

## Minutes of the Food Focus Meeting held on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022

**Chaired by:** Andy Barnes, Estates Bursar

**Attendees:** Julia Hodgson, Head of Boarding; Ed Nightingale, Deputy Head (Pastoral); Will Finlay (Proctor)

Will Elviss (B1); James Maloney (BH); Henry Lloyd-Baker (C1); Zayaan Malik (C2); Obaayaa Acquah (DA); Phoebe Pilkington (EL); Nigella Broackes (IH); Tilly Norman (MM); Sam Pickering (MO); Ava Dean-Smith (NC); Kai Neu (PR); Jack Harper-Hill (SU); Charlie Kirkwood (TU)

**Absentees:** Charlie Hammond (C3); Stas Lonskiy (CO); Rafe Phillips (LI)

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

- **There was general agreement from pupils that food available was of a good standard and pupils expressed their gratitude.**

AB thanked pupils and said it was good to hear that the service in Norwood Hall and Houses generally, was appreciated, especially as recent shortages in both food supplies and staff, had created additional challenges when maintaining the high standards everyone has come to expect at the College.

- **Issue of portion sizes was raised and inconsistency of quantities served to pupils. Is it possible for pupils to ask for larger portions and can they go back to counter for second helpings?**

Yes, pupils can ask for larger helpings, but at busy times may instead be encouraged to return for seconds instead, to make sure that all pupils can be served initially. The Lighter option was designed as just that – so not ideal if pupils choose to take 2 or even 3 plates as alternative to the main meal option; this makes working out numbers for various options, especially difficult to determine.

- **TU boys asked if Hash Browns and baked beans could be served every day for Breakfast?**

AB said this had been increased following similar request at last meeting, but pointed out that to have this on offer everyday was not a particularly healthy option!

- **Pupils attending second sitting often find food has run out; could more be made available please? Also, shortages of options still available for pupils following P6 at supper service.**

This has been raised before and will be looked at again to ensure sufficient of both options is available to replenish counters for second sitting at lunch. The Duty Manager will be asked to make sure food is topped up for pupils arriving after P6 at the supper service.

- **Pasta and sauces provided as Early lunches for pupils with matches, was not always well received by some pupils – with some complaints about undercooked pasta or about the sauces. Could the sauce be served separately please, so that pupils can determine whether they have plain pasta, or choose to have with sauce.**

This was also raised at the last meeting and AB pointed out again that this option would continue as was often booked by Sports Coaches and is the most efficient way to provide quantities required for this “early” sitting for the numbers involved. He will look into how the sauces are delivered.

- PR pupils asked if Chicken Katsu could return to the menu please.  
 AB said this was currently on the Norwood Hall menu regularly, so this should also be featuring in out-Houses. He will mention this to the team to ensure it happens.
- Lots of feedback on Vegetarian options. Pupils asked whether there could be a vegetarian sausage option available at breakfast.  
 Yes, this should be possible. AB will look into it.
- Plated salad options often have meat included – could more meat-free options be available please? Also, could sauces/dressings be optional or served on the side? Could seeds be provided on the salad bar for pupils to add to their meal?  
 Yes, more meat-free salad options and optional dressings are possible - AB will discuss this with the Head Chef. This was raised at the last meeting in relation to the Deli option. AB said that providing seeds was not an easy thing to offer when considering the scale on which lunches needed to be provided and this would also be very costly, especially with budgets already tighter due to shortages etc.
- Soup option – Could this be offered more regularly as a supper option again please?  
 Yes, AB will look into reintroducing this – perhaps in mugs as had been an option during the pandemic and was very popular. AB said this would mean that bread rolls would need to be available on the counter too.
- Sunday Night options – pupils asked if some of the current options offered at lunch could be offered for supper as well, so that pupils could make up their own choice on the plate.  
 Yes, this might be possible and would be looked at.
- Apples/Satsumas – complaints about quality  
 AB agreed that occasionally some of the fruit at this time of year is getting to the end of its natural season and storage in cold weather can affect shelf-life; this together with supply problems meant quality is sometimes affected, but he would talk to the suppliers about quality control.
- Sweet potatoes are more popular than regular jacket potatoes – could the numbers be increased please?  
 Yes, AB will discuss with Head Chef and suggest that the balance of quantities for both types of jacket potato is looked into.
- Teryaki Salmon / Burritos / Chicken Fajitas / Ravioli Verde / Tortelloni / Sweet & Sour Chicken with noodles – request for old favourites to return to the menu please. Pupils also mentioned that often two popular options would be available at the same meal, ie. Turkey Schnitzel and Duck Wraps – could this be avoided please?  
 AB noted this and said he would ask the Head Chef to consider these options when planning future menus. The aim with choices was to get a balance, but it was acknowledged that sometimes this would mean pupils having to choose between two favourite dishes.
- Could a “Berry Bar” be offered at Breakfast / Lunch, rather than pre-selected fruit pots currently offered, so that pupils could add to porridge, or simply select a dish of fruit of their choice, rather than wasting elements that they did not like.  
 AB said this would be quite a costly option to offer, especially out of season, but might be

possible in Lent/Summer terms when UK fruit would be in season and therefore more cost-efficient when budgeting. AB will discuss single-fruit option pots with Norwood team.

- **Request for Sweet Chilli sauce and Soy sauce at salad bar please. Request for mayonnaise to be provided when Fish & Chips served.**

AB said this was certainly possible, in the same way that Tabasco sauce was now available, having been requested at a previous meeting. AB will ask for the sauces to be provided at the salad bar in Norwood Hall. However, mayonnaise is expensive when served this way. Sachets not a good choice for the environment or for the budget, so this may not be possible. Tartar sauce is provided.

- **Could there generally be more salads and meat free options made available for main meals please? Also, the sliced Cucumber offered on the salad bar is very popular and has often run out by the time the later sittings arrive in Norwood at lunchtime. AB said that there was definitely a greater demand for meat free options now and this would be communicated to the Head Chef, so that the balance of options could sway towards this rather than always appearing to be in favour of meat eaters. A request will be made to kitchen staff to refill popular items on the salad bar at peak times, to ensure that pupils all have an opportunity to enjoy a variety of options, regardless of the time they arrive in the hall.**

- **Some pupils felt that the salad bar was very basic in comparison with options that had been available in the past. The salad garnish added to the sandwich options was often not wanted and would therefore be a big waste – could this be avoided?**

AB said it was good to hear that pupils are making good use of the salad bar and that any impression of reduced options could be due to current supply problems, resulting from the pandemic. Yes, it was acknowledged that the salad garnish on sandwiches was not always wanted, but this did often encourage some pupils to eat salad where they might not choose it as an option.

- **The recent change in the quality of Pan au Chocolats was raised. Could the previous type return to the menu please? Could cinnamon rolls be offered again, as well please? Would bagels be offered again for breakfast?**

AB agreed that the quality/flavour of the current ones supplied were of an inferior quality and hoped that a return to the previous supplier would be possible one day; shortages and difficulties in the supply chain were likely to be the cause of this. Cinnamon rolls would be considered again as an alternative sometimes. AB said absence of bagels mentioned could be another supply problem, as would have been ordered specifically by the House (in this case MM) and would be down to their catering team to order; these could be considered again, but not easy to offer on the scale required in Norwood Hall.

- **Request for Coronation Chicken on the salad bar more often, as this remains a very popular choice.**

This was raised at the last meeting and AB confirmed that it will continue to be offered, but was not practical or economical to offer it on a daily basis. The salad bar was designed to offer a salad “bowl” to accompany main dishes, rather than a choice of additional protein options.

- **Request for greater variety of snack options at break – flapjacks or doughnuts instead of biscuits please? Would an option of fruit pots be possible at break?**

A return to a wider variety of breaktime snacks will be looked at, but biscuits would remain the predominant option for Saturdays due to House routines and time constraints. Berry pots were not a practical option at this time of day because of time pressure for staff, leading up to lunch service.

- **Could the sandwiches supplied for packed lunches and as the Deli option, please be made with less dressings, or with simpler fillings? This would mean the same offering would appeal to a greater number of pupils and thus remain an alternative to the hot option.**  
AB will discuss with the kitchen team.
- **Request for different options for suppers – ie. Fish Fingers or Egg Sandwiches**  
This would be looked at as possible alternatives.
- **Please could the theme nights return? Chinese themed menus and Steak nights were remembered from pre-pandemic times.**  
Yes, this could certainly be offered again in future. In the past such evenings would be organised when there were available funds in the budget.
- **Sunday lunch – could there be a simple pasta option please?**  
This request would be considered.
- **Changes to menus shown on Firefly often led to disappointment when other options were also not suitable for special dietary requirements ie Gluten free or Vegan.**  
This is unfortunate but sometimes changes were unavoidable due to supply chain problems. In such circumstances, pupils should be aware that they can always ask at the serving counter if they need a particular type of meal which has either run out, or if no suitable option is on offer.
- **The issue of seating in Norwood Hall was raised again. The blue chairs are not very comfortable - request for the bench style seating to return**  
AB said the blue seats were introduced as a Covid distancing measure. It was intended that eventually the traditional style bench seats would return.
- **Pupils asked if there could be an electronic voting option for pupil feedback**  
Several pupils have asked whether there could be a more direct way to provide quick feedback on individual menus or issues. Mr Nightingale had previously talked about this at the last meeting; Mr Nightingale and Mr Barnes said it might be possible to implement a system to enable pupil feedback via QR codes in House and this would be discussed further.

Mr Barnes announced plans for a Food Festival on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April, where pupils would be able to experience different world cuisine, from 15 pop-up tents. Pupils will be given a number (3) of random tickets which would be redeemable against menu choices from specific tents, so that a broad range of options are tried by pupils, perhaps ones that they would not have chosen themselves. Norwood staff would be actively involved in the selection of different cuisines because they would be encouraged to suggest food from their own cultures.

Mr Nightingale said that he had received lots of very favourable feedback from pupils since the last meeting; in particular the formal dinners for the Hundred and Sixth form had been widely appreciated

by pupils. He asked if thanks from the pupil body could be passed on to members of the Catering team please.

The issue of queues in Norwood at the lunchtime service was raised. Historically there has been a general perception from Lower School pupils that when Upper School pupils enter Norwood at lunchtime, they don't always join the back of the queue and sometimes appear to just go to the front. AB/WF said that this did tend to happen as yeargroups "collided" in the queue. This had first started to happen since losing the 5-10 minute gap between first and second sittings. However, Pupil representatives at the meeting said that this type of behaviour had generally improved recently.

Mr Barnes thanked all the pupils for their input to the meeting and was pleased to hear the wide range of feedback from Houses. This would be noted and discussed with the catering team. In summary he said that it was clear that there was now a much greater interest in vegetarian and healthy eating options and this will be taken into consideration when planning future menus.

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

31/01/22