

PRESS RELEASE

APPG Chair for school food samples Sodexo's new Food & Co offer

15 January 2019

Sodexo welcomed the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for school food, Sharon Hodgson to Ridgeway Primary Academy in South Shields on Friday 11 January to see its new Food & Co school meals offer. Ms Hodgson is MP for Washington & Sunderland West and Shadow Minister for Public Health.

Food & Co. by Sodexo is an exciting new approach to school catering, Sodexo's marketing manager for schools Rosemary Molinari led the development of the new offer. Rosemary is a public health practitioner and founding member of APPG for school food. The new offer was created following 12 months of research and using market insights and was first rolled out to schools in January 2018.

Sodexo's contract with Ridgeway Primary Academy began in September 2018. A vital element of the new offer is using pupil-led insight and in July 2018 the team met with a group of children from years 5 and 6 to ask them to help design the dining hall for the new academic year.

The pupils helped decide the colour scheme and look of the dining hall choosing from a selection of ideas and colours provided by Sodexo. The hall was then transformed over the summer to create a new bespoke dining hall for the school.

The new menu will be regularly reviewed by a group of five children from years 5 and 6 who represent their fellow pupils and have become Sodexo's Agents of Change. These Agents will taste the new dishes, and gather feedback from their fellow pupils. They will then work with Paula Lumsden the school catering manager and her team to make sure the new menu meets their needs whilst learning about what goes on in the kitchen in creating and preparing the meals.

Sharon Hodgson, MP commented: *"It was a pleasure to meet the pupils at Ridgeway Primary Academy, together with the team at Sodexo they have created a vibrant school meal offer which the children love.*

It is so important to engage children from a young age in the importance of eating a balanced meal every day, and Sodexo is doing this in an enjoyable and collaborative way with the school and the children."

Food & Co was developed as a result of research with pupils from aged 7 up to 16 years which sought to find out what food they like to eat, as well as why and how they want to eat it.

The research revealed that pupils have a more sophisticated palate than ever before, they have a strong understanding of restaurant brands and want to eat in a relaxed, informal environment that allows them time and space to connect with friends.

Sodexo's new Food & Co school meals offer is a four-week menu cycle using 'Five Foodie Days' based on the following:

- **Planet Earth Day:** a celebration of plant-based foods to encourage pupils to try interesting vegetables.
- **Street Food Day:** dishes inspired by high-street trends and served in our hot-box to increase the fun-factor and create a more grown-up dining experience.
- **World Food Day:** exploring new foods and tastes from across the globe.
- **Originals Day:** classic and familiar dishes that pupils love to eat.
- **Favourite Friday:** popular foods for the end of the week.

Matt Garner, managing director, government schools at Sodexo UK & Ireland said: *"We are thrilled to have been able to show Sharon Hodgson our new offer at Ridgeway. The pupils and the team at Ridgeway have been fantastic and really helped us create a school dining service that is appealing and fun and we look forward to continuing to work with the school and its Agents."*

Director of Ridgeway Primary Academy, Michael McCarthy added, *"It was great that the school's leadership and pupils were able to have input into the new design for the dining hall and in what dishes are on the menu. This has certainly helped with school meal uptake."*

"We needed to find ways to interest children more in their food and to involve them in decisions surrounding what they were eating. Sodexo's innovative 'Agents for Change' approach has led us to redesign our dining hall in line with our pupils' views and needs, and has helped us rethink the way that we provide nutritious and balanced meals."

Sodexo was awarded the eight-year, £11.2m contract with Tyne Coast College Group earlier last year. Building on its six-year relationship with South Tyneside College, one of the institutions in the newly formed group, Sodexo's new contract includes the delivery of catering and student accommodation services at six sites in North and South Shields. In addition to Ridgeway Primary Academy, Sodexo is delivering services to South Tyneside College, South Shields Marine School and Queen Alexandria Campus.

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