

Minutes of the Food Focus Meeting held on 4th October 2021

Chaired by: Andy Barnes (Director of Operations) and Will Finlay (Proctor)

Attendees: Ed Nightingale, Deputy Head (Pastoral)

James Maloney (BH); Henry Lloyd-Baker (C1); Charlie Hammond (C3); Stas Lonskiy (CO); Obaayaa Acquah (DA); Nigella Broackes (IH); Rafe Phillips (LI); Tilly Norman (MM); Sam Pickering (MO); Ava Dean-Smith (NC); Kai Neu (PR); Charlie Kirkwood (TU)

Absentees: Will Elviss (B1); John Gerson (C2); Phoebe Pilkington (EL); Jack Harper-Hill (SU)

Discussion/Points Raised: (Response/Action from Norwood Team in Red)

- **Is it possible for pupils to have the Light option as well as the Main option at lunch?**
This is not easy to permit, because it is too difficult to determine quantities required. The Light option is offered as an alternative to the Main lunch offering.
- **Pupils attending last sitting often find food has run out; could more be made available please?**
This will be looked at to ensure sufficient of both options is available to replenish counters for second sitting at lunch.
- **Sunday night burger option in Preshute had not gone down well and quality of the burger was thought inferior**
Sunday night dining is difficult to quantify, but the burgers served in out-Houses would be the same burgers as those served in Norwood hall and therefore any difference would be down to how it has been prepared/cooked in individual Houses. This will be addressed with the chef.
- **Portion sizes – Boys often felt they would like larger portion of meat and girls had also commented that recently smaller portions of chicken dishes were offered than previously**
WF pointed out that although the Hu boys wanted bigger portions, they were also the year group responsible for some of the highest wastage, highlighting that this is a difficult balance to maintain. AB reminded pupils that they can go back for second helpings at both lunch and supper.
Pupil suggestion made that different counters could be designated for smaller or larger portion sizes...This isn't practical as it would affect the service flow and cause queues.
- **Most C1 pupils felt there had been a huge improvement in the offering from last year.**
Thank you from AB – it is good to hear it is appreciated after a lot of work that has gone into revising offering available.
- **Pasta option offered before matches on Match days not popular with some pupils**
AB pointed out that this option had often been booked by Sports Coaches; When often serving c. 192 pupils in a 15 min window, whatever option given, it needed to be delivered very quickly which made this an ideal choice.
- **Request for Hash Browns again please**
Yes, this should be possible. AB will look into it and assess the menu frequency.
- **Toasted bagels for breakfast**

Yes, this can be reintroduced. AB will look into it.

- **Pasta Sauces options – Could there be more choice please and not just tomato based sauce**
Yes other options, like bolognese sauce could be offered as an option, but if too many options are given this will just increase food wastage. When delivering 1300 lunches, decisions had to be made based on likely consumption.
- **Breakfast: Some Houses, that have a light breakfast, are disappointed not to have full English breakfast option**
AB pointed out that all pupils were able to access full English breakfast option in Norwood Hall – it is not economically viable to deliver this option to Houses because of staffing levels and associated cost with delivering food.
- **C1 boys asked if breakfast option could be pushed back by 15 minutes?**
This is not practical as the 15 minutes would then push timings on to the next commitment for Norwood staff.
- **Request for Waffles and Crepes – in particular these are not currently available in Preshute**
This will be looked at and where possible will be reintroduced as a breakfast option.
- **LI pupils – No complaints and all going well**
AB pleased to hear that provision in House was being appreciated.
- **MM pupils – all agreed has been massive improvement in offering from Norwood and very much appreciated. Could the Wednesday “Greasy” supper option be swapped with lunchtime please? Pupils finding that the burger or Fish & Chips options are better when consumed at lunchtime.**
AB will look into swapping these options to lunchtimes.
- **Soup option – Could this be offered as a supper option again please?**
Yes, AB will look into reintroducing this.
- **Deli option at lunchtimes often has meat incorporated in the dish – could there be an option for vegetarians as well please?**
AB said this will be taken into consideration.
- **Tuna is often the only fish/meat offered on the salad bar – could this be extended to more choices please?**
AB said the function of the Salad Bar is to provide a side salad; the main Salad options offered at lunch now are the pre-plated dishes.
- **Coronation Chicken provided in the salad bar and deli sandwiches, is very popular**
AB was pleased to hear this and it will continue to be an option in both formats.
- **Water taps in Norwood: majority of representatives agreed that pupils would like more taps to be available again to stop queues and hold-ups**
AB pointed out that only the two taps at the end of each counter provided chilled water and that the other side options were at ambient temp; Pupils had not realised this, but would still like these other taps to be made available please. AB is happy to arrange for them to be made operational again.
- **Cookies as desert option at lunchtimes**

AB said these were already an option during the regular menu cycle and would continue to be offered; he was pleased to hear that they were so well received.

- **Ham and Cheese Paninis were very popular**
This would be fed back to Norwood staff and they will remain on the menu.
- **Gluten Free option: Sometimes these dishes did not seem to be available or had run out**
AB said anyone needing a Gluten Free option could ask the duty Manager who would then make sure one was made available; often choices are not put out, as they may then not be available for those who genuinely need them. It was stressed that pupils should always ask, if they cannot see what they need in this respect.
- **Breakfast: Berry option was requested to go with cereals/porridge etc.**
AB said this was not an option that was easy to deliver at this time of year due to costs. It was more likely to be possible in Lent/Summer terms when this type of fruit would be in season and therefore more cost-efficient when budgeting.
- **Curly fries are appreciated and liked; also, spicy fries and Sweet Potato fries**
The volume of these type of fries is difficult to achieve because of the cooking process involved, but as they are popular they will continue to be offered occasionally.
- **BH pupils enjoy the bacon option at breakfast – would it be possible to extend this to include eggs?**
This is not practical to offer to out-Houses because of the cost involved in delivering. Always an option for pupils to have full English breakfast in Norwood though.
- **Porridge oats / Granola breakfast options requested please; also request for yoghurt to accompany these**
Yes, these options will be looked into and provided where/when possible. Natural yoghurt is made on site and already provided in Norwood.
- **Request for Nutella pots at breakfast**
Unfortunately, this is not possible to provide in Norwood due to costs. Pots that were purchased for use during Covid operation had now been used up and future offering would revert to the regular jars, and available in Houses.
- **Request for hot sauce at salad bar; also request for Balsamic vinegar to be left out for supper service**
Tabasco sauce will be made available at the Salad bar; request for Balsamic vinegar at supper service was noted.
- **Salad option often not available after P6 at supper service**
This was noted and the Duty Manager will be asked to make sure it is topped up for pupils arriving after P6.
- **Request for return to bottled ketchup; also request for it to be Heinz rather than non-branded**
Tomato sauce sachets provided during Covid operation were almost all gone now and provision of ketchup would revert to the regular bottles provided in the past. As a point of interest AB advised that the College spends £20k per annum on tomato ketchup. If the current unbranded option was swapped to Heinz this would increase to £50k. Pupils were surprised by this increase and WF pointed out that in the past in taste tests, pupils had not been able to distinguish between Heinz or a non-branded alternative.

- **Requests for Mayonnaise, Honey and Banana Chips**

It would be possible to offer mayonnaise as a sauce option on days when burger and fries option offered, in both Norwood Hall and out-Houses; also the option for honey and banana chips would be looked into.

Mr Barnes was pleased to hear from many representatives that the recent changes in provision of food offered by Norwood Hall was very well received and appreciated by pupils generally. He thought pupils might be interested to know that many changes had been made possible following a large and very generous donation made by a parent, specifically for use in the Catering provision for the school. Mr Barnes invited representatives to suggest any other areas relating to the catering operation where they would like to see some of these funds used to make improvements. Suggestions included:

- **Could more environmentally friendly sauces be available**

AB said that 90% of the food produced was already finished "on site" and therefore environmentally friendly. 3,500 meals are provided each day in Norwood. An example of quantities included 5 boxes (approx 100kg) of bananas used every day. AB invited pupils to email with greater detail about how they see this area being improved.

- **Seating: The blue chairs are very low - request for the bench style seating to return**

Blue seats were introduced as a Covid distancing measure. Yes, it was intended that eventually the traditional style bench seats would return.

- **Additional display of menu options in Norwood Hall**

There are already wall mounted screens displaying menus in Norwood, alongside the counter-top menu cards. Menus are also available on the screens on the doors viewable from Court entrances, they are also published on Firefly and generally on house noticeboards.

- **More staff serving hot chocolate please, to cut down on the queues at peak times**

Urns, similar to those used during Covid, would be considered to speed up service.

- **Greater Selection of Teas; and enhanced system for delivery of hot drinks**

The Catering team will look into this as a possible expansion of current provision. AB explained that service which took place outside in Court during the height of restrictions, had shown that delivery of tea etc. from urns could provide a faster service than pupils making individual cups; (this could include Earl Grey, other speciality teas and other hot drinks). AB explained that the quality of any drinks served in this way was all down to how it was mixed at any one time, as the product was exactly the same as via any other method of delivery in College.

AB thanked all the pupils for attending the meeting and said it was very encouraging to have such enthusiastic feedback. After the restrictions and disruptions to normal service over the past 18 months, he was keen to stress just how much extra work had needed to take place behind the scenes in the Catering department in order to keep meals and services running around the College. AB was delighted to receive such favourable comments about the recent changes and improvements to the service and to hear that the efforts of the Catering team were widely appreciated. Pupils were encouraged to remind their peers to bring any concerns to the attention of the Catering Manager or Mr Barnes and to continue to provide any feedback either via the cards system in Norwood Hall, or through their House representative.

Mr Nightingale, Deputy Head (Pastoral) introduced himself to the pupil representatives and said how pleased he was to hear such constructive feedback and discussion in the group. Since he and his wife had taken up their new posts at the College at the start of this term, he had been very impressed with the catering provision across all areas and in particular liked the focus on improvements to processes that would reduce food waste. He congratulated Mr Barnes on the considerable efforts of the whole team, especially under the very difficult circumstances created by the pandemic. He said the many small improvements suggested would enhance the already impressive offering. Hearing about the large donation recently made by a parent, specifically to be directed to the catering provision, he said it was very good to know that there was such positive support from parents. One idea he thought might be a useful addition, was the use of QR codes against menu options, that pupils could vote on in House to give direct feedback on specific meals. AB noted this and said he would look into whether this could be implemented at the College.

Mr Barnes thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 1.45 pm.

04/10/21