



Food strategy conversation starters

Food sustains us, gives us pleasure and creates social bonds. It also costs, both financially and environmentally. Do you have a vision for food in your setting? What does a sustainable food strategy mean for you? Use these questions with staff, leaders, governors and pupils to start conversations and develop your food strategy.

Setting the context: challenges and changes

Issues such as funding for free school meals, rising catering costs, food waste and sustainability can cause challenges for catering teams. Check out or share [What's happening with food in schools](#) (three-minute read) to understand more.

Revised standards for food in schools are planned to be in force for September 2027. Read the [DfE announcement](#) for highlights and [Annex A from the consultation response](#) documents for a full breakdown of changes. As well as introducing new breakfast standards, the change will:

- increase the amount of fibre, fruit and vegetables on offer
- reduce foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt.

Questions

Purpose and impact

1. What's our vision for food provision in our setting? What's the purpose of food for us? What or who do we want to nourish?
2. What do we like about our current food provision? What don't we like? What's the impact? If we could make changes, what difference would that make?

Pupil voice and experience

3. What do our pupils think about our food offer? Is our food offer informed by pupil voice?
4. Is our dining hall a pleasant place to eat? Is it a comfortable, inclusive place to be?
5. Do pupils have enough time to eat? Do we have a [grab and go culture](#) in our setting, and what impact does that have on pupil health and wellbeing?
6. How or where does food feature in our curriculum?



Supply chains and sourcing

7. Where does our food come from? What do we know about our supply chain? What's our food mileage? How much of our food is grown or raised in the UK?

Food waste

8. How much of our food gets wasted? How much of that is plate waste (the child didn't eat it), counter waste (we didn't sell it) or production waste (e.g. we had something in the fridge that didn't get used and went off)?
9. What happens to our food waste? And what does that cost us?

Food costs

10. What's our cost per school meal? What's the gap between this and what we receive in free school meal funding?
11. What do we do to incentivise or encourage take-up of free school meals?

Breakfast

12. Do we offer, or want to offer, breakfast provision in our setting? What barriers have we encountered in making breakfast work? How could we improve our breakfast provision?

School food standards and governance

13. What do we know about the changes to school food standards? What are the implications for our setting? How do we prepare for them? For example:
 - Do we have a food policy for our setting?
 - Is there a governor with a responsibility for food?

Next steps

- [Join the newsletter](#) for fortnightly resources, insights and updates.
- Find out about [ways to work with us](#).
- Use these resources to deepen your understanding and generate further development.
 - [Podcast episode 42](#): How do we make lunchtimes better?
 - [Why do breakfast clubs matter?](#)
 - [Making breakfast work](#)
 - [Why playtime matters – and how to make it work](#)
 - Schools Week: [New school food standards: 13 key changes you need to know](#)