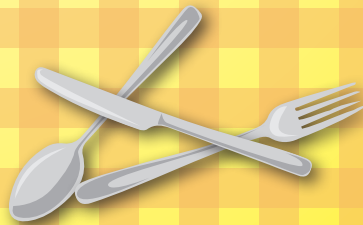
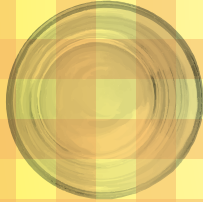
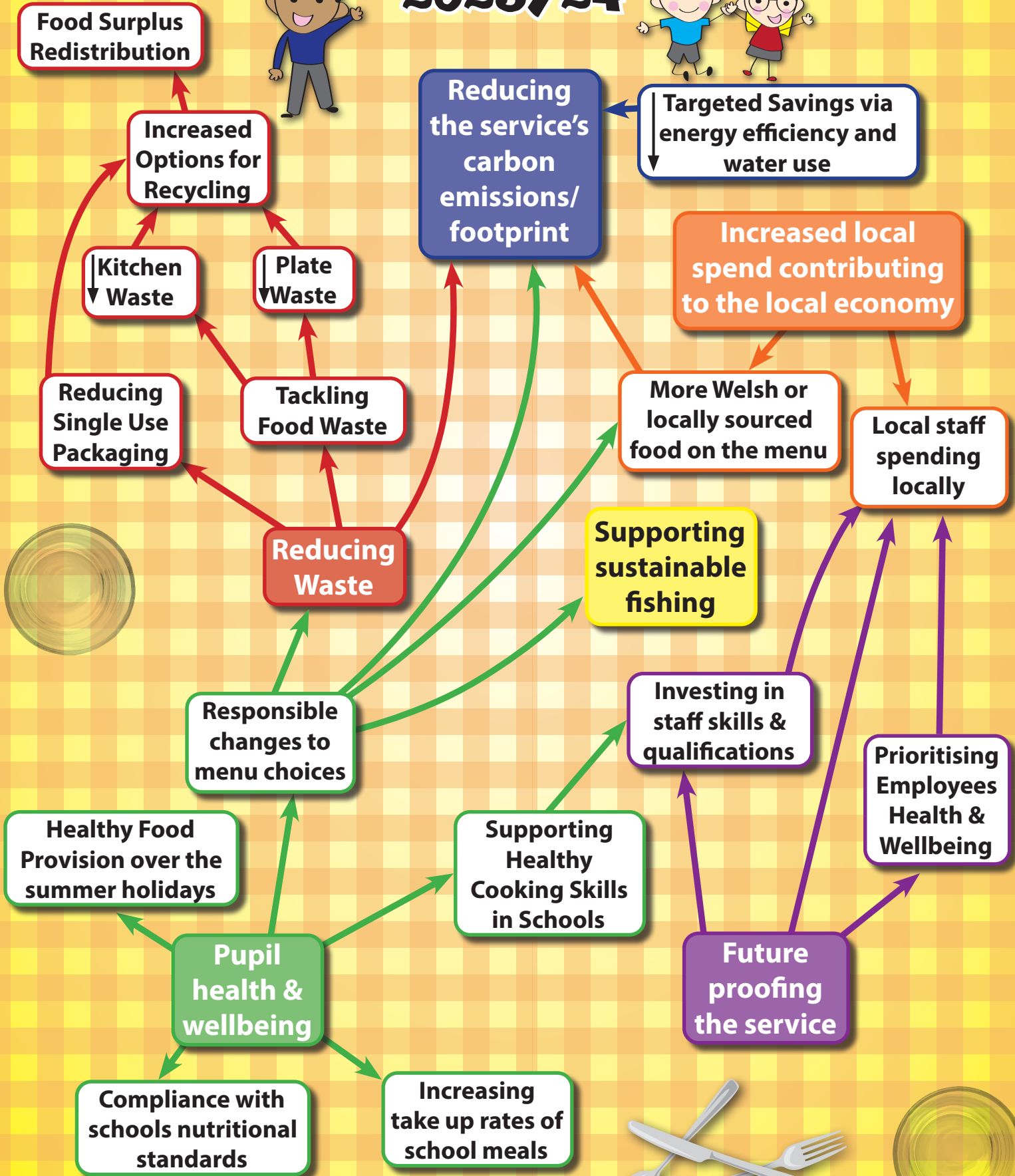
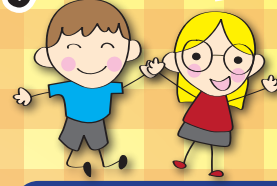


TORFAEN SCHOOL MEALS

Sustainability Journey Roadmap 2023/24



Mapping out our Sustainability Journey 2023/24

Transparency in Targets & Achievements

Decisions made today can have both positive, (or negative) long term effects for our pupils and the wider community. Sustainable School Catering is about meeting the needs of today's pupils without damaging opportunities for the future.

Sustainability in school catering is not going to be a quick fix. It is a HUGE topic. But we are resilient and focussed, and we are committed to the long term journey. However we do need to be transparent in what we are doing, with meaningful incremental (year by year) real and tangible targets and achievements. This is the map for 2023 and 2024 and we would welcome your suggestions for each year's targets.

You can follow this journey in our interactive "Sustainability Journey Map" – click on the links or scan the QR codes to find out what is going on behind the scenes for each topic.



Reducing the Service's carbon emissions

Did you know that the Council has declared a climate emergency? To respond to the climate emergency, the Council has committed to becoming carbon net zero by 2030. This means decarbonising our vehicles and how we travel, changing how we heat and power our buildings and reducing the carbon impact of the goods and services we buy.

Where we started

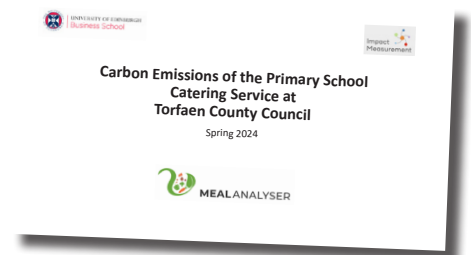
Fortunately for us in school catering, a team of researchers working across 5 European countries have been working specifically on reducing carbon emissions in the school meals sector. And we have been following this research for some time.

Target/Goal/Action for 2023/2024

We have been engaging with the UK professor in this research team to ensure any changes we make to reduce our carbon emissions are meaningful, not tokenistic. The research team have highlighted 2 key areas for us to target – food waste and responsible menu choices. These are shown to offer the biggest potential reductions in carbon emissions in school meals. However, we will also be targeting other areas – including seeking out opportunities to increase the amount of Welsh or local food on our menus. We will continue to follow closely the work of the European research team to ensure that changes we make have the most meaningful impact.

Progress/Achievement 2023/24

We worked with the Professor in the research team who conducted an in-depth analysis of our service's carbon emissions over 2 years. Making small changes to what was served on the menu and how we disposed of food waste, we managed to reduce our carbon emissions substantially. We served many more pupils in 2023 compared with 2022 (roll out of primary free school meals), and the amount of food we served increased by 35%. But we still managed to reduce our overall carbon emissions by 8% even with the increase in food served. Per kilo of food served that is a whopping 32% reduction in just a year. For the full report and details of how we achieved this see the report.



What next?

Since the reported reductions, we have made even further changes – this time to our recipes, particularly the high emission recipes highlighted in this report. We think these changes will reduce our carbon emissions further and are planning on working with the Professor to analyse these new changes to see if further reductions can be quantified.

We are also exploring more sustainable/ environmental / purchasing / lifecycle / responsible disposal options when it comes to the large catering equipment we purchase to use in our kitchens, working with asset decarbonisation experts in this area. Lots more to do yet!



Increased local spend contributing to the local economy

Increased local spending keeps money in the local community – also known as community wealth building. The impact of local sourcing/procurement of food as well as the employment of local catering staff spending in the local area can bring wide ranging benefits to economic and social wellbeing by the multiplier effect. We need to consider both areas.

Our journey to date

100% of our staff live in the local area, just one of the economic and social benefits of using LA catering. And whilst we know that we only use Welsh wholesalers in the supply of our food on or menus, we need to understand how far back the supply chain goes (beyond our local wholesalers).

What we are currently doing

We are working with an external company who are undertaking a piece of research to evaluate how our spending on goods and services benefits the local, and the wider Welsh economies. This will enable us to not only quantify how much we currently contribute to the local economy through our business operations but, more importantly, also identify how we can improve our local impact in the future.



TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH



BWRDEISTREF
SIROL
TORFAEN

Supporting Sustainable Fishing

Our journey to date

We understand that seafood is one of the world's valuable resources. We know that all our frozen fish – fishcakes, fish fingers and battered fish is Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified so we are confident that it comes from sustainable sources.

Target/Goal/Action for 2023/2024

We also use tinned tuna in our schools. This is not marked as MSC certified. We will explore options to switch our tinned tuna to more sustainably sourced tuna with our suppliers.

Progress/ Achievement 2023/24

Discussions are continuing with both MSC and our wholesaler around suitable alternative tuna. We are now aware that around half the fish eaten globally is farmed, and there are standards to ensure that farmed fish are produced in a sustainable way. Accreditation in this area includes Best Aquaculture Practice (BAP) and Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) so we are exploring if we can be supplied with tinned tuna that meets one of the 3 main accreditations – MSC, BAP, ASC.



Future proofing the service

We must ensure that we attract and retain local talent. We think we can do this by focussing on 2 areas – investing in staff skills and qualifications and by prioritising staff health and wellbeing. We must also ensure we maintain or increase the take up of school meals, so the service is safe into the future. We need to consider all these areas. **Move to the relevant pages to find out more detail.....**



TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH



BWRDEISTREF
SIROL
TORFAEN

Reducing Waste

There will always be an element of waste as this is a by-product of catering. But reducing waste remains important

- for financial reasons – the less wastage our service produces, the more money we have to spend on quality food ingredients and menus
- for the environment and our carbon footprint. Food production uses significant land, water and energy resources, and food waste is estimated to amount for 8-10% of man- made greenhouse gas emissions. The environmental need to reduce food waste is well documented. This is a huge topic. For our purposes we have divided this into 2 separate areas – kitchen waste and plate waste, **see these pages for more information on how we are approaching this.**



Promoting Pupil Health & Wellbeing

There have been well documented concerns over the numbers of pupils who are overweight and obese. In addition, there is a worrying trend upwards in the number of pupils who come from households suffering from food poverty/food insecurity. Poor diet is linked to health inequalities. School Catering can and does contribute to ensuring pupils have a healthy balanced diet and develop good eating habits for the longer term.

We have divided up this topic into several areas –

Responsible Changes to Menu Choices

Supporting Healthy Cooking Skills in Schools

Healthy Food Provision Over the Summer Holidays

Compliance with Schools Nutritional Standards

Increasing take-up rates of School Meals

Move to the relevant pages to find out what and how we are doing in each of these areas



Healthy Food Provision over the summer holidays

Our journey to date

For many years now, Torfaen School Caterers have been teamed up with Torfaen Play in their Laugh, Learn + Get Active Camps run in the summer holidays. Serving a FREE healthy breakfast and FREE healthy lunch, this provision has mitigated the impact of food poverty in the local area. The scheme has also provided enhanced activities for local pupils in the long summers.

2017 2 schools 2730 meals served

2018 4 schools 2233 meals served

2019 5 schools 6294 meals served

2021 14 schools 32416 meals served

2022 14 schools 32746 meals served

Target/Goal/Action for 2023/24

We think this is a remarkable record. As our staff also need a break over the summer holidays we think we may have reached capacity for offering this service. We aim to maintain the same number of schools and pupils benefiting from our work in this area.

Progress/Achievement

2023 13 schools 40987 meals served

2024 15 schools 45251 meals served

Numbers catered for are still on the up!



Increasing the rate of take up of school meals

Our journey to date

Research carried out by University of Leeds does not paint a positive picture of the nutritional content of packed lunches versus school meals, with less than 2% of packed lunches meeting school meals standards. And with recorded worsening levels of Vitamin C, Vitamin A and zinc over the years, we need more pupils to take up the offer of school meals. We can only do this if we listen to our customers. We regularly request feedback from our pupils on menu choices, and direct pupil quotes for each dish on the primary menu are highlighted on our website next to a photo of the meal. Pictured here is us meeting with Garnteg Pupil School Council to get their honest feedback.



Target/Goal/ Action for 2023/24

We will explore additional avenues for pupil feedback including through our Waste Warriors project and in addition to regular pupil surveys. We will also look at the wider food culture in schools – after the roll out of Universal Primary Free School Meals (and anticipated wider uptake), we will re-evaluate if whether the time allowed for lunchbreaks is sufficient for all pupils to access a healthy lunch. And is the dining area a relaxed environment with free drinking water accessible to all?

Progress/Achievement in 2023/24

Feedback is already coming through from pupils participating in our Waste Warriors Competition about what is liked about our menus and what tends to result in plate waste. We have also been working closely with Nesta, the UK's social innovation agency to assist them in designing a study to understand issues with non-take up from pupils' perspective with a view to improving this. See LSC MAG AUTUMN ISSUE 2023.

We have met with several Pupil School Councils, including those in Coed Eva, Blenheim Rd, Garnteg, George St, Griffithstown, New Inn, Our Lady's and Padre Pio primaries and actively sought out their views on what works and what does not work in school meals in Torfaen.

We have also met with several of our schools' Eco- Committees, including Coed Eva primary and Blenheim Road primary who have quizzed us on our environmental credentials and suggested further areas we should be considering. We are following up these suggestions, starting with the topic of Fairtrade. Our sugar is all Fairtrade and at the request of pupils in these schools we are commencing a small pilot of Fairtrade Bananas, with a close eye on ensuring the quality is what our pupils expect.



Supporting Healthy Cooking Skills in Schools

Our journey to date

Our dietitian has had some past success running After School Cooking Clubs in Coed Eva and Blenheim Road, with Coed Eva Cooks reaching the final of the national Young Baking Team of the Year Competition in 2017. But she can't be everywhere. She has, however, been supporting those schools running After School Cooking Clubs, most recently in Padre Pio primary.

Target/Goal/ Action for 2023/24

Schools Eco Committees will be invited to engage in the "Waste Warriors" project (see plate waste section) are in for a chance to win a full day's healthy cooking session for 16 pupils. It is hoped that this prize will fuel interest in this area, and we will continue to offer support to any primary school looking to offer After School Cooking Clubs (with parent participation if this is preferred).

We are also planning to link up with some of the good work already going on with school allotments and hope to tie in some cooking lessons using vegetables home grown by the pupils.

Progress/ Achievement 2023/2024

Our "Waste Warriors" winning schools Woodlands Primary, Blenheim Road Primary and Coed Eva Primary all enjoyed a healthy cooking session in 2023. In 2024 the winning schools Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbran and Cwmffrwdroer will both also be partaking in a full day healthy cooking session. It has been reported back that this has been both educational and thoroughly enjoyed by all (see photos). It is also hoped that this might be a springboard for encouraging further cooking activities in schools.



Responsible Changes to Menu Choices

Our journey to date

A diet that is mainly plant based is good for our health in terms of preventing obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. It can also have a lower impact on the environment compared with animal-based foods. As school caterers we are not promoting a complete swap to a vegetarian or vegan diet as we believe that choice and variety are the important consideration.

A full hot vegetarian menu and a full hot pescatarian menu has always been available on request in our primaries. We always consider carefully the nutritional value of these dishes - in dishes that do not contain meat we use iron rich plant foods such as spinach and Vitamin C rich ingredients such as peppers and peas alongside to maximise iron absorption. And where milk alternatives are required for those following a plant-based menu or for those who have an allergy/intolerance to cow's milk, we only use alternatives that are fortified with the same level of calcium as cow's milk.



But our pupils expressed a wish to be able to opt in and out of plant-based choices without signing up to a fully vegetarian or vegan menu and so we agreed to offer a menu that enabled a more flexible approach for all.

Target/Goal/Action for 2023/24

From Easter 2023 at least half our menu choices will be vegetarian – no need to fully commit to a separate Vegetarian menu, pupils can opt in and out. We will also increase plant-based options in our schools.

We know that production of palm oil can increase the risk of destruction to tropical rainforest and the drainage of peatland. This in turn can negatively impact biodiversity, climate change and the land rights of local peoples. For this reason, many suppliers have already committed to only using 100% sustainably sourced palm oil by 2015. We will be checking in on progress with all our suppliers who use palm oil as an ingredient in their products.

Progress/Achievements 2023/24

We worked with a UK Professor who conducted an in-depth analysis of our service's carbon emissions over 2 years. Making small changes to what was served on the menu and how we disposed of food waste, we managed to reduce our carbon emissions substantially. We served many more pupils in 2023 compared with 2022 (roll out of primary free school meals), and the amount of food we served increased by 35%. But we still managed to reduce our overall carbon emissions by 8% even with the increase in food served. Per



Responsible Changes to Menu Choices

kilo of food served that is a whopping 32% reduction. For the full report and details of how we achieved this see the report.

We know that not all meat alternatives are equally friendly to the environment- we are only looking to offer products made with soya from the EU growing in existing, established agricultural areas, and are in discussions with a UK supplier of plant-based protein (pea based) as an alternative protein source in our meat free dishes. Both are options that could be used in recipes to enable the meat content to be reduced in dishes. Plant based tasting days have taken place at Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllw, with pupils giving the tasters a big thumbs up!

Following a successful trial of a Healthy Pasta Salad Bar at Ysgol Panteg, we found that this switch made a more responsible alternative to the current salad bar which was reported to be generating unnecessary plate waste with some foods left uneaten. The new pasta salad bars have been rolled out across our primaries – listening to pupils has resulted in more responsible menu choices that pupils favoured, and less generation of waste.

What's next?

We are accountable to our pupils (current generation and future generation) and we are being guided by what they want us to look at next. The pupils of the Eco Committee of Blenheim Road primary have tasked us with sourcing Fair Trade foods where practicable on our menu. We are in discussions with our suppliers and can confirm that all our sugar is Fairtrade, and in the new year we will be trialling a small pilot of Fairtrade bananas in our schools, with pupils reporting back on whether the quality passes their tests!"



Compliance with Nutritional Standards

Our journey to date

Nutritionally poor diets are the biggest cause of premature death and disability in the UK. For 15 years now, Torfaen School Catering have employed a dietitian to ensure compliance with Welsh Healthy Eating in Schools Regs. We are rated as having Gold Standard menus.

What you can already see in our schools - Fruit daily, Vegetables and/or salad daily, Fruit based desserts at least twice each week, Fish each week, Oily fish at least twice in 3 weeks, Meat cuts at least twice a week in our primary schools and three times each week in secondary schools, No added salt, Removal of all confectionery, such as chocolate bars, cereal bars and sweets; and also crisps, Limited potato and potato products cooked in fat or oil (not more than twice each week), Limited deep fried or flash fried food (not more than twice each week), Restricted processed meat products, Fruit tuck shops in our primary schools, Free milk for all nursery and infant pupils, Free healthy breakfast in the majority of our primary schools, Promotion of milk and water as best for dental health.



Target/Goal/Action for 2023/24

It has been many years since the Welsh school nutritional standards have been revised. We know that recommendations for both sugar (lowered) and fibre (increased) are yet to be reflected in the Regs. We will look at ways to reduce sugar and increase fibre further whilst we wait for the Regs to catch up with the science.

Progress/Achievement in 2023/24

We are working hard behind the scenes to revise recipes to reduce sugar and increase fibre, whilst ensuring our pupils still love the results. And we have been working with Welsh Government to ensure our suggestions and those of our pupils are heard when they undertake a revision of Healthy Eating Standards in schools. Many of our suggestions have already appeared in draft versions for consultations. We are hoping that this contribution will go some way to ensuring that the standards remain relevant, challenging and have meaningful results in terms of our pupils' health and wellbeing.

Targeted savings in energy use and reduced water use

Our journey to date

Research would indicate that transport of school meals (where schools do not have sufficient cooking space) has a minimal impact on carbon emissions compared with how we choose to dispose of food waste (landfill or anaerobic digestion) and the impact of responsible menu choices. That said, as there are now electric charging points in the main office car park, this would allow us to consider changing our transport van from diesel to electric powered and this would reduce our emissions. We have no readily available information about the energy efficiency and water consumption of our major electrical equipment in our school kitchens. Recipes have not yet been considered for energy saving reductions within safe cooking parameters.



Target/Goal/Action for 2023/24

- 1) We will investigate funding sources to replace the old diesel transport van with an electric van.
- 2) We will engage with the Energy + Carbon Reduction Team in the council to survey the water and energy efficiency ratings of dishwashers and combi ovens across our sites and take their advice with regards to both future purchasing decisions and preventative maintenance to ensure efficiencies.
- 3) We will actively seek out changes to our cooking patterns/recipes to reduce safe cooking times and make savings in our energy consumption

Progress/Achievement 2023/2024

- 1) One transport vans is now fully electric..... we will seek funding to change over the other van to electric.
- 2) We have met with Torfaen's Energy + Carbon Reduction Team and we have jointly produced an Energy Efficiency and Water Use survey which we will roll out in January 2025 with the aim of making efficiency savings where real issues highlighted.
- 3) Our frozen turkey joint used on Wednesdays in schools swapped to fresh turkey joint reducing safe cooking time (and energy consumption) by an hour per school. We will continue to consider other swaps to reduce cooking times while ensuring safety perimeters are reached.

Reducing Plate Waste

Our journey to date

There are reports feeding back to Catering management of huge amounts of food waste being generated at school dining hall level. Without recorded measurement and associated direct action to address this, it is unlikely to change or improve. Worryingly, the data from researchers in the EU project (Strength2Food European project, strength2food.eu) would indicate that an average 30% of what is served to pupils in school meals ends up as plate waste in the bin.

Target/Goal/Action for 2023/2024

We need to be paying as much attention to what ends up in the bin as we do ensuring the nutritional value of what is served up. We need to actively be monitoring plate waste, show real reductions in this, and investigate the reasons behind the plate waste. Many of our schools have pupil led "Eco Committees" or similar. It is hoped to involve pupils in weighing and monitoring plate waste in the dining hall reporting back (mini audit) to caterers as to what the main components are that are being binned and why (areas for improvement? portion sizes? recipes?).

Progress/Achievement 2023/2024

The "Waste Warriors" project/competition was a great success in 2023. We had a successful bid for funding accepted to purchase multiple sets of large parcel scales to weigh and monitor food waste. Twelve primary schools took part in 2023 weighing plate waste in the dining hall, campaigning amongst their peers to reduce waste then reweighing after their campaign. Plate waste was reduced by an average 19% amongst participating schools with Woodlands scooping first prize and Blenheim Road and Coed Eva schools coming runners up. This pupil led intervention gained UK wide attention with an article in the LACA magazine, see LSC MAG WINTER ISSUE 2023/2024.

We ran the competition again in 2024, this time with 14 primary schools taking part and more enthusiasm than ever. The standard of entries was so high we had to enlist an external judge and are pleased to announce an average 32% reduction in plate waste. Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbran took top prize, with Cwmffrwdroer pupil's runners up. Fabulous results!



Disposal of food waste

Our journey to date

As caterers, we need to make responsible decisions about how we dispose of things. When food goes to landfill it creates large carbon emissions which is very bad for the environment. From November 2022 our kitchens have been collecting food waste in special bins. This is collected and taken to a recycling plant. It is recycled using a process called ANAEROBIC DIGESTION. If you would like an overview of the process, click on the link to a video filmed at the facility in Hertfordshire. The site is pretty much the same as the South Wales site that processes our school food waste, as is the process. It can be found at Severn Trent Green Power - North London AD.

Target/Goal/ Action for 2023/24

The collection of food waste for recycling is part of a pilot project – we need to make the case to retain this service.

Progress/ Achievement 2023/24

Not only are we still successfully in retaining this recycling service, but our pupils have made great strides in reducing plate waste in the dining halls (see page on Reducing Plate Waste). And a Professor at Edinburgh Uni has reported back that this, along with some changes to our menu has resulted in us reducing our service's carbon emissions by a whopping 32% per kilo of food served (see page on Reducing Carbon Emissions).



Increased options for Recycling

Our journey to date

We have been thoroughly inspired by our catering staff at Ysgol Panteg (see photo) who have been collecting the stretchy plastic in the school kitchen there and taking it with them on their own supermarket shop to be recycled along with their stretchy plastic from home. We can do better in our school kitchens. Our cardboard has been recycled in the Highway transport kitchen for many years now. Our food waste is already being recycled (See page on reducing plate waste)



Target/Goal/Action for 2023/24

We are committed to getting the stretchy plastic collection points up and running and our kitchens stretchy plastic feeding into this. We are also looking for a responsible way to dispose of fabric (old staff uniforms) in both our Catering and Cleaning teams. We will continue to look for other options to increase recycling from our kitchens, including wider cardboard recycling.

Progress/Achievement 2023/2024

We set up and were working with a new service which has been directly collecting stretchy plastic from our school kitchens for recycling, along with encouraging school children to bring stretchy plastic into school from home for recycling.....unfortunately the recyclers have ceased to trade so we are actively seeking out a new recycler.....let us know if you have any leads?

We have a uniform recycling scheme up and running!

Overall we are now recycling

- Food waste
- Cardboard
- Metal tins
- Plastic Milk Cartons
- Tetra packs for fruit juice

We do not have glass in our kitchens for food safety reasons.

We are always looking for more options for recycling – let us know if you think we have missed any opportunities?



Reducing single use products & packaging

Our journey to date

We had already begun to identify single use products and packaging in our school kitchens that were unnecessary. Our Comprehensives have led in this area – with Ysgol Gymraeg Gwnllyw. offering a discount to those bringing their own reusable cups. But during the pandemic there was fear of transmission and there was some return to single use containers. We need to be sure we are not continuing to use single use packaging unnecessarily. Did you know we have been going through 88,400 sachets of ketchup annually in our schools? That is a lot of single use plastic sachets going to landfill! In 2023 there will be change in legislation (with a ban on single use plastics) focussing us further in this important area.

Target/Goal/Action for 2023/2024

We have identified 5 areas we are going to target first

- 1) Plastic tuck bags that fruit is served in (46,636 bags used annually in 33 primaries)
- 2) Plastic Ice cream spoons
- 3) Friday menu “take away boxes” (Annual numbers used 22,500 at a cost of £2754)
- 4) Plastic sachets of ketchup (Annual numbers 78,400 at a cost of £997.03)
- 5) Fruit + Veg – exploring crates for delivery with no plastic wrapping

Progress/Achievement 2023/2024

Cooks have been advised that single use cutlery will no longer be able to be ordered. We met with the council's experts to choose the best eco alternative to single use plastic takeaway containers in our Comprehensives. We are pleased to announce that all polystyrene containers have been replaced by recyclable cardboard, all plastic cutlery is now wooden, any plastic used for dessert containers is PET, and hot desserts are served in Ecoware containers.

We instigated a ban/block on ordering of ketchup sachets. Instead, schools now use refillable containers – see pictures.

In addition to meeting our targets above, we have also swapped over from using thousands of single yogurt tubs in our primaries each year and are now ordering 5kg tubs of yogurt that is used to provide individual portions of yogurt. That is a big saving on plastic yogurt pots!



Reducing Kitchen Waste

Our journey to date

Measures are already in place to try and reduce kitchen waste – for many years our primary pupils have had to pre-order their meal choice. This avoids the cook guessing numbers for each choice or overestimating to ensure all pupils get their 1st choice. Whilst we operate strict stock rotation as part of our food safety procedures, we need to be sure that we are using up all the food in an opened package before it has to be disposed of.

Target/Goal/ Action for 2023/24

We will survey our cooks to find out about foods arriving with excessive packaging or in wholesale sizes that are too large, resulting in food going to waste before it can be used within safe timescales. We will work with our suppliers to substitute foods/brands in these cases to ensure waste is reduced.

Progress/ Achievement 2023/2024

We cook to order every day, cooks work within budgets. Our cooks have been issued updated guidance on portion sizes for infants and juniors in line with Government guidelines. This is assisting cooks in planning ahead to reduce waste.



Food Surplus Redistribution

Our journey to date

We operate strict stock rotation as part of our food safety procedures, and we do not overstock our kitchens. Occasionally there will be free school milk left over from the morning and our cooks ensure that this is offered to pupils at lunchtimes rather than wasted. At the end of term there is little food leftover as our cooks communicate with each other to ensure that any surplus in one school kitchen is transported safely and in a timely manner to be used up at another school before the kitchen closes for the holidays. After this, if there is any food left at the end of term this is donated to be used at Torfaen Playschemes.

Target/Goal/Action for 2023/24

We will continue to operate as above and ensure that nothing goes to waste.

Progress/ Achievement so far in 2023/24

We continue to keep excess stock at a minimum and this system for redistributing is rarely required. This meets with our environmental aims and also ensures that budgets are used wisely to the benefit of pupils.



More Welsh or locally sourced food on the menu

Our journey to date

Buying more food locally will reduce food miles travelled and is more likely to have a lower environmental impact. Buying local is also good for the local economy.

We have been serving some locally produced foods on our menus for some time, including Welsh Cheddar and Welsh sausages, although we have been a little shy in promoting this.

Target/Goal/Action for 2023/24

We need to work with internal and external partners to pinpoint opportunities to increase the amount of Welsh or local foods on our menu. We need to highlight Welsh produce on our menus in schools.

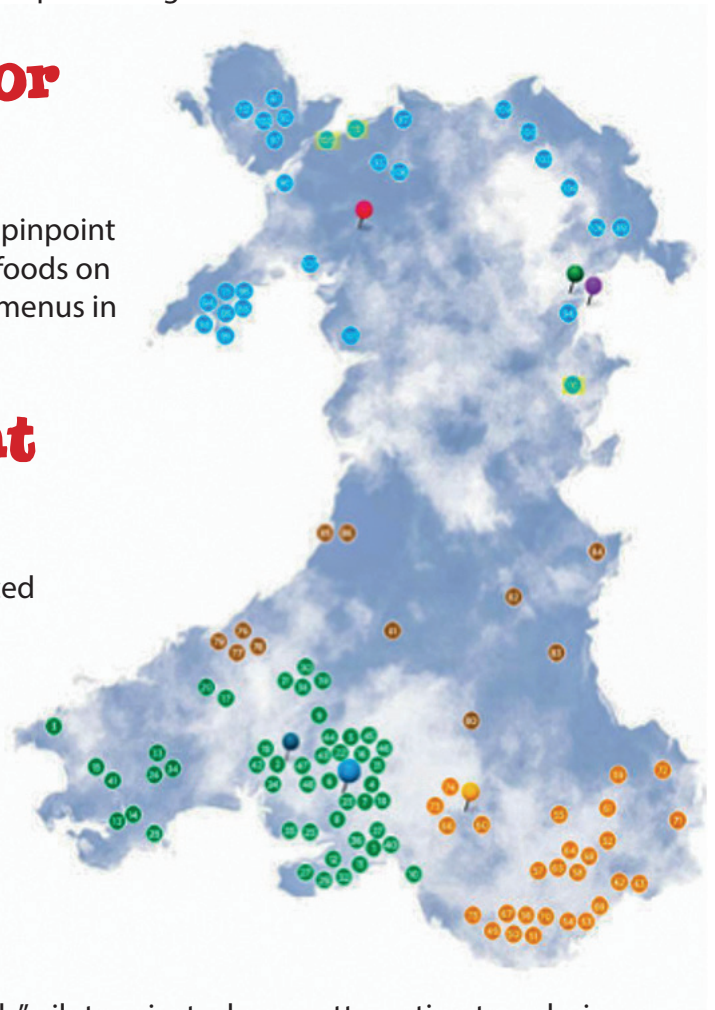
Progress/Achievement 2023/24

The following staples on our menu are all Welsh produced

- Sausages
- Cheddar
- Milk
- Bread and rolls
- Baking potatoes
- Our new 5kg yogurt pots

We are also in discussions with the "Welsh Veg in Schools" pilot project who are attempting to redesign supply chains and supporting local growers to grow and supply Welsh schools. It may be that in 2025 we may be trialling some Welsh veg in our primaries.....watch this space.....

We are actively engaged with the Torfaen Food Partnership Group. The group aims to map out and increase local food sourcing opportunities. We are chasing the limited opportunities there are already mapped in the Torfaen areas and are widening our search outwards. Are you a local supplier or producer who might like to see your food/ingredients being used on our school menus? Please speak to us directly about the pathways to supplying school meals. Email tracy.james@torfaen.gov.uk



Local Staff Spending Locally

We are a local authority providing healthy meals cooked at school level. Our School Catering Services employ around 200 local staff. Economists are in agreement that where local staff are employed locally, this can have a huge impact on whether money stays local and supports local. We firmly believe that this mode of school catering is best for pupils and best for the local business ecosystem. There have been tools developed to track the school meals budget in terms of local spend on both supplies and staff, and a corresponding analysis of how much of that budget stays in the local area. This is a relatively new area and something we will be following closely and considering going forward. But for 2023/24 we will be prioritising attracting and retaining local talent to ensure we are serving our pupils the best quality meals.



Prioritising Staff Health & Wellbeing

Our journey to date

Our staff are all paid the Foundation living wage or above. Most staff health and wellbeing initiatives are organised on a council wide basis and are highlighted on the intranet. These include 238, yes 238 online courses from alcohol awareness to effective communication skills to dealing with a relationship breakdown. In addition, there is an active menopause campaign with monthly café and a counselling service accessible through Occupational Health. We also have a history of celebrating the success of our teams and showcasing where our team members have gone the extra mile. Staff will always need to know they are valued and appreciated.

The photo shows some our caterers winning a national innovation award for their work with Autistic pupils in 2022.

Pledges for 2023/2024

On surveying staff we have found that there is an ongoing niggle with back pain as a result of pot washing in deep sinks. This is a concern specific to our staff. We will actively seek to obtain direct access physio for our staff and promote the staff discounts at local gyms available to Torfaen employees. We will continue to recognise and celebrate the outstanding work of our staff via our Comms team and the wider Catering world. Everyone benefits when they are reminded how appreciated they are.

Progress/ Achievement so far 2023/2024

Our pot washing in deep sinks issue has been addressed directly. With the support of Welsh Government funding to assist in the roll out of universal free school meals in our primary schools we have



Prioritising Staff Health & Wellbeing

upgraded several of our kitchens. Our kitchens are now more modern than ever, and old fashioned designed deep sinks are a thing of the past.

In other news, with approximately 200 female staff, eco-friendly sanitary supplies made available via a Welsh Government grant have been distributed amongst our staff to alleviate period poverty whilst encouraging the use of reusable/washable alternatives.

And we have not failed to ensure the work of our team and the pupils of Torfaen has been recognised far and wide.....

In 2023 Torfaen School Catering was awarded the **Welsh Government Recognition of Excellence Award** for our successful roll out of primary free school meals for all in Torfaen.

The work of Torfaen pupil's taking part in the Waste Warriors competition both won the team the **LACA Wales Innovation Award 2023** and saw them **shortlisted in the very prestigious Waste2Zero Awards in 2023**. It also resulted outstanding work in the area of reducing plate waste has been acknowledged and shared via an article in a UK Catering magazine – see LSC MAG WINTER ISSUE 2023/2024

Individually, Kirsty Milns, our Projects, Systems and Data Manager had her work on streamlining the free school meals application process recognised – it landed her as a **finalist in the APSE catering category of the Soft Facilities Management Innovation Awards 2023**. A great piece of work and a very worthy finalist!

And this very Sustainable Schools Roadmap won us the **LACA Nan Berger Memorial Award 2023**.

And last but not least, hot off the press, after all of the above, we have just received word that Torfaen School Catering you has been **shortlisted as finalists for the APSE Performance Network Most Improved Performer for Catering Services 2024**.



Investing in Staff Skills & Qualifications

Our journey to date

We pride ourselves in investing in skills and qualifications for staff – our cooks are qualified in Supervising Food Safety level 3, and many at Level 4. Our Catering assistants are trained in Level 2 Food Safety. We have over 60 members of staff holding the Level 3 qualification in Allergen Management in Catering. And in recent years all our staff have received training in Autism Awareness (see photo). But we have not formally mapped these training opportunities to be able to look for and ask our staff where they think the gaps are.

Target/Goal/Action for 2023/24

We will map out current training opportunities so we all staff can opt in to upskill and ask our staff what training/ qualifications they would benefit from being invested in.

Progress/ Achievement in 2023/24

Online training has been rolled out to all Catering staff in areas including Safeguarding, Violence against Women, Safeguarding, Data protection and Equality and Diversity.

All cooks have received training in Special Diets from our in-house dietitian.

All staff (over 200) have received training or retraining in Allergen management in the 2023/24 period.

6 Catering Staff are piloting NVQ Level 2 in Kitchen Services and there are plans to roll out the level 2+ and 3 to the wider workforce if this proves worthwhile.

2 members of staff have undergone intensive training in Eating Challenges and Autism to enable them to support pupils directly and assist the dietitian with menu planning.

