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Gayhurst Community School

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021

Dear parents and carers,

### School Lunches at Gayhurst

At Gayhurst we are passionate about good food and happiness! Gayhurst has been on a food journey since 2015, when Nicole Pisani, ex- Head Chef at Ottolenghi restaurants, redesigned our school food to ensure children ate freshly cooked meals each day.

This has driven us to weave food education into our curriculum and focus on teaching our children the pleasures of growing, cooking and eating healthy food. All of our pupils, from Reception through to Year 6 have the opportunity to participate in regular cooking lessons. Children are able to learn about food from seed to plate in our award-winning Hackney School of Food's teaching kitchen and our wonderful productive gardens.

We believe it is the right of every child to enjoy a healthy and nutritious meal every day that they are at school; we want the best for every child and we know how important a healthy lunch is for their learning.

### Packed Lunches

Although packed lunches have been part of school lunch systems for years in the UK, they are a hang-over from before the School food plan and high nutritional standards in schools. It is far easier to get the necessary nutrients into a freshly cooked meal. Last year, a national study found only 1% of packed lunches meet the nutritional standards that currently apply to school food.

Although we had a robust packed lunch policy, children who brought in packed lunches missed out on our free, nutritious, cooked meals. Due to the pandemic, we had stop children from bringing in packed lunches as part of our COVID safe practice. This had the required impact in terms of keeping our community safe but also had other surprising benefits. Those children who were reluctant to try our cooked school meals found that they loved them and those children who were thought to be selective eaters very quickly found food on our wide and varied menus that suited their particular tastes. Where children had additional needs the chefs and other school staff worked closely with families to ensure that children were included and catered for.



Executive Headteacher: Louise Nichols | Associate Headteacher: Karen Pedro | Bursar: Cyrilene Malcolm | Chair of Governors: Ian Mullaney

Gayhurst, Kingsmead and Mandeville Primary Schools working in partnership

**For this reason and for the benefit of our children all children will continue to have a nutritious, tasty cooked meal from the school kitchen. We will not be returning to packed lunches.**

We meticulously plan our menus each term in accordance to seasonality and government nutritional guidelines. We design around the 'Eatwell plate' which addresses the correct amount of protein, carbohydrates, vegetables, fruits, dairy and essential fats and sugars people should have and apply this to different age groups. We believe it's really important to give children a lifelong interest in food and the endless joy it can bring. We encourage this by introducing them to new flavours and ingredients. The children now regularly enjoy salad, daily fresh bread, olives and other antipasti, beetroot ketchup and a host of other homemade condiments, pickles and preserves made in house, exciting dishes from around the world like noodles and jollof rice. We also make up big batches of seasonal salads every day with homemade dressings.

Our commitment is to cook food that is both appetising and nutritious; making the dining hall a welcoming place with a restaurant-like atmosphere; where staff and children sit together to enjoy great food and great conversation; and children become interested and excited about cooking and growing food.

Gayhurst has enjoyed an enormous amount of positive attention from the media, including Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast, The One show, and most national newspapers have at some point featured Gayhurst in their articles about school food. Other schools both nationally and internationally have visited the school and we constantly get questions from schools trying to follow the same model. This is why we were founder members of the national charity Chefs in Schools so that there was a mechanism to unite great chefs with schools. As a flagship school for healthy food, we intend to continue this work and continue to try and innovate in this field.

To date we have catered to all pupils' dietary requirements and intend to do so in the future. Any allergies or intolerances your child may have will be accommodated for.

**Benefits:**

- Nutritious and balanced diets for everyone
- Better concentration in class
- More time efficient for parents not having shop for packed lunch ingredients
- All dietary needs catered for
- Children enriched by exposure to new and exciting flavours
- Developing healthy habits for life
- All children eating the same thing together ensures community and belonging

**Challenges:**

- Selective eaters: from our experience, a lot of children that began term as selective eaters, through the socialising and eating with their friends have improved. The food becomes an exciting talking point within their day.

- Who is monitoring whether my child is eating?
  - This is monitored by midday supervisors, support staff and class teachers. Any problems that arise are discussed and managed with parents and kitchen team.
  
- I don't know what my child is eating?
  - Our menu is on the school website and you can follow us on Instagram where we post regular kitchen updates.

We will be holding workshops for parents and cares to come into school to try the school food, meet with our chefs and kitchen team and have the opportunity to ask questions. We are keen for this to be a working partnership with families and our school team.

More information and dates will follow in our weekly newsletter.

Thank you for your continued support,

Karen Pedro  
Associate Headteacher