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Sodexo get thumbs up from Richmond's children

Sodexo, who provides meals for 35 primary and four special schools in Richmond, has today launched its new summer menu, to coincide with the announcement that it has seen a 76% increase in the uptake of meals across the borough.

Since taking over the contract in September of 2007 from a rival company, Sodexo has seen an unprecedented increase in the uptake of meals.

The success has been attributed to the communication between Sodexo, parents, teachers, council representatives, and most importantly, the pupils themselves.

Sodexo has already held 20 taster sessions in some of the borough's schools, where parents and pupils were given the opportunity to give feedback on the meals that are being served in school dining rooms. As the new menu is launched, Sodexo will co-ordinate taster sessions in every single school in the borough.

Sodexo's offer, called 'Just Joules', is a concept designed to make lunchtime fun and attractive to children, whilst educating them to choose a healthy, balanced meal and meeting food-based standards set out by the Government.

The new menus will include new healthy fruit smoothies, more seasonal produce and seasonal desserts. Old favourites such as roast dinners are still proving popular with the children and will be included on the menus.

Sodexo has also changed their cycle from the previous three weeks, to a four week cycle, enabling the children to experience more of a variety in their menus, particularly ethnic variations such as Chinese, Italian and Indian dishes.

Cllr Malcolm Eady, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Education, said:

"The reports I have received from the schools have been very positive and indicate that this new contract has been a huge success. The take-up of meals has increased significantly and we are, therefore, planning to invest more in the school meals service to continue to support the success of the last six months.



"The new summer menus look very appetising, nutritional and fun, which hopefully will increase take-up even more."

Malcolm Rivers, head teacher at Hampton school, and Richmond Head's Forum representative, said: "We are very pleased with the menus Sodexo have provided and are very much looking forward to seeing the new options. The food quality is much improved and children now approach lunchtime with more enthusiasm, as a result, many more are taking up the school meal option".

Mark Hartley, head teacher at Barnes primary school, added: "Before Sodexo had taken over, a number of parents of children who attend this school had raised a number of concerns about the service. They are now delighted with the food and the children have expressed great satisfaction about their new school meals."

Ian Henderson, business development manager, Sodexo Education said: "In the four months leading up to December, we conducted around 20 food tasting sessions for parents and children at different schools in Richmond. After every session there was an increase in uptake of meals at each site visited."

Jeremy Alderton, director of business development, Sodexo, said: "We are delighted with the increase in uptake and our new menus. Together with Richmond Council, we have worked hard at producing menus which are appealing to the children whilst meeting nutritional requirements".

Sodexo have more than 50 years' experience in the education market and has a healthy portfolio of clients in this sector.

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About Sodexo

In the UK and Ireland, Sodexo employs 43,000 employees, and provides food and facilities management services to clients at over 2,300 locations in the corporate services, education, healthcare, leisure and defence sectors.

Sodexo is part of the Sodexo group, the leading global provider of food and facilities management services, with more than 332,000 employees at 28,300 sites in 80 countries.