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HEALTHY SCHOOLS RATING SCHEME: A NEW MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Letting parents know that children are eating well
at school and learning to keep themselves healthy

March 2019

A report from School Food Matters in collaboration with:

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INTRODUCTION

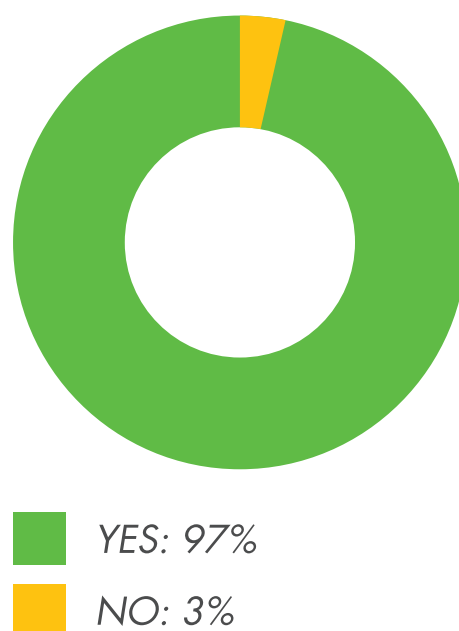
As part of their Childhood Obesity Plan (chapters 1 and 2), Government has proposed a **Healthy Schools Rating Scheme** (HSRS) which would be used to evaluate how schools are supporting children to keep themselves healthy.

At School Food Matters (SFM), we believe that a HSRS that works for everyone can be developed through consultation and collaboration. As such, we turned to parents, school staff and governors to find out their views. We asked respondents to tell us: Are they in favour of a HSRS? Should it be mandatory? Should it be monitored by Ofsted? Should it apply to all state-funded schools?

KEY FINDINGS

- **97%** of people surveyed are **in favour of a Healthy Schools Rating Scheme (HSRS)**.
- When asked if the scheme **should be mandatory**, **85%** of respondents agreed.
- **93%** are in favour of the HSRS being **applied to all state-funded schools**.
- When asked if **Ofsted should monitor** the scheme, **72%** of people surveyed, and **76%** of parents, agreed.

Figure 1: Are you in favour of a Healthy Schools Rating Scheme?



WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY?

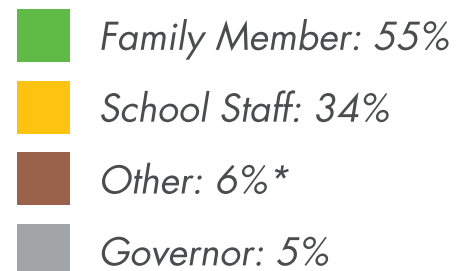
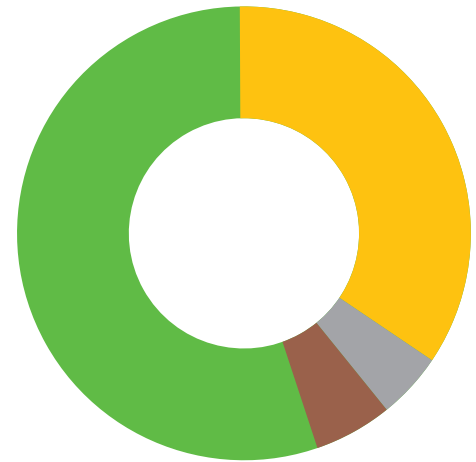
Responses were received from 987 individuals and came predominantly from family members: parents, grandparents, carers (55%), school staff (34%), and governors (5%).

Some respondents also noted if they held additional roles that were relevant to the issue such as working for a local authority, being a health practitioner or working for a related charity.

As these respondents represented small groups that predominantly overlapped with the other categories, we chose to segment the data only by family members, school staff, and governors.

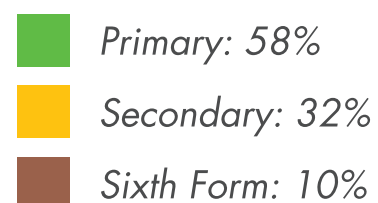
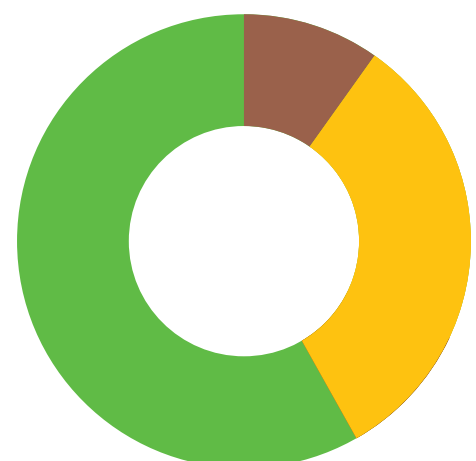
Primary (58%) and secondary (32%) school settings were the main school settings represented by the respondents. Various comments also noted that their views applied to early years as well.

Figure 2:
Who were the respondents?



*Local Authority: 3% / Health: 2% / Civil Society: 1%

Figure 3:
Relevant school setting



WHY SUPPORT A HEALTHY SCHOOLS RATING SCHEME?

The overwhelming support for a HSRS (97%) was accompanied by many comments about the concerns family members, school staff and governors have. The rise in childhood obesity, overarching worries about student health, and the poor quality of school meals were some of the more prevalent comments expressed. Parents were particularly worried about how to keep their children healthy and how schools could support them.

“My 12 year old has put 2 inches on around his waist since starting high school in August 18. He says there is muffins and cookies among other things on offer, as much as we educate him about health, these items are quite tempting for kids.”

Secondary school parent

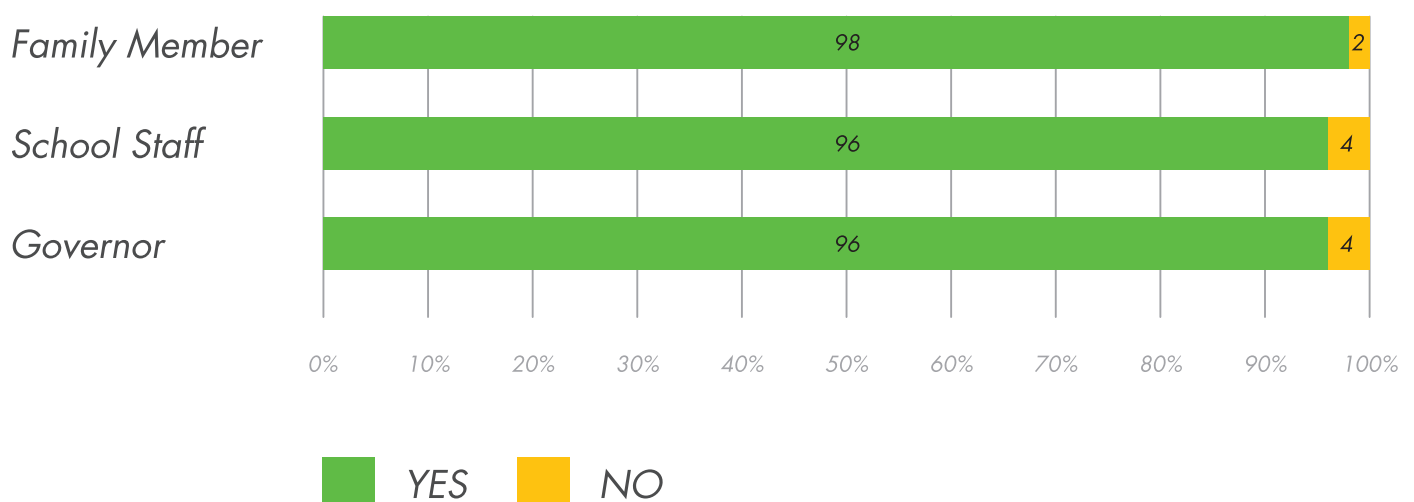
“School food is generally poor. My children yesterday had pizza, chips and ice cream. That is not a healthy balanced meal and is increasing childhood obesity.”

Primary school parent

A HSRS can be a first step towards alleviating some of those concerns because, at its core, **the scheme is a tool to monitor what is currently being done and check for compliance of statutory regulations**; regulations to ensure that school meals meet School Food Standards and that cooking and nutrition be taught within the curriculum.

Across all segments of the survey group, respondents were strongly in favour of a scheme with almost all parents supporting the scheme (98%):

Figure 4: Are you in favour of a HSRS (Segmented)?



WHY A RATING SCHEME IN SCHOOLS?

We acknowledge that schools cannot be solely responsible for children's health but we must recognise that **schools are a unique environment to positively influence children.** Many respondents spoke about how schools should serve as role models that help ensure children are well fed so that they are ready to learn.



"For many students, schools are the only place where they can learn about healthy eating, develop the skills to cook healthy food and to eat healthy meals."

Secondary school teacher and governor

"A school's role is to ensure successful outcomes for children and help them achieve their full potential. Developing skills that enable children to lead healthy and fulfilling lives must include the benefits of healthy eating and exercise."

Primary school staff member

"I consider such a scheme a basic requirement in this obesogenic environment. We need to instil in our schools (teachers/kitchens/students) the fundamental importance of healthy eating. There would be less absenteeism through sickness, better concentration in class and therefore optimising the teaching time and benefits to children's learning. Short term investment in training and delivery, for long term (lifelong) gains."

Secondary school parent

“Children are not able to learn effectively unless they have good health and well-being so it should be made a priority. Although schools should not be expected to ‘parent’ children in healthy lifestyles the school has a responsibility to be a good role model and set a good example in terms of prioritizing your health and well-being.”

Primary school parent

A TOOL TO HELP SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

A HSRS is an opportunity to celebrate schools' successes and help those that need more support. With recognition created through the scheme, schools will be able to better communicate how they support children's health and well-being and give parents confidence that their school prioritises healthy eating and food education.

SCHOOLS ARE SUPPORTED:

"Some parents are not aware of all the measures schools go to, to make sure the children have the chance of a healthy life."

Primary school teacher

"A great positive idea, excellent way of educating and supporting catering teams and fostering a whole school inclusive approach to school food."

Primary & secondary school catering staff

“As a teacher, I think it would be a good way to be recognised for all the work our school, and others, do to promote, educate and support healthy eating. Would also ensure all schools address this issue consistently.”

Primary school teacher

PARENTS ARE SUPPORTED:

“Schools have a duty of care to children, why should that not extend to what they are fed? I would love to know how schools compare in what they are offering and this would really help.”

Primary and secondary school parent



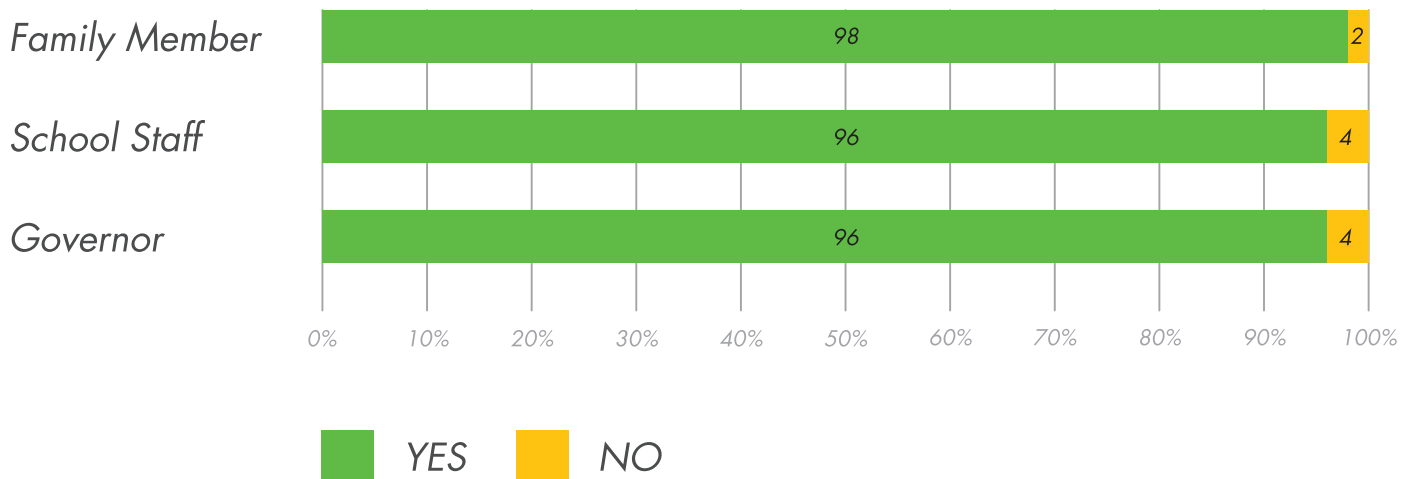
"A clear vision for all schools to follow and implement, and as a parent you know the same standard is being applied no matter where you go to school."

Primary school parent

WHY SHOULD THE SCHEME APPLY TO ALL SCHOOLS?

All respondents were very clear that a HSRS should apply to all state-funded schools. Many included comments about the unacceptable current loopholes that exist for academies when it comes to School Food Standards and food education.

Figure 5: Should the scheme apply to all state-funded schools?



"All children deserve healthy food regardless of the funding status of the school they attend."

Primary school catering staff

"The obesity problem and healthy eating can only be tackled if all are involved."

Primary and secondary school parent

“All children, regardless of what school they go to should be able to learn in an environment that prioritises their health and well-being as part of their learning.”

Primary school parent

"Absolutely – and I'd go further to say that anywhere where there are children should have to adhere to the scheme. Our children's health and future is more important than the politics of school types."

Primary school governor

WHY A MANDATORY SCHEME?

Overall, respondents are in favour (85%) of the scheme being mandatory. The strongest justification was that making it mandatory provides a level playing field for everyone involved including the schools, caterers, parents and students.

“It needs to be mandatory across all schools in order to have a valuable impact. Children deserve a level playing field when it comes to health, and the only way to help to ensure that is through a robust mandatory scheme that applies to all schools. Also, the Prime Minister has committed to reducing childhood obesity and ill health, so the scheme needs to be mandatory.”

Primary and secondary school parent

“Time and time again, we have seen that optional schemes have limited impact. I think it’s important that this scheme is rigorous, mandatory and universal, and this will enable a rising tide that will lift all ships and improve standards across the board.”

Primary school governor



“This would ensure it takes place and is consistent. It also allows publications and sharing of best practice.”

Secondary school parent

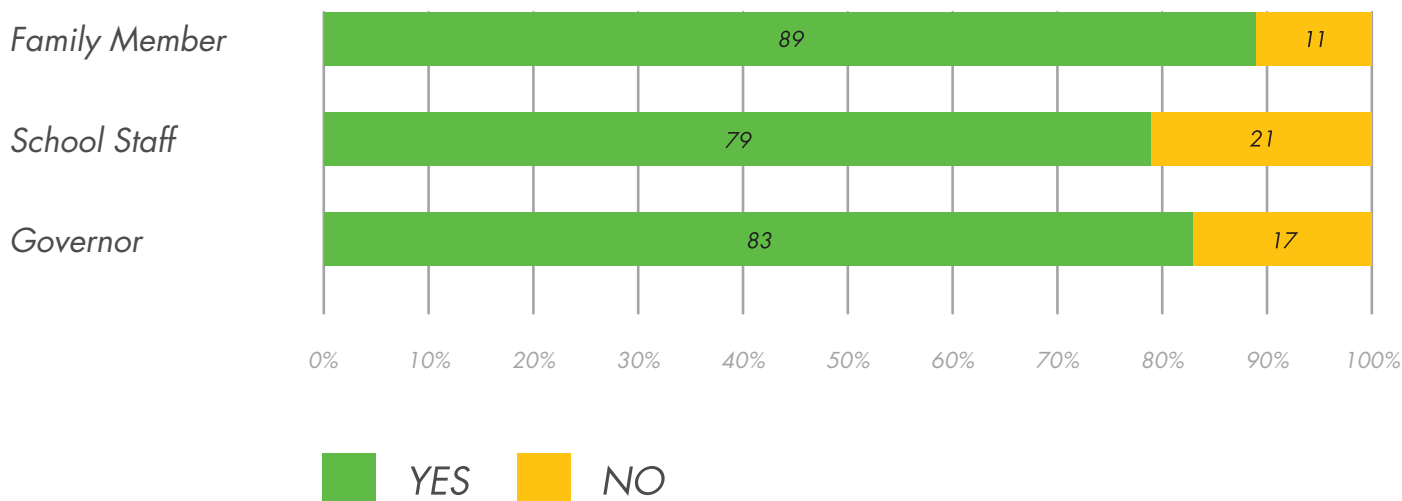
“If the scheme is brought in, it will need monitoring. At the moment there is no monitoring of School Food Standards which puts companies that are compliant at a disadvantage.”

Primary school catering staff

WHY A MANDATORY SCHEME?

When broken down by segmentations, family members are strongly in favour (89%) with governors (83%) and school staff (79%) lagging slightly behind.

Figure 6: Should the scheme be mandatory (segmented)?



Some of the concerns expressed by school staff centred around feeling overworked and worried that the scheme could add additional burdens. There were also comments about fears that a HSRS could undermine some of the great work that has already been achieved by schools through existing award frameworks.

“As a governor I have a concern that this might replace much of the work we have done on healthy schools. Through the local programme in Westminster we have been able to focus on emotional well-being and mental health in addition to healthy eating, oral health and healthy weight.”

Primary school parent and governor

That said, **we view the HSRS as a tool that would work in conjunction with existing frameworks** that would help schools provide evidence of success. National monitoring under a HSRS would help bring cohesion and clarity across the multitude of awards and accreditations. This was expressed by some respondents as well.

“Creating a network of schools who show good practice and have models of how to implement easy schemes to raise the amount they are doing to keep the children healthy, would be a good idea and could help schools work together nationally.”

Primary school teacher

WHY A SCHEME MONITORED BY OFSTED?

Government proposed that the HSRS be monitored by Ofsted as part of their Childhood Obesity Plan (chapters 1 and 2). Overall, respondents are in favour of Ofsted monitoring (72%) primarily because Ofsted is the main monitoring body for schools in England and schools focus on delivering what they measure.

“Schools will never prioritise something that is not monitored by Ofsted as they will always put first the things that Ofsted measure them on.”

Primary and secondary school parent

“Reasonable as they already run an inspection regime.”

Parent and secondary school teacher

“If it is not, there will be no motivator to do it. Without Ofsted monitoring, only the engaged schools will partake in the scheme which further increases the gap in quality of provision.”

Primary school parent

“I have no doubt Ofsted is under a huge amount of pressure to deliver as it is but additional funding must be made available to bring this initiative within their remit. This will give the accreditation the gravitas it deserves and will apply the appropriate amount of pressure to deliver real positive change at a time when it is needed so badly by our children and young people.”

Primary and secondary school teacher

“When Ofsted speaks, head teachers listen and take action. Everything else is lip service.”

Secondary school parent

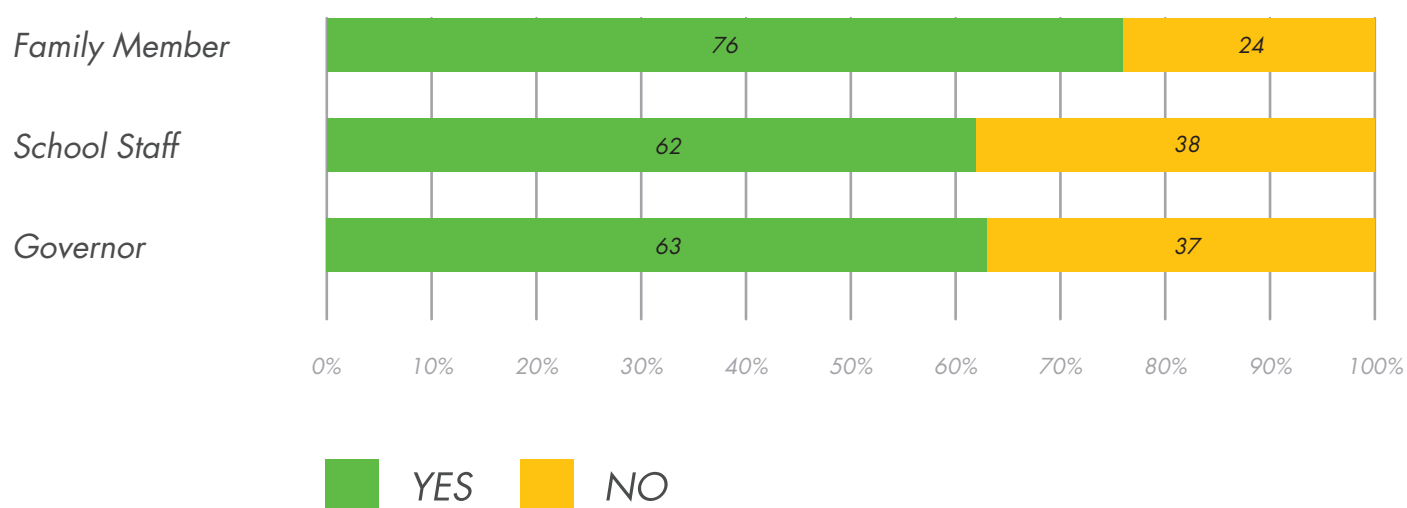
“Ofsted are regulators of quality of teaching and sound environment, therefore ought to assess this too.”

Primary school governor

WHY A SCHEME MONITORED BY OFSTED?

Yet, this question presented the most significant difference in opinions between the different groups of participants.

Figure 7: Should the scheme be monitored by Ofsted (segmented)?



Across the board, most concerns touched upon the fact that Ofsted does not currently have expertise in nutrition so they would need to be trained or supported in order to monitor it adequately. Concerns specifically from school staff and governors highlighted some of the current challenges in the school/Ofsted relationship.

"I feel this would add further to teacher/staff stress. Measurement should be done through admissible evidence to Local Authority or Department for Education."

Secondary school staff

"It should be about health and well-being of the children, not performance of the school. Ofsted is too data driven and doesn't take into consideration the whole child. Also the rules change with every education minister!"

Primary school parent and governor

WHY A SCHEME MONITORED BY OFSTED?

“It should be part of the factors that Ofsted use in judging the performance of a school, and it should be referred to under the new Behaviour and Welfare Judgement. (If the consultation brings that in).”

Primary school governor

“I’m not sure Ofsted are best ‘qualified’ to assess/monitor this. The concern is that they will just do a ‘tick box’ assessment without the discernment or detail that would make such a scheme more than a ‘box ticking’ exercise.”

Secondary school parent

The HSRS offers Ofsted an opportunity to ensure that schools contribute to the overall health and well-being of children whilst maintaining its core educational purpose. Implemented collaboratively and with consultation, the scheme does not add unnecessary inspection burdens as the scheme could work alongside current inspections.

The HSRS reflects the Government’s commitment to halving childhood obesity by 2030 through what Ofsted does best: monitoring and evaluation to achieve excellence in the education and care of children and young people.



HOW DO PARENTS KNOW?

Parents were clearest in their support for Ofsted monitoring of the HSRS (76%) and that echoes what Ofsted discovered in its thematic review on obesity¹; parents want to know more about how schools support their children and current Ofsted reports only provide a snapshot of the impact schools have on children.

“If it’s not rated in the same way as everything else we have no knowledge as parents about this aspect of school. If it’s not monitored schools won’t find time or effort to put into it.”

Primary school parent

“Ofsted’s role should be holistic, looking at all aspects of school life.”

Primary school governor and parent

As Ofsted’s review further explains, parents want “better information about what children [are] eating in school” and want schools to “provide cooking lessons or lessons on how to grow food” and to “teach more about healthy food and the impact of unhealthy food on children.”²

The HSRS would be an effective mechanism for telling parents what they need to know; that their children are eating well at school and learning how to keep themselves healthy.



¹ “Obesity, healthy eating and physical activity in primary schools” – Ofsted Thematic Review, July 2018, No. 180017, pg 32-35.

² “Obesity, healthy eating and physical activity in primary schools” – Ofsted Thematic Review, July 2018, No. 180017, pg 33

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the response to our survey we recommend that Government establish a Healthy Schools Rating Scheme that, as a minimum:

- Is **mandatory in all state-funded schools**; secondary schools must be included so that progress made in primary school is not lost
- Is **monitored by Ofsted**; the scheme can provide a fair and reliable framework for schools without adding unnecessary inspection burdens, as the scheme could work alongside current inspections
- Is the **mechanism for ensuring that schools meet statutory requirements**; complying with the School Food Standards and delivering lessons in cooking and nutrition
- Collects **data on school meal take-up** to allow for analysis of the success of school meal programmes
- Encourages participation and celebrates the work schools are doing to improve children's health; a **springboard to existing accreditation schemes** and awards.

THE HEALTHY SCHOOLS RATING SCHEME CAN WORK FOR EVERYONE:

FOR TEACHERS:

- Providing a health check for schools to measure progress and find out what more can be done.
- An opportunity to be recognised for supporting children to keep themselves healthy.

FOR GOVERNORS:

- Providing a process to ensure that schools are meeting the statutory requirements for school food and food education and a framework for improvement.

FOR PARENTS:

- An opportunity to understand what is happening in relation to food and food education.
- Provides a 'quality mark' to give parents confidence that their school prioritises children's health.

FOR CHILDREN:

- A scheme to ensure that children receive consistent messages and guidance to help them lead healthier lives.

METHODOLOGY

An online survey via SurveyMonkey was developed by School Food Matters in collaboration with partner organisations. It was distributed via email and social media to the public in England with a focus on family members of school aged children, school staff and governors. The survey was open from 16 January to 14 February 2019 and 987 responses were received.

Each respondent was asked to identify as a family member, school staff, governor or other. Multiple selections were allowed and all “others” were categorised and broadly fell into the groupings: local authority, health (public health practitioner or nutritionist/dietitian), civil society. “Family member” included parents, grandparents, and siblings. “School staff” included headteachers, teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff, kitchen staff and catering teams, school lunch supervisors, and support staff.

All survey answers presented in this report are segmented by the predominate groups of family member, school staff and governor. When segmenting the data by school type (primary, secondary, sixth form) there is not a significant difference in results. All segmented results were within 2% points of one another except for the question regarding Ofsted. The split between respondents in favour of Ofsted monitoring is: 73% of primary school, 71% of secondary school, 67% of sixth form.

The survey did not collect any demographic data including education level or geographical location. The full survey, including SFM’s explanation of the proposed Healthy Schools Rating Scheme, can be found in the appendix.

Study limitations: The survey respondents were self-selecting with participants receiving the survey link from School Food Matters and other children’s health or food education groups’ communication channels. Therefore, participants may already be interested in or concerned about this topic.

APPENDIX

HEALTHY SCHOOLS RATING SCHEME SURVEY

Government has proposed a Healthy Schools Rating Scheme which Ofsted would use to evaluate how schools in England are supporting children to keep themselves healthy. We're keen to get your responses to five key questions so that we can encourage government to develop a scheme that works for everyone.

1. ABOUT YOU:

Answer options: Parent, Teacher, Governor, Other

2. ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL:

Answer options: Primary (Reception to year 6), Secondary (Year 7 to year 11), Sixth form

A BIT OF BACKGROUND

We want the Healthy Schools Rating Scheme to celebrate the work schools in England are doing to improve children's health, and to encourage all schools to get involved. A scheme that works for everyone.

FOR TEACHERS:

- Provides a health check for your school so that you can measure progress and find out what more can be done.
- An opportunity to be recognised for the work you're doing to support children to keep themselves healthy.

FOR GOVERNORS:

- Helps ensure you are meeting the statutory requirements for school food and food education.
- Provides a framework for improvement.

FOR PARENTS:

- A chance to understand what is going on in your child's school in relation to food and food education.
- Provides a 'quality mark' for you to look for to give you confidence that your school prioritises children's health.

FOR CHILDREN:

- A scheme to ensure that children receive consistent messages and guidance to help them lead healthier lives.

APPENDIX

FIVE QUICK QUESTIONS

1. ARE YOU IN FAVOUR OF A HEALTHY SCHOOLS RATING SCHEME?

Answer options: Yes, No, Comments?

2. SHOULD THE SCHEME BE MANDATORY?

Answer options: Yes, No, Comments?

3. SHOULD THE SCHEME BE MONITORED BY OFSTED?

Answer options: Yes, No, Comments?

4. SHOULD THE SCHEME APPLY TO ALL STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS?

Answer options: Yes, No, Comments?

5. IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER COMMENTS, PLEASE ADD THEM HERE



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