

FOOD FOCUS MEETING MONDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2023

Chaired by: Mike Naworynsky, Director of Operations & Edward Morton, Catering Operations Manager

Attendees: Yohann Clement, Senior Sous Chef (rep Head Chef)

Will Elviss, B1; Jomei Greensall, Barton Hill; Henry Lloyd Baker, C1; Austin Crapper, C2; Charlie Hammond, C3; Obaa Yaa Acquah, Dancy; Rafe Phillips, Littlefield; Milly Gladstone, Mill Mead; Atalanta Royle, New Court; Kai Neu, Preshute; Charlie Kirkwood, Turner.

Absentees: Andrew Nicholson, Cotton; Elmhurst rep (name TBC); Flora Percy-Davies, Ivy; Roe Gough, Morris; Jake Bostock, Summerfield.

1. Introduction

MN asked all Food Focus representatives to feedback on how they thought the food provision was going so far this year. MN reminded pupils that the forum was about getting a nutritional balance for pupils, about likes and dislikes - as not all pupils will share the same views on this - and looking to the future.

MN thanked all the reps for their input and reminded the group that if they were ever in Norwood and had a point to make or a question, they could speak to MN, EM, the duty senior Chef or the Proctor; feedback is important, and all their points are valuable and will be considered. The Committee had driven forward significant improvements over the last year and should be congratulated on their proactive and constructive approach.

This year there is a nominated Food Prefect: Aoife Guinness and she will be a key member of the Food Focus Team.

Feedback was positive, and MN and EM spoke about how to balance what is on offer with what pupils want (i.e., there will inevitably be something not everyone likes sometimes, or which is unaffordable or unsustainable).

Some of the reps asked about the Year 8 Experience Day held last Saturday and the perceived excellence of the lunch. Chef explained that the food served for pupils at those events is different because it is cooked in much smaller quantities – some recipes just do not lend themselves to large scale cooking. Where possible the chefs want to make sure that menus are varied and of a high quality.

1. Food Feedback

Grab and Go Pots

- These are popular and are a result of the committees request last year.
- This range will continue to be developed (e.g. pasta pots)
- Offering is currently approximately 50 pots per day, having started at 15 pots per day, but this will be increased to a max of 150 pots per day over the coming year as demand grows and tastes develop.
- The Grab & Go pots are available from 1.00pm and are geared towards Sixth form pupils because they have more time constraints

Breakfast

- The Preshute rep noted a lack of consistency with these (i.e., not always cooked well or certainly not as good as Norwood). YC explained that outhouse hash browns were oven cooked rather than fried which may account for the variation.
- It was also reported that Hash Browns sometimes seemed undercooked (in Norwood): EM will investigate.
- Some portion sizes are smaller: YC will look at the suppliers
- Scrambled egg was also a problem in outhouses – sometimes being overcooked: YC will investigate.

Food offerings

- Changes brought in to improve Greasy Wednesdays have been popular and less popular menu items will be reduced (i.e., the frankfurters)
- Katsu chicken curry is on the menu as part of the 4-week rotation.
- Can branded ketchup be available in Norwood Hall? MN said they would investigate this again but there is a considerable price difference in products. It is also worth remembering that taste tests have revealed that the brand name item has normally been ranked lower than our current supplies.
- Ice cream on a more regular basis? MN explained that ice cream is hard to serve up to large quantities due to the problem of melting and this increases wastage
- Healthier snack options are being considered for all houses

Pupils would like more pizza to be offered

- The pizza is on a rotation basis and will be offered approximately every two weeks

Pupils requested increased breakfast provisions:

- Bagels
- Granola, bran or Weetabix as healthier options
- EM will look at this

Second Helpings:

- Pupils talked about if they asked for second helpings, could they please automatically get given them. There was talk about some servers not allowing second helpings. Rugby players were cited as an example of needing second helpings. EM will brief the serving staff on making sure that pupils are allowed extra if requested but made the point that pupils should eat what they take to reduce wastage.

Theme Nights

- These are popular and there will be two of them in October: Caribbean Night and Halloween. We plan a theme night for approximately one a month

Allergen/ Diets Servery

- This must be by the hot food service area
- There is always gluten free and lactose free available alongside the vegetarian and vegan offerings and other special dietary support is provided. The Food Focus Reps raised the question that the availability is not always obvious, especially at supper time. EM will work on these being more obvious to pupils and make sure the evening provision is similar to lunch
- Vegan offerings are increasingly being introduced (i.e. even moving to have a plant-based mayo) to help pupils try different food options.
- All pupils are able to try any of the meals offered (e.g. plant based)

- The Food Focus Reps felt that some of the breakfast offerings for pupils with allergies were too limited (i.e., they do not always want a cooked breakfast). This is a challenge for catering, but we are examining all options. The introduction of gluten free sausages as standard alongside standard items such as mushrooms, tomatoes, gluten free toast and a range of dairy free milks mean that there is a considerable offering already in place. A variety of cereals are already offered.

Timings for snacks and meals

- There was discussion about where pupils in Preshute could take their break: currently Norwood pupils have their break in Norwood. Preshute rep mentioned that most pupils are going over to the house for break rather than going to Norwood. MN is talking to the Dame at Preshute and will investigate the best way of managing this but time between lessons and weather conditions need to be factored in. MN suggested we look at seasonal offerings (so avoiding traipsing back and forwards during the winter months)?
- Pupils talked about the stagger issue with which year group eats when. The Proctor and the Second Master are working on adjusting the stagger to ensure the right amount of food is ready at the right times and to reduce queuing. This issue will be monitored.
- Pupils spoke about Prefects and Wellbeing Ambassadors being more mindful of Shell pupils - some of whom were finding mealtimes challenging. Pupils talked about P6 suppers and asked why the salad bar is less than lunchtime. EM reminded the committee that the evening salad bar had been introduced last year following the request of the committee. However, we need to balance demand with not putting out too much food that then had to be thrown away. Seasonality is also an issue and the salad offering at lunchtime is more plentiful due to higher demand. The evening offer is reduced to make sure we minimise food waste. Pupils in Littlefield, Preshute, Cotton and Summerfield asked about perceived inconsistency in their meals.
- EM talked about the need to recruit more chefs (vacancies in this sector are extremely high) and that they are trying to find people who can cook consistently for pupils in these houses
- Menus are being developed to help ensure consistency across the Houses and more in line with what Norwood Hall is serving

Female Match Teas

- The female pupils sometimes find that the standard match tea (e.g., sausage and chips) is not as appetising as the male pupils find them!
- Aoife agreed to ask what sort of items the female teams might appreciate (and not just the Parents' cake-based match tea!)

1. Environmental

MN and EM talked about how Marlborough College and the Food Focus Reps can help the college tackle food waste.

- Food waste is a major issue in Norwood Hall
- Kitchen waste is under control but the plate waste (i.e., what comes back on trays and plates) is not
- This is due to a combination of factors and mainly education.
- Pupils are sometimes taking too much food and then not eating it; for example, if a pupil takes two yoghurts but only eats one, even though the second yoghurt may not have been opened, it has to be thrown away. Same goes for pieces of fruit or breakfast items.
- On average, we generate over 60kg of food waste per lunch and dinner sitting in Norwood Hall

- This does not include kitchen waste which is more actively managed with items being recycled to other meals (e.g. soups etc)

MN and EM asked pupils to give real thought to how food waste can be tackled

- It is about educating the whole school population about how we can reduce food waste
- While all food waste goes to a biodigester, and is converted into methane gas, the cost of this process is relatively expensive.
- Educating the school population about how we recycle (in general) needs to improve.
- It was suggested that MN attend assembly to help get the message across.
- It was noted that, if someone throws away a recyclable container in a recycling bin, but if it has any food in it, the contents of the bin will go to the waste chain instead as the bin is treated as 'contaminated' and cannot be recycled.
- The waste management company that Marlborough College works with has invited pupils to visit their premises to see how they work. This will help pupils to understand the process which will help them to become more aware of how they can help
- MN and EM said that the college has a good handle on our waste ratio from the kitchen. Efficient food management means that food can be chilled down again for use later or in a different way (i.e., adding to a sauce or making a soup, or making grab and go pots).
- The pupils commented that if they had more time to eat, they would possibly waste less food. They sometimes take food and then just do not have time to eat it.
- YC mentioned that he sometimes asks pupils why they were taking such a large amount of food -but he felt it would be better if the Food Focus Reps could get involved with more monitoring and education of their peers
- MN will report back to the academic team on the perceived pressure that is felt about meal timings.
- The Food Focus Reps were incredibly positive about wanting to get involved to educate about food waste
- There was a suggestion for times when pupils could 'self-scrape' their plates and trays to see what is going into the bins as this could raise awareness; this is planned for after Half Term

Packaging

- Marlborough College has joined the University of Oxford Colleges food consortium which give MC a stronger place in the market to source better packaging and sustainable ingredients
- MC has now sourced recyclable pots rather than compostable pots which are of questionable efficacy and are more expensive.

1. Norwood Hall Refurbishment

- A consultancy (Litmus Group) will soon be coming into school and speaking with pupils to get the student body view on what they would like to see in any refurbishment project
- The hope is to design a solution which would allow Norwood Hall to be totally refurbished within the next few years
- In the meantime, the flooring in front of the serving counters will be replaced this half term to improve the area.
- Early estimates of cost to refurbish Norwood Hall are well over £1M dependant on the final design; funding would also need to be found but the College is moving forward with this work

Pupils raised questions about:

- Needing more storage for their books and papers. MN will discuss with Second Master/Proctor
- Better water pressure in Norwood Hall (an ongoing issue which can only be improved as part of a wider refurbishment)
- Possible mezzanine or upper floor for Norwood Hall will be fed onto the consultants
- Would it be better to build a brand new Hall on a different part of the school site? MN observed that all options would be considered but the cost of a new build facility would be significant and is not currently a planned option.

MN thanked EM for his service to Marlborough College over the past year as this was his last meeting.

Meeting ended at 14.02