by school staff, who take it in turns to cover lunchtime. This works well and the staff all know the children by name. The staff are very interactive with the pupils, and each have an area of the lunchroom they look after. Staff walk around the room and chat with the children, assisting where needed with cutting food, prompting to use cutlery, checking that children are eating. Year 6 helpers also assist the younger children at lunchtime with tasks including opening foods in packed lunches, encouraging children to eat, encouraging good manners. Helpers also assist with wiping tables and sweeping the floor. The children's independence is encouraged, and children clean up small spillages themselves.

As the children are choosing a set meal which is well-balanced all the food available is healthy. There are no signs identifying the food available, but the staff tell the children about the choices whilst they are queuing.

Food

The food served matches the menu and looks fresh and appealing. The vegetables are vibrant in colour. The children all have the set roast pork dinner or the veggie alternative with mash, veg, bread, some do opt for no gravy. All plates have vegetables on and the children are eating them. The children that are having school lunches are enjoying them. Radleys usually have a salad bar at lunchtime but not on roast dinner day when there are 3 hot vegetables served.



Photos of lunchtime service

Eating and drinking

Most children are eating the whole meal. Some plates do have some mash with peas or cabbage left over. The portions are quite generous. Drinking water is freely available in brightly coloured jugs and cups. Staff and lunchtime

helpers serve water for the younger children. Most children have pudding; these are collected after the main course has been eaten. Yogurt was a popular choice. Children show the staff / helpers their plates before throwing away any food. If they haven't eaten much they are encouraged to eat some more.

Caterers and kitchen

The catering team are busy but are smiley and friendly with the children. They know all the children by name and are happy to answer their questions e.g., "what is rhubarb?".

Many of the staff also enjoy lunch at school, especially on a roast dinner day. These are eaten in the staff room.

The reception teacher explained that for many of the children when they start school are unable to sit and eat a roast dinner as they are not used to sitting at a table or using a knife and fork. Their skills are still improving.

Packed Lunches

Packed lunches contain lots of ultra-processed foods: crisps, cake bars, biscuits, frubes. Since school lunches have got healthier more children are bringing a packed lunch. Nursery age children bring in a whole bag of crisps and eat them as part of lunch. School is looking to address this.

Quotes from children about lunchtime

"Yummy, yummy in my tummy" (Reception pupil).

"My mash was yummy" (reception pupil)

"We love to help reception with mealtime. This little girl has the best manners; I'm going to nominate her for an award" (year 6 helper).

"We have the menus on the wall, and we know what the choices for lunch are going to be" (Year 6 pupil).

Quote about growing

"We had a competition growing potatoes. We all grew potatoes in our classes all around school. We were the winner of the wonkiest potato. It was fun!" (Year 4 pupils).