

Reducing food waste in schools

Background information



"After half an hour queuing you are in a rush to eat quickly and get outside"

Comment on the dining experience from Year 7 pupil

"Children are cautious of unfamiliar foods, for example they wouldn't eat the new organic chicken sausages because they were white"

Comment on unfamiliar foods from school cook

"Cooks never know how many pupils will want to eat and everyone has to have the opportunity to eat, so a lot has to be prepared"

Comment on the lack of ability to plan quantities in advance from Business Manager

"Portion sizes need looking at. Often the portions are too big for the smallest children"

Comment on portion sizes from school caretaker

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Why do we need to waste less food?

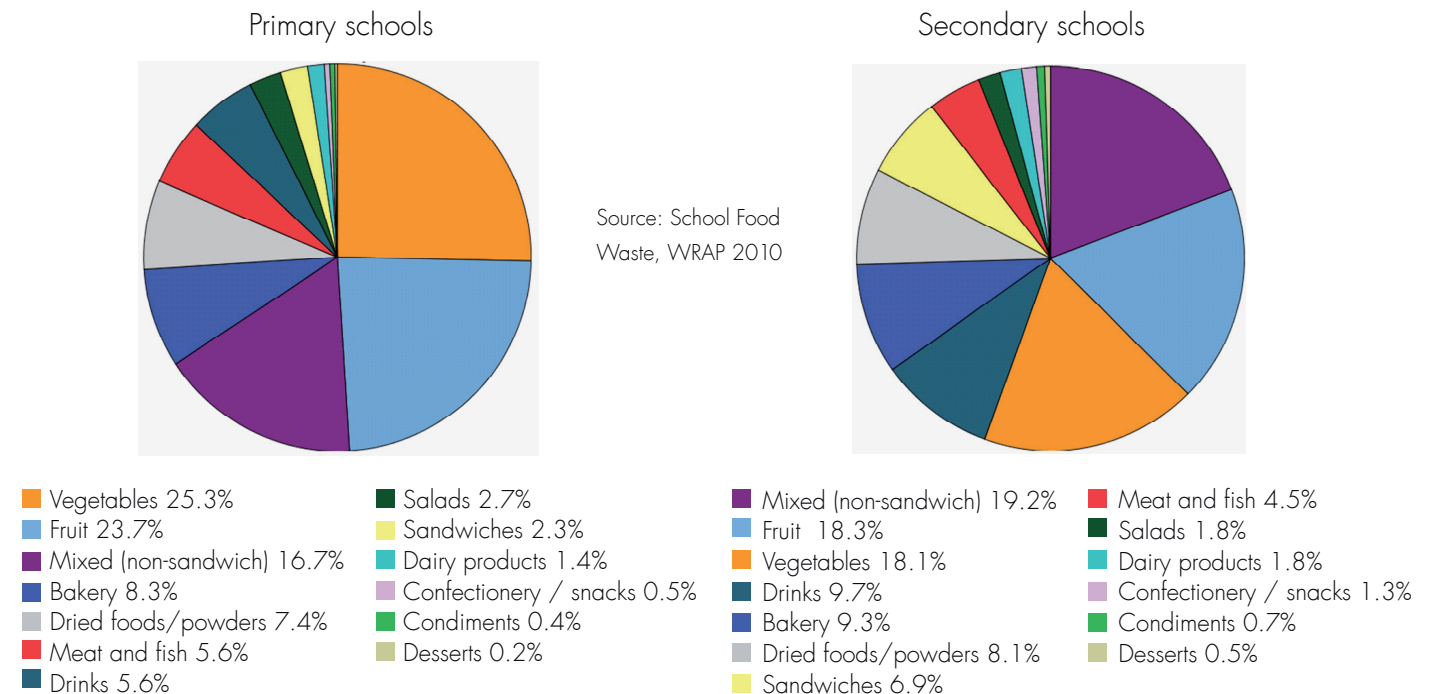
- £12.5 billion worth of food that could have been eaten is thrown away every year in UK homes. This is around £700/year for families with children – almost £60 per month.
- In terms of weight: 4.2 million tonnes of good food is thrown away every year in the UK, such as cheese, meat and fish, fruit, vegetables and bread. This figure does not include anything we would not normally eat, like peelings, bones, or crusts.
- Wasting food has a huge environmental impact – if we avoided throwing all the good food away, it would save the equivalent carbon dioxide as taking one in every four cars off our roads.
- Food waste is damaging to the environment because producing, storing and getting the food to our homes uses a lot of energy and resources – all of which are wasted when food gets binned. A lot of this food reaches landfill sites where it can emit methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

Why do we need to waste less food at school?

Wasting food is not only an issue in our homes, but also in our schools. Food waste is estimated to account for almost half of the waste, by weight, from primary schools in England and almost a third of waste, by weight, from secondary schools in England. An estimated 80,382 tonnes food waste are produced by schools in England per (40 week) school year. Of this waste, 63,099 tonnes are avoidable. The environmental impact (accrued through production and agriculture, processing, transportation, storage and disposal) of this avoidable food waste in terms of greenhouse gas emissions is 253,000 tonnes per year. This is comparable to the carbon produced by more than 80,000 cars in a year.

Source: School Food Waste, WRAP 2010.

The charts below show the average composition of food waste found in primary and secondary schools.

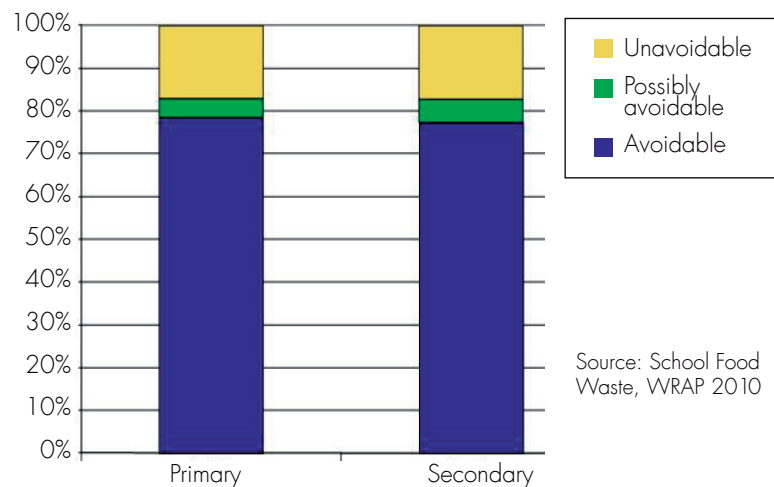


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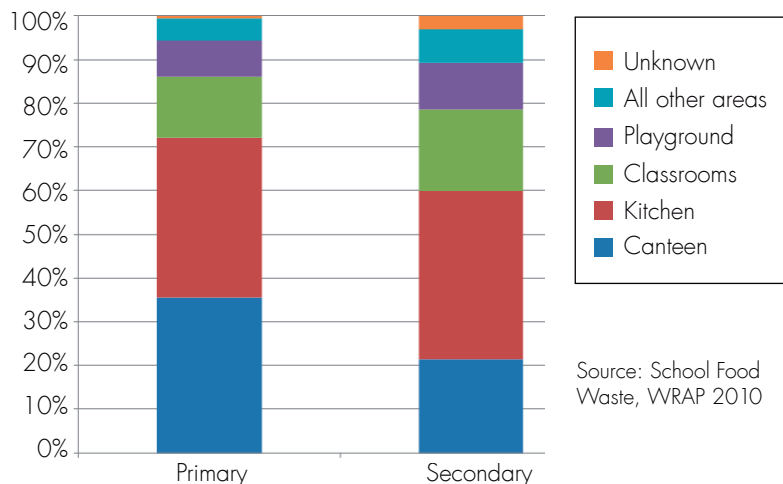
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The chart below shows the average proportion of food waste that is categorised as 'avoidable,' 'possibly avoidable' and 'unavoidable' in primary and secondary schools.



The chart below shows the location within primary and secondary schools where food waste is generated.



How does your school measure up?

To find out how much food your school is throwing away, conduct a waste audit. This involves pupils working together to sort and weigh the various types of waste produced in different areas of their school. They can then analyse the data and use it to create an action plan. After implementing your action plan conduct another audit to help you evaluate how effectively you have reduced food waste.

For more information, including a full lesson plan and curriculum links for KS1-KS4, see www.recyclenow.com/schools/recycle_at_school_guide/activity_lesson_plans/waste_audit.html

How can your school waste less food?

Check out the following activity sheets for ideas on how your school could waste less food:

- Meals cooked to order
- Improving the dining experience
- Improving familiarity and appreciation of school meals

