

SFM PETITION UPDATE 2 – JUNE 2009

Dear Supporters

Many apologies for contacting you all again so soon, but I have been asked to forward the following email from the LA.

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Matthew Paul" <M.Paul@richmond.gov.uk>

Date: 30 June 2009 14:47:10 BST

To: <stephanie@schoolfoodmatters.com>

Cc: "Cllr Malcolm Eady" <cldr.meady@richmond.gov.uk>

Subject: **FW: school meals in the Richmond borough school system**

Dear Stephanie,

It seems that you have asked parents to bombard Cllr Eady and I with emails. Please could you pass on the attached message to them all and ask them to refrain from sending us further emails? Many thanks.

All schools in Richmond Borough offer a hot meals service. Most – i.e. 35 out of 41 – of the primary schools are within the Council's central contract with Sodexo, which is scheduled to run until July 2011, with the option of an extension until July 2013. The other six schools each have their own separate contracts with hot meals providers. All meals offered by Sodexo and the other providers full conform to the Government's minimum nutritional standards.

We are well aware of the importance of improving the school lunches. Our long-term aim is for locally-sourced, reasonably-priced food to be cooked from fresh within all our schools, however we are not yet in a position to move to a cooked-from-fresh meals service in all our schools, as the kitchens in many cases are not suitable and would require major capital investment. At the moment, and for the foreseeable future, the bulk of the Council's capital will be spent on enabling the expansion of primary schools to meet the massive increase in demand for reception class places. Where those expansions are happening – please see our [Consultation on Primary Expansions Strategy](#) – we will be looking to expand the kitchens accordingly.

I have met with Stephanie several times over the past two years and remain in email contact with her. We share Stephanie's aims, but we do not, as yet, have the funding in place to undertake the capital investment that would be needed to realise those aims.

I hope that clarifies the situation for you.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Paul Deputy Head of Commissioning, Delivery & Service
Improvement Children's Services & Culture / LB Richmond
upon Thames / Regal House / London Road / Twickenham / TW1 3QB

Tel: 020 8891 7588 / Mobile: 07946 890631 / Fax: 020 8891 7714 /
Email: m.paul@richmond.gov.uk / Web: www.richmond.gov.uk

RESPONSE

In my response I said:

'I have certainly not asked them to 'bombard' you, but am delighted that they are so enthusiastic! Just how many have you had?

As I mentioned in our previous email exchange, I needed to update those that have signed the SFM petition (468 at last count) on any progress and suggested that if they wanted to contact the LA directly (since the LA will not work with me) they should direct their comments to you and Cllr Eady.

If you would like me to act on behalf of the LA, I will certainly pass on your email as requested. I don't feel I can ask them not to email you, as they are parents and residents of the borough, and are entitled to be heard. I am sure you will respect this.

On your email below, I am a little disappointed that funding seems to have put a full stop on developing Richmond's school meal service without first investigating what can be done to improve the service we had. I understood that the purpose of a working party was to explore the possibilities within the existing framework, to learn from other boroughs with similar limitations and to try and improve the services 'sustainability rating'. There was much talk of developing 'cook-fresh' in some schools - perhaps as a pilot. Has that plan been abandoned? '

UPDATES

I am keen not to inundate you all with emails, so if you would like to follow any developments, please subscribe to the SFM blog, which will be regularly updated.

Many thanks