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Key stages	KS1- KS2
School type	LA maintained, primary
Themes	Health, wellbeing

# Enhancing the lunchtime experience with a new dining room

## Roebuck Primary School and Nursery

### Context

Roebuck Primary School and Nursery is an average-sized school located in the Stevenage district. In October 2011 the school moved into a brand new building with state of the art facilities to enhance learning.

### Brief description

Following the successful completion of the Hertfordshire Healthy Schools Programme, Roebuck Primary School and Nursery became the first school in Stevenage to be awarded the Healthy Schools Enhanced Award in May 2015. This award recognised the school's efforts in supporting the health and wellbeing of its pupils.

The school has focused on improving the lunchtime experience for its pupils. This has involved both enhancing the dining room environment and developing the activities and resources available for children at lunchtimes. The overall aim of the changes was to improve the emotional wellbeing and health of pupils through their lunchtime experience. The school council had a key role throughout the work towards gaining Hertfordshire Healthy Schools enhanced status.

### Improving the lunchtime experience for pupils

#### The dining room

The staff at the school wanted to transform the dining room, which was previously a long and narrow structure with white walls, into a more interactive and child-friendly environment. Members of the school council were involved in the initial set up of the project which allowed pupils to have ownership of the restructure. Allowing the school council to gather the ideas of their peers, hold assemblies, create designs for the new dining room and write to local businesses for sponsorship made them feel like an important part of the school community. A naming competition hosted by the school council resulted in the new dining room being called 'The Lunchbox'.

Governors, teaching staff, parents and midday supervisory assistants (MSAs) were fully involved in the plans and key staff were allocated with targets on the action plan. An artist was employed to bring the ideas of the pupils to life and the new dining room became much more vibrant and child-friendly.

As requested by the pupils, the new dining room is equipped with a 'Pizza Hut style' salad bar, offering greater variety and choice of salad and healthy options.

A display of the dining room behaviour policy ensures that pupils are aware of expectations at all times. Every week MSAs nominate a child from each class who has demonstrated improved behaviour in the dining room, (which includes demonstrating good manners) to be awarded a certificate at the achievement assembly. Members of the school council serve the winning pupils lunch at the 'top table'; a table decorated with a table cloth and flowers each Friday.

## Outdoor activities

The school worked to improve the outdoor experience for pupils at lunchtime in order to promote their physical and social wellbeing. All MSAs recently completed training on interaction with pupils using playtime games as part of the school's Healthy Schools subscription entitlement. As a result two lead MSAs regularly set up games and activities on the playground and take an interactive role in play rather than only supervising. MSAs are now confident to set up, lead and engage in a variety of sporting activities with the children.

## Impact

Completing the Healthy School's enhanced status project was a worthwhile and valuable experience for all involved and pupils enjoyed seeing their vision become a reality and promoting a healthy lifestyle. Taking an active role in the creation of the new dining room gave members of the school council confidence in leading projects and made all pupils feel an important and valued part of the school community. The school motto 'Dream, Believe and Achieve' was enforced throughout the project.

The dining room is now a more attractive and welcoming environment. According to the Healthy Schools Project Lead and Assistant Headteacher Clare Elson, lunchtimes are now a positive and engaging experience for all. The new salad bar has encouraged all children and staff to try out new vegetables with their meal and all of the food served contributes towards a healthy and balanced diet. Children spoke proudly of their achievements to Healthy Schools advisors and feedback from the pupils included comments such as 'I have the salad every day, I love it' and 'I love the new dining room especially the paintings and the colour. It makes me feel happy when I come in!' There are different options every day'. Parents have also made positive comments about the new dining room.

Providing MSAs with training on playtime interaction has been successful in engaging pupils on the playground. SIMS assessment has shown that behavioural incidents have reduced and pupils are coming into lessons much calmer and more willing to learn after lunchtime. Comments from parents and governors include 'it is good to see the MSAs interacting more with the children at lunchtime' and 'my child is a lot happier at lunchtimes.'

## Next steps

The school will be developing an outdoor dining area over summer 2016 to further enhance the wellbeing of pupils at lunchtimes.

Contact	Clare Elson, Healthy Schools Project Lead and Assistant Headteacher
Related documents and links	<a href="http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/hwb/healthy_schools_programme/">http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/hwb/healthy_schools_programme/</a> <a href="http://www.roebuck.herts.sch.uk/">http://www.roebuck.herts.sch.uk/</a>

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