

Further response submitted by NAHT Cymru

HES(3)-05-08(p1) Saesneg yn unig

Proposals for Healthy Eating in School Measure

Introduction:

Thank you for inviting NAHT Cymru to provide a further response to the Healthy Eating in Schools Measure.

NAHT Cymru is concerned that by making Healthy Eating in Schools in Wales a legal requirement, it will increase the workload and accountability of our members. The majority of schools, if not all, schools are involved in existing and effective programmes such as the Healthy Schools Scheme, the Appetite for Life Action Plan, the Cooking Bus and working closely with organisations such as Urdd Gobaith Cymru. We do not feel that legislative powers are the way forward.

It should be noted that for those pupils in receipt of school meals, the meals account for only 23.8% of a pupil's meals (assuming 3 meals a day) over 7 days, during a term time of 190 days.

Issues such as whether a school is doing sufficient to promote healthy eating are open to interpretation, and could result in it being decided in a court of law.

Whilst members are fully supportive of, and indeed promote, the concept of Healthy Eating in Schools we would like to reiterate the concerns expressed by NAHT Cymru in its previous submission on 29.02.08 namely:

Disproportionately penalise schools in deprived areas who already face considerable challenges.

Damage goodwill and undermine existing initiatives and good practice which are meeting with some success.

Make Headteachers and Governors accountable for a service over which they have no direct control.

Duties in Relation to the promotion of healthy eating in schools

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from time to time consult the school council of any relevant school on how the authority should best discharge that duty; and

have regard to any view which such a school council may at any time express in relation to that matter.

What would be the frequency of these consultations?

Having taken regard of the views, Headteachers and Governing Bodies have no control of quality, content etc of school meals. Throughout Wales school meals and dietary implications attached to these is managed for schools by nutritional experts.

Governors Reports:

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Although this section has been amended, in reality it is Headteachers who compile the draft report for the Governing Body.

Inspection System:

NAHT Cymru still has serious concerns that schools will be judged on whether there has been an increase in the uptake of school meals. This is a matter beyond the control of the schools and is importantly a choice for parents. At a time of very limited resources we are concerned that this additional requirement of Estyn has been estimated at a cost of "... **between £1000,000 and £250,000 per annum.**"

What criteria will be used to determine an acceptable increase in the uptake?

"Healthy eating and good nutrition in schools should be part of the inspection regime"

Headteachers and Governors have no control over nutritional content, and Estyn Inspectors are unlikely to be qualified to make such judgements.

Additional Resources Needed:

It is also estimated that to provide water coolers to all schools (excluding Communities First Schools, who have already been provided with coolers) would cost an **additional £0.9 million**. There will then be the additional cost of purchasing the bottled water, administrative costs, maintenance and energy costs.

Conclusion:

Whilst fully supportive of Healthy Eating in schools, the NAHT is of the view that schools cannot be held responsible for the total health of pupils. Healthy eating is already addressed as an issue within the school curriculum. As already stated, the nutritional content of school meals is not within the direct control of schools, nor can schools dictate what parents should provide in the 'lunch box', for those pupils not taking a school dinner.

Promoting healthy eating in schools via legislation places an unfair burden and workload on Head Teachers.

It should be noted that there is a body of opinion within the education sector that favours abolishing the traditional school dinner, replacing it with a 'healthy snack'. This would be part of a re-arranged school day. The school day would start earlier, with a longer morning session, followed by a half hour break, leading on to afternoon, extra curricular activities. Research shows that instances of poor behaviour occur during the long lunch hour break. The NAHT does not yet have a view on this issue.