

Do you have lunch at school? Do you like having lunch at school? School dinners (that means 'lunch') are a hot topic in the UK these days and there are lots of different opinions about what young people eat at lunchtime. Some people think that school meals are unhealthy, some people say that they are much better than in the past and others say that midday meals should be free for all school children.

What is a school dinner?

A typical school dinner costs about 2 pounds a day for a secondary pupil in the UK. There is usually a main course, a dessert and a drink. Parents often pay in advance online. School dinners must include food groups such as fruit and vegetables, protein (for example meat, fish or cheese) and carbohydrate (for example rice or pasta). There are rules about how the food is prepared, for example there are limits on the quantity of fried food.

Neverseconds – the school dinners blog

Martha Payne, from Scotland, started a blog called 'Neverseconds' about her school dinners when she was just nine years old. She posts photographs of her lunch every day and gives the food a grade out of ten. The grade depends on the quality and quantity of the food and how healthy it is. She doesn't always give good grades. Her complaints include too much fried food, small quantities and hair in the food (yuck!). Many people read her blog and young people from all over the world post pictures of their school meals on Neverseconds.

Jamie Oliver, the celebrity British chef, is passionate about school dinners. He thinks that they need to be healthier and tastier. Jamie helped to promote Martha's blog by tweeting about it and Neverseconds became very popular, very quickly on social media websites. On the blog, Martha also collects money for charity. The money is used to provide food for more than 600,000 poor children around the world.

Do all children have school dinners?

More than a third of British school pupils have school dinner. Some take a packed lunch, prepared at home. Others either have lunch at home or eat at nearby take-away restaurants. We asked some young people to tell us about what they eat at lunchtime on school days.

'I have school dinners most days but I take a packed lunch on Fridays. This Friday I had a cheese sandwich, tomatoes, crisps, a chocolate bar and an apple juice.'

Tom, 14, Dorset

'Today we had pizza, salad, then an apple for dessert. I get free school meals because my mum and dad are unemployed.'

Rae, 13, Hathersage

'I had fish and chips today. I went to the chip shop near school with some friends. Sometimes I take a packed lunch and sometimes my parents give me money to buy lunch.'

Theo, 15, Cambridge

'I have school dinner every day. Today I had roast chicken, carrots, green beans and potatoes. For dessert I had cake.'

Sarah, 14, Birmingham

The future for school dinners

There are plans to examine school dinners in the UK and look at ways to make them better. Henry Dimbleby and John Vincent started 'Leon', a chain of restaurants which aim to sell healthy fast food. The British government has asked the two restaurant owners to collect information about school dinners and see how they can be improved. Perhaps complaints about lunchtime food in British schools will soon be a thing of the past.