

Keeping up with the Kitchen

Welcome to our newsletter!

Sit back on this rocky road (see what we did there!), as we discuss the well-debated topic of school dinners!

What Impact do School Lunches have on Students?

According to [Alliance in Partnership](#) students have better concentration and show improved behaviour after a nutritious lunch. It also states that having healthier meals more widely available, meant that there was a 10% reduction in absenteeism from sickness.



Free school meals

The students who are eligible for free school meals are given the fuel they need to reach their full potential.



Academic outcomes

There is [growing evidence](#) that school meals promote better academic outcomes and this is typically greater in students from low income families.



What are the positives of school lunches at TGA?

First of all, you can get free school meals if it is unaffordable at home. This comes after the UK Government funds lots of money to ensure that no student goes hungry. In 2023, the Government spent [£1.4 billion](#) on free school meals during term-time. Across The Gainsborough Academy, no student has to miss out on having a balanced meal during the school day because of this policy.

The frequency of meals available at the school is also a positive. Within the school day, lunch is provided twice a day - three if there are breakfast options before school times start!

Recently, the price of school meals has increased to £2.50, but this isn't necessarily a problem. Considering the cost of living crisis, the increase in employer national insurance contributions and the other financial difficulties the UK has faced since 2020 (when [the average cost of school meals was £2.24](#)). Plus, Taylor Shaw, the school meals provider for The Gainsborough Academy, also froze the price for healthy foods, meaning that healthy foods like fruit, salads and vegetables are still accessible for all students.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

What could be improved about school meals at TGA?

We caught up with Y7 student, Mayah, to see what her opinions were of school meals. Here's what she said:

Q1: What are your opinions on portion sizes of school lunches?

A: "Some days it's enough to keep you full but some days it's not enough".

Q2: Do you think anything can be improved?

A: "More money given on your account in case people are still hungry at second break."

Q3: Do you think you get enough with free school meals some days?

A: Some days.

Q4: Do you think there is anything you would change in the portion for hot meals?

A: "The portion for most of the hot meals."

Student Voice

By listening to student voice, there are a few suggestions that could improve school meals for students of The Gainsborough Academy:

- Bigger portion sizes to keep students fuller for longer and give students the brain power they need to get the most out of their learning
- Freeze the price on all school meals to ensure that they remain affordable for most families
- Provide healthier options for students so that they are like to get a balanced meal during school times
- Cater to a range of allergies / dietary restrictions

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Let's wrap it up...

Overall, we have found that school meals have a generally positive impact on students. However healthier options improve outcomes more than processed foods. Healthy school meals not only impact academic outcomes but also behaviour and attendance.

The Gainsborough Academy tries to ensure that their students have access to food throughout the school day however, we do feel that more dietary requirements need to be catered for.

Most students have a neutral opinion on school meals. They agree that TGA does their best to ensure that food is available to most of the school via Breakfast Club, and then at both lunch breaks. However, the general consensus is that students wish for more variety in choice and more allergies/dietary restrictions need to be catered for.



HIGH EXPECTATIONS