



Thursday 9th March 2023

**Glasgow joins other cities around the world to celebrate
the International School Meals Day**

PRESS RELEASE

Many cities and countries across the world will be celebrating the International School Meals Day today. Launched in 2013, the campaign has brought together teachers and students, policymakers, school cooks, chefs, food and nutrition professionals, schools and communities, charities, businesses and health professionals from around the world to talk about the importance of school meals and their impact on wellbeing and education. Simon Massey, Head of Engagement and Learning at Children in Scotland, who is also the International School Meals Day Project Lead, says *“Children in Scotland is delighted to once again be hosting International School Meals Day in 2023. This is the eleventh year of the initiative, supported by the Scottish Government and global partners. This year’s theme is ‘Our changing food – methods, menus and meals’, and we look forward to seeing the exciting activities schools and learning centres undertake on the day to share conversations about school food, nutrition, health and wellbeing.”*

In Glasgow and the rest of Scotland, a lot of great work is happening to improve school meals by making them tastier, healthier and more sustainable. In Scotland, school meals – which include soup, bread, milk, a main dish, yoghurt and fruit – are now universally free to all pupils from Primary 1 to Primary 5 year groups, with some of P6 to S6 pupils also eligible. However, many of these pupils opt out of school meals despite them being free, with overall uptake of primary school meals in Glasgow being around 62% ([based on figures from 2018](#)). This figure drops drastically in high school with only 23% eating school lunch. Out of the remaining pupils, 50% eat lunch outside of school, 23% eat school lunch, 17% eat a home-made or packed lunch and 10% do not eat any lunch.

The importance of school meals is widely recognised, and the Glasgow City Council school catering department works hard to follow the nutritional guidance the Scottish Government set for school meals in 2020. Receiving healthy meals at school has shown to increase young people’s concentration and educational attainment, and for some children school meals might be the only warm healthy meal they will eat in a day. The cost-of-living crisis has made it even harder for families to afford healthy food for their children, making the role of school meals even more important. Based on the Scottish Government ‘Health and Wellbeing Census’ published last week, 38% of P5-S6 students sometimes go to bed or to school hungry. The cost saving for a family taking the free school meals ranges between £9.50-10 per child per week (based on the daily charge for a school meal in Glasgow of £1.90 in primary schools and £2 in secondary schools).

Stephen [Sawers](#), the head of facilities management for Glasgow City Council says: *‘Glasgow School meals service encourages you to be part of a community which takes part in this initiative to connect young people globally as we are all entitled to healthy, nutritious school lunches. Glasgow endorses the promotion of these days locally and nationally to support young people to learn and achieve.’*

Leanne McGuire, the chair of the Glasgow City Parents Group continues: *"Given the current cost of living crisis, school meals have become increasingly crucial for families. It is imperative that parents can rely on these meals to be both nourishing and substantial. Our committee collaborates regularly with GCC facilities and catering to provide parents with comprehensive information about school meal options, enabling them to assist their children in accessing affordable and healthy meals. However, there remains some apprehension regarding the utilisation of school meals, particularly at the secondary school level. We are committed to working alongside GCC to decrease this stigma and promote greater participation in school meal programs."*

School meals served in the Glasgow City Council area have won prestigious awards in recent years. The school catering team works actively with the Soil Association's Food for Life team, which led to the council being awarded the bronze Food for Life Catering Award in 2021 for cooking more food from scratch and using more local and sustainable food as part of school meals. In 2022, the team also received the Healthy Living Innovation Award at the School Catering Awards for its efforts in delivering fresh, local and sustainable food onto the plates of children and young people.

Sarah Duley, Head of Food, Food for Life Scotland said, *"Glasgow City Council has held the Food for Life Served Here Bronze Award for their school meals service since 2021. This is a nationally recognised mark of quality that credits all the hard work Glasgow catering teams are putting into serving food that's good for health, good for the environment and good for the local economy."*

She continues: *"When a council holds the award, parents can rest assured that the majority of the food on the menu will be freshly prepared, all food will be free from undesirable trans fats, sweeteners, and additives, only free-range eggs will be used, and all meat can be traced back to the farm and satisfies UK animal welfare standards. We would like to wish a Happy International School Meals Day to catering teams across Glasgow and thank them for their valuable work maintaining these standards."*

School meals may not always have been as nutritionally sound and well thought-of, which might have contributed to low uptake of school meals in the past. The Glasgow City Council is actively working with pupils and parents so that they can influence food provision in schools. Mairi Baker Quality Improvement Officer for Health and Wellbeing says *"Within Education Glasgow, staff members from many schools, primary and secondary, have joined a working group to look at promoting whole school good food initiatives. Now known as, 'Good Food Groups' – these groups were formally known as SNAGs (School Nutrition Action Groups) – the groups can include school staff, pupils, parents, carers and local community groups to promote food related themes. The groups wish to positively enhance lunch experiences, further promote sustainability opportunities related to food, its production and its disposal and promote whole school initiatives such as healthy food promotions, healthy tuck shops etc. All initiatives are all in line with current guidance including The School Health Promotion and Nutrition, Scotland Act."*

The focus on food education also links with the delivery of the 10-year Glasgow City Food Plan launched in 2021, with some of its aims to linking schools to growing spaces, as well as updating food related educational resources to include both health and sustainability.

Groups all over the UK are campaigning for universal free school meals for all children, and the Mayor of London announced recently school meals would be free to all Primary school children soon. With free school meals already available to a large proportion of Glasgow pupils and with so much work towards making food in schools more healthy, sustainable and tasty, it would make sense for young students in to take an advantage of this fantastic offering.

THE END

Issued by: Glasgow Food Policy Partnership

Contact Details:

Riikka Gonzalez – 07967 479 152 / Riikka.Gonzalez@Glasgow.ac.uk

Website: Web: goodfoodforall.co.uk

Social media: [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

Social Media: #ISMD2023

Notes to Editors

1. [International School Meals Day](#) (ISMD) is a unique campaign with the aim of raising awareness of good nutrition for all children regardless of their circumstances. Launched in 2013, it has brought together teachers and students, policymakers, school cooks, chefs, food and nutrition professionals, schools and communities, charities, businesses and health professionals from around the world to talk about the importance of school meals and its impact on wellbeing and education. Themes have included ‘eating for the health of it’, ‘sharing successes’ and ‘who makes my meal?’.
2. [Glasgow Food Policy Partnership \(GFPP\)](#) is a group of public, private and voluntary sector organisations working together towards a fairer, healthier, more sustainable and resilient food system for Glasgow. It is a member of the UK-wide Sustainable Food Places Network. In June 2021 Glasgow was awarded Sustainable Food Places Bronze Award recognising the success of taking a joined up, holistic approach to food and achieving significant positive change on a range of key food issues. Glasgow Food Policy Partnership hopes to build on this work and engage with even more organisations and businesses to help us make Glasgow’s food system better for everyone.
3. The [Glasgow City Food Plan](#), launched in June 2021, was developed by a team comprising Glasgow Food Policy Partnership, Glasgow Centre for Population Health, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Glasgow Community Food Network. The team worked with over 80 city-wide partners to develop actions towards a more sustainable equitable and healthy food system for Glasgow.
4. [Sustainable Food Places](#) is a partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming. It has over 60 members places (cities, towns, boroughs, counties and districts) working together to improve the food system in the UK.
5. [Soil Association’s Food for Life Served Here](#) awards food providers making positive impacts through food. They certify caterers for providing meals cooked from scratch, using sustainable fish, free range eggs and ingredients that can be traced back to the farm.
6. School meal data quoted here is from the 2018 Healthy Living Survey: [School meals and PE supplementary data 2018](#). New data should be available in Spring 2023.
7. [Health and Wellbeing Census Scotland 2021-2022](#) was published on the 28th February 2023
8. Healthy eating in schools: guidance 2020 from the Scottish Government sets out nutritional guidance for school meals in Scotland: [Healthy eating in schools: guidance 2020 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)