

School-based food initiatives



contents

■ Introduction	3
■ <i>Getting to grips with grub</i> : Food and nutrition competencies among 14–16 year olds	4
■ <i>Cook It!</i> : Out-of-school-hours learning cookery clubs for 11–14 year olds	5
■ <i>Food Standards Agency Cooking Bus</i> : delivering practical food skills to schools	6
■ <i>Bad food live!</i> : Spoof celebrity chef show conveying food hygiene and healthy eating messages	7
■ <i>Dish it Up!</i> : a multimedia interactive CD-ROM to motivate 11–12 year olds to eat healthily	8
■ <i>Five-a-day the Bash Street Way</i> : Promoting fruit and vegetable consumption among 7–11 year olds	9
■ <i>Eat Smart, Play Smart</i> : Promoting healthy diets and physical activity among 5–7 year olds	10
■ Fruit tuck shops in primary schools: running them effectively	11
■ Vending healthy drinks in schools: Making it economically viable	12
■ Secondary school meals in England: Could do better	13
■ <i>Starting early</i> : OFSTED/Food Standards Agency survey of food-related good practice in primary schools and early years settings	14
■ School lunchbox surveys: Too much fat, salt and sugar	15
■ Promoting healthy eating habits among low income and minority ethnic young people	16
■ School governors: a whole-school approach	17
■ Further information on food and nutrition	18

Introduction

We hope that you can make use of some of the wealth of activities that the Agency has undertaken to take forward your own work on nutrition in schools and communities around the country.

This booklet contains summaries of ongoing and completed projects designed to help influence pupils, parents, teachers and others who affect the foods children and young people eat. By working together, we can promote healthier lifestyles now as well as better health in the future.

The Food Standards Agency is committed to improving the nation's health through food and diet.

We want to:

- encourage consumers to choose a healthy diet
- make healthy eating an easier option
- help to reduce diet-related diseases

We aim to do this by:

- helping to influence the eating habits of the next generation:
 - by encouraging others to strengthen 'healthy eating' in the curriculum and improving what children eat at school
 - by securing changes to the way food is promoted to children
- contributing to the work of health departments on the nutrition of very young children
- making it easier for consumers to choose a healthy diet
- encouraging consumer demand for healthier options through national campaigns and promotion of best practice at the local level
- encouraging the public sector to provide healthy food in schools, hospitals and other institutions

The Agency's activities also help to support the work of other government departments in this area.

Help us to achieve these aims through your work with schools, children and young people, **within and outside curricular activities.**

Getting to grips with grub: Food and nutrition competencies among 14–16 year olds

Do the 14–16 year olds you work with:

- know what a healthy balanced diet is and how to achieve or maintain a healthy body weight?
- know about the comparative cost of different foods/preparation and cooking methods?
- have the practical capability to be able to prepare and cook a variety of dishes to achieve a healthy diet?
- know about and understand the principles of food safety?

These are just some of the competencies that the cross-Government group, brought together by the Food Standards Agency, agreed that young people should have achieved by this age through the curriculum and outside school.

The Agency believes that if young people are to eat more healthily they need to understand what constitutes a healthy diet and have the practical skills to put this knowledge into practice.

The cross-Government group developed a set of core competencies for food and nutrition knowledge and skills called *Getting to Grips with Grub*. These core competencies are grouped under the following themes:

- diet and health
- consumer awareness
- food preparation and handling skills
- food hygiene and safety

The full list of competencies that fall into these themes can be found at:

www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/grubgrips.pdf

Qualitative research showed that 14–16 year olds had a broad sense of the key constituents of a healthy diet. But they did not assess their own diets in the context of nutritional recommendations and had little knowledge of what constitutes a healthy weight.

While aware of basic food safety rules, many failed to observe them in practice. Lack of experience choosing food to eat at home was evident, and overall meals were more likely to be put together from prepared components than cooked ‘from scratch’.

The full report of the research is available on the Agency website at:

www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/competencyevaluation.pdf

The competencies were also the subject of discussion with teachers at a joint FSA/Design And Technology Association workshop in November 2003. Calls to action on a number of issues were raised including development of a national food education strategy, promotion of clear messages, and identification of resources to support teachers. The proceedings are available at: **www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/ggresearchpaper20.pdf**

The summaries in the rest of this document are part of our approach to addressing the gaps identified in young people’s knowledge and skills. Specifically the Agency is addressing this through a range of activity at a local level including guidance on how to run out-of-school-hours cookery clubs (see page 5) and through means of the Agency’s cooking bus for schools (see page 6).

Cook It!: Out-of-school-hours learning cookery clubs for 11–14 year olds

Encompassing all four of the competency themes identified in the *Getting to Grips with Grub* research (see page 4), Cook it! clubs cover a range of knowledge and skills such as:

- budgeting for food
- meal planning
- shopping
- reading food labels
- hygienic food preparation
- practical cookery

The *Cook It!* project piloted and evaluated ten out-of-school-hours cookery clubs in two local education authorities (LEAs): Stockton and North Tyneside, with lower secondary school-aged children and finished mid-January 2005.

The schemes formed good links with other relevant organisations and professionals in the community. Teachers as well as other interested adults were involved in the delivery of the cookery clubs. Each scheme offered activities on a weekly basis, with some activities at weekends or in holiday periods.

Each LEA held an event called ‘*Cook It! Academy*’ where children from all the cookery clubs worked in pairs and groups to shop and prepare a packed lunch and a buffet with the help of local celebrity chefs. Parents and carers were invited to the buffet. Here are just a few of the comments from children on the ‘*Cook It! Academy*’ course:

- ‘I enjoyed the whole course but the buffet and the shopping trip was the best.’
- ‘I enjoyed designing the fruit and veg.’
- ‘I enjoyed cooking with the chef.’
- ‘I enjoyed making my own food dishes in groups, plus going shopping for a healthy food packed lunch. I’m glad my friend came too!’

A ‘How to’ guide based on the results of the pilots will provide practical advice to members of local communities and teachers who wish to set up their own *Cook It!* clubs. It covers:

- getting funding
- promoting the club
- training and supporting staff and volunteers
- engaging the school, youth groups and the local community
- involving local people including local businesses

The *Cook It!* guide provides a complementary approach to that tested in the Department for Education and Skills/Department of Health joint Food in Schools (FIS) initiative. The guide was due to be launched and downloadable from: www.food.gov.uk in March 2005.

Food Standards Agency Cooking Bus: delivering practical food skills to schools

Some lucky school pupils in England have already had an opportunity to hop aboard the FSA's Cooking Bus, which aims to promote cooking skills and convey key food messages in a practical and fun way.

The bus is decorated with colourful graphics and expands into a large open plan classroom using hydraulics, moveable pods and carefully packed stairs, rails, tables and chairs. The end result is a large, clean and bright teaching space, with integrated ovens and grills, sinks, worktops, hobs and extractors. And even the cupboards are colour-co-ordinated to match the worktables.

Dishes cooked by the children on the Cooking Bus vary according to age and ability, but all of the lessons communicate key food hygiene and nutrition messages. The Cooking Bus staff discuss in advance with each school the cooking lessons to be held on the bus and what will be covered in the teacher training, to ensure the cooking sessions fit in with the schools' teaching objectives.

Aboard the bus, pupils get the chance to prepare healthy but tasty recipes from scratch such as apple and summer fruit parcels, cheesy tuna jacket potatoes and banana and strawberry milkshakes.

The Cooking Bus encourages healthy eating and provides a practical and innovative means of reinforcing Agency messages while providing a really memorable experience. Teachers report that children often say it's the best lesson they've ever had, with some even saying it was the best day of their lives.

But it's not only the pupils who benefit since the Cooking Bus also passes on teaching strategies, advice about equipment and provides an opportunity for teachers to discuss what can be done with limited resources. Staff training sessions also mean that the lessons learned on the bus can be sustained after it has moved on.



Since its launch in November 2003, the FSA's Cooking Bus has visited 50 schools and projects, taught cooking skills to more than 4,800 children and trained approximately 800 teachers.

The bus has focused on visiting socially deprived areas all over the country including Birmingham, Great Yarmouth, London, Manchester, Merseyside, Nottingham, Plymouth and Sunderland with more areas such as Burton upon Trent, Hastings and Selby planned to follow in 2005.

To find out more about the Cooking Bus, including checking the bus timetable and to register for a visit by the bus (for which you will need to explain how bus activity will be integrated into schoolwork) see: www.food.gov.uk/bus

Bad food live!: Spoof celebrity chef show conveying food hygiene and healthy eating messages

The spoof celebrity cooks Richie Twist and Bernard Le Blanc first took to the stage at the 2001 BBC Good Food Show in Birmingham. They have since hung up their chef's hats, but their video is still available for schools together with practical resources for teachers.

Ultra-hip Richie and upper-crust Bernard demonstrate how not to cook when they haphazardly compete against each other in what they believe to be a serious cooking competition. In reality the pair are being scrutinised by the audience and bubbly presenter Lydia Potts for food hygiene and safety errors.

Bad Food Live! was produced as part of the Agency's five-year Food Hygiene Campaign aimed at encouraging good hygiene practices among consumers and the catering industry, and raising awareness of food poisoning and how to prevent it.

Bad Food Live! can help teachers teach basic food hygiene messages, from the importance of hand-washing to cooking and chilling food properly. The 20-minute teaching resource for primary and secondary school teachers is aimed at 7 to 14 year olds.

The education pack that accompanies the video contains a series of teaching notes, background information, photocopiable activity sheets and suggestions for related activities. The materials are aimed at a range of ability levels.

Teachers can order a free copy of the video, by contacting Food Standards Agency Publications quoting ref: FSA/0845/0903, tel: 0845 606 0667 or email: foodstandards@eclogistics.co.uk.



Teaching about food hygiene fits into the PSHE & Citizenship curriculum at key stages 2 and 3, 'developing a healthy, safer lifestyle'.

***Dish it Up!*: a multimedia interactive CD-ROM to motivate 11–12 year olds to eat healthily**

Promoting autonomy, decision-making skills and self-esteem, *Dish it Up!* aims to motivate 11–12 year olds to make positive eating choices and develop healthy eating behaviour.

Each episode in the CD-ROM, which was developed with the involvement of 11–12 year old children, contains interactive elements such as games and quizzes that are designed to be fun and educational. An animated fridge is packed with factual information about food, diet and health.



The young person can keep track of everything they eat through an interactive diary that can analyse their diet, set them personal targets for change and see if they manage to reach their goals.

A 'Balance-a-tron' analyses everything they choose to eat during the virtual day or during a real day and gives feedback based on the Balance of Good Health plate model, see left.

The Balance of Good Health is a pictorial representation of the recommended proportions of foods in the diet. Copies of the Balance of Good Health leaflet or poster are available free from Food Standards Agency Publications. **See Further information on food and nutrition** on page 18.

Dish it Up! takes children through a 'virtual' day, which provides personally relevant situations, environments and dilemmas with respect to food. It provides insights, information and understanding on food-related issues including food shopping, peer pressure, physical activity and misconceptions about food and diets as well advice about healthy choices for breakfast, snacks and school lunches.

Dish it Up! comes with teacher notes and suggested curriculum links. Teachers of Key Stage 3 (P7-S2 in Scotland) should find this tool useful across a range of curricular areas such as food technology; home economics; personal, social and health education; science and information technology.

Figure 1: The 'Balance-a-tron'

The pupil is invited to enter into a diary all food and drink they have consumed in a day. This is analysed and the results shown by a 'Balance-a-tron' based on the *Balance of Good Health*.



Figure 2: Lunchtime in school canteen

In this section the pupil is invited to play a game involving mealtime choices. Here the focus is on barriers such as lack of choice, time pressures, cost and variety.



Copies of *Dish it Up!* can be obtained from Food Standards Agency Publications. See **Further information on food and nutrition** on page 18.

You may copy these CD-ROMs for use with and to give to young people (subject to Agency copyright, which states that the CD-ROM may not be changed in any way and copies may not be sold).

Five-a-day the Bash Street Way: Promoting fruit and vegetable consumption among 7–11 year olds

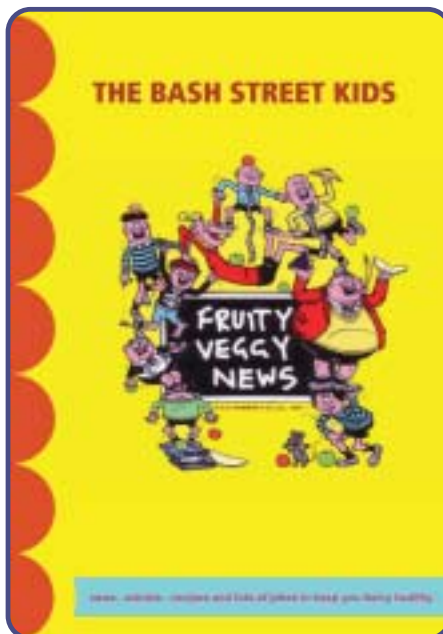
Using the Bash Street comic characters to engage children in tasting, writing about, and preparing fruit and vegetables, this pilot project tested the efficacy of a whole-school approach to encourage primary school children to eat more fruit and vegetables.

The programme increased provision of fruit and vegetables in schools, through tuck shops, school lunches and curriculum materials focusing on practical food preparation and tasting. More than 500 children in two primary schools in Dundee were involved in the project. They were encouraged to do hands-on activities, written work, watch videos, use self-monitoring materials and read story books to stimulate their interest in fruit and vegetables.

After the project, the 500 children had increased their fruit consumption per day compared to 464 children from other schools not taking part. The increase was modest but significant. The children's positive attitudes to, and knowledge of, fruit and vegetables also increased.

Material developed for the intervention based on the Bash Street Kids cartoon characters has been adapted, with permission from DC Thompson, for wider use by teachers and is available on the Agency's website at:

www.food.gov.uk/interactivetools/educational/bashstreetdiet/



***Eat Smart, Play Smart*: Promoting healthy diets and physical activity among 5–7 year olds**

Eat Smart, Play Smart is a Food Standards Agency teaching resource developed for primary school teachers throughout the UK to use with children aged 5 to 7 years.

The materials have been designed to engage children's interest in healthy food choices and in keeping active – giving them important guidance to promote healthier lifestyles.

Eat Smart, Play Smart has been developed to:

- help children to understand the need for healthy diets and to choose appropriately from different food groups for their meals
- encourage children to be more active in their everyday lives and to understand the benefits of being active. Ways of increasing activity in the home and at school are suggested in fun, energetic and easy-to-follow ways

Eat Smart, Play Smart started life as a school-based family-orientated intervention programme to prevent obesity in children under ten years of age.

There were 212 children aged 5–7 years recruited from primary schools for this programme. The children reported their physical activity and parents or carers completed dietary and physical activity questionnaires on the children. Adult nutrition knowledge, physical activity and medical and social histories were assessed using postal questionnaires.

Eat Smart, Play Smart tested four different approaches by allocating children to one of four lunchtime clubs:

- nutrition group (*Eat Smart*)
- physical activity group (*Play Smart*)
- combined nutrition and physical activity group (*Eat Smart, Play Smart*)
- control group (*Be Smart*)

Assessments were repeated at the end of the intervention period and analysed for any changes. Both the physical activity and nutrition components had a positive outcome.

The Agency adapted some of the materials for use with children aged 5 to 7 years. These are available on the Agency's website at:

www.food.gov.uk/healthierating/eatsmartplaysmart/

Fruit tuck shops in primary schools: running them effectively

The impact of running fruit tuck shops on children's consumption was evaluated in 23 primary schools in Bristol and parts of Wales compared to 20 control schools.

All 23 intervention schools set up fruit tuck shops and many schools were very positive about them. In particular, schools identified numerous positive spin-offs from the tuck shops, including benefits for the curriculum, social benefits, community links and litter reduction.

In all schools, fruit sales were high in the first few weeks of operation, but then declined at varying rates over the intervention year. It is estimated that 70,000 pieces of fruit were sold in the 23 intervention schools over the year, but this equates to only 0.046 pieces of fruit per pupil per day. Four schools were no longer running their tuckshops by the end of the intervention year.

While fruit tuckshops might not impact greatly on children's fruit consumption by themselves, they are likely to be a valuable component of a more comprehensive approach to children's nutrition.

Based on experiences gained during the trial, a booklet was produced for schools on how to set up and run a fruit tuck shop. This booklet is available to download from the Agency's website in English at www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fruittuckwales and in Welsh at: www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fruitwalesw.

The Food Standards Agency booklet was used extensively by the Department of Health's Food in Schools Initiative during the tuckshops pilot project.



Vending healthy drinks in schools: Making it economically viable

The Food Standards Agency believes that all schools should have a source of drinking water freely available to every pupil. But vending can provide choice and act as a tool for education about nutrition and litter control – what matters is the type of products they contain.

A pilot project, commissioned by the Agency in 2003, evaluated the economic viability of healthier drinks vending in secondary schools. Testing of healthier drinks vending machines, within a whole-school approach, took place in 12 schools in 4 areas, chosen to reflect both urban and rural locations and to offer an appropriate mix of size, area and socio-economic group.



In each school a small working party was set up to include senior management, curriculum staff, catering personnel and representatives from the student council or Schools Nutrition Action Group (SNAG). In the schools completing the project, approximately 70,000 items were sold, in excess of 35% of these were milk or milk products – about 25,000 in under 6 months.

Results indicate that properly managed healthier drinks vending in schools can be economically viable. The key to success was found to be involving students in the decisions made about the machine, its products and prices.

The more successful schools used a 'whole-school' approach to healthier eating so the vending machines support healthier eating messages given in lessons.

Other key pointers for success were:

- location of the vending machine
- commitment of staff to making sure the machines work and have a range of products
- vending machines flexible enough to contain a range of products with enough capacity to meet demand
- a system to record sales and students' feedback

The report is available on the Agency's website at:

www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/vendingreport.pdf

A toolkit for schools, *Vending healthy drinks: a guide for schools*, provides guidance to setting up successful healthier drinks vending and has been sent to all secondary schools in the UK. It is also available on the Agency's website at:

www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/vendingmachinebooklet.pdf

Secondary school meals in England: Could do better

The topic of school meals can evoke strong memories and mixed feelings. Many people think they could be better.

School meals in secondary schools in England reported on how well school caterers are meeting current statutory nutritional standards and how food consumed compares to the Caroline Walker Trust's nutritional guidelines for school meals.

The survey identified:

- although 83% of meal providers met all the nutritional standards for school meals every lunchtime at the beginning of service, this had fallen to 47% by the end of service
- compliance with statutory standards was not resulting in pupils selecting balanced meals
- a significant proportion of schools had no formal documentation that ensured delivery of healthier meals
- few caterers had undergone training in healthy eating or healthy cooking
- those caterers who had undertaken training on healthy eating or cooking in the past 12 months offered more foods of a 'healthier' nature, and in these schools there was a trend towards children choosing lower fat main dishes more often



As a result of the survey the Agency, together with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is:

- developing target nutrient specifications for processed foods used in school meals
- conducting a survey of primary school meals in England
- revising secondary school meal standards and extending them to food throughout the school day
- developing support for head teachers and governors on drawing up and monitoring catering contracts
- developing a training course for school caterers in healthy catering practice

School meals in secondary schools in England is available on the Agency's website at: www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/secondarieschoolmeals.pdf

A DfES expert panel has been established to revise secondary school meal standards. Work that will feed into this includes:

- evaluating the impact of changes in caterer practice on pupil intake in schools in three local authority areas
- modelling the impact of changes to menu components on pupils' fat, salt and sugar consumption

Look out for reports from this work on the Agency's website: www.food.gov.uk

***Starting early*: OFSTED/Food Standards Agency survey of food-related good practice in primary schools and early years settings in England**

Starting early is the first ever survey of good practice related to a 'whole school' approach to food and nutrition in primary schools and early learning settings such as nursery schools, Sure Start schemes and day care nurseries.

The survey, which was jointly published by OFSTED and the Food Standards Agency in July 2004, examined school activity relating to food in the learning environment. This included the curriculum, breakfast and after-school clubs, school meals, tuck shops, water provision, packed lunches, dining environment, and alternative food supplies close to school.

The survey identified considerable gaps in practice related to food and nutrition in the schools surveyed. Despite this, case studies included in the report, *Starting early: food and nutrition education of young children* indicate individual examples of good practice that could provide you with sources of inspiration either to adopt or adapt to the needs of your own school or early years setting.

Conclusions from the report include:

- Teachers and others who support children's learning have a genuine interest in healthy eating and are keen to learn ways of promoting it. Many are actively looking for ways to incorporate healthy eating more effectively into the formal and informal curriculum. Children, too, generally have a real enthusiasm for this aspect of their work.
- To further improve the quality of food and nutrition education, there are several key aspects to be addressed. In particular, teachers need to be made aware of reputable sources of accurate and current nutritional information and given easy access to it and encouraged to make regular use of it.
- Other adults, particularly catering staff in schools, need up-to-date factual information, support and training so they are able to provide food that puts healthy eating messages into practice.

Starting early is available at: www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/ofstedearly.pdf

School lunchbox surveys: Too much fat, salt and sugar

Surveys of the contents of school lunchboxes commissioned by the Agency in 2003 and 2004 showed that many children's lunchboxes contained too much salt, sugar and fat and little fruit or vegetables.

Analysis of the nutrient content identified key foods that contributed most to salt, sugar and fat intakes. The survey results are published on the Agency's website.

2004 survey – www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/lunchbox2004report.pdf

2003 survey – www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/lunchsurvey.pdf

You can get some ideas for healthier lunchboxes with the two months' worth of healthier lunchbox menu suggestions on the Agency's website:

www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2004/sep/lunchbox2

www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2003/sep/lunchbox

It is planned to publish further menu suggestions in September 2005.

The lunchbox menus feature a wide range of foods to encourage consumption of a variety of foods as part of a balanced diet. They also provide nutritional analysis.

The results from the lunchbox surveys helped to inform this area of the Department of Health/Department for Education and Skills' 'Food in Schools' initiative.



Promoting healthy eating habits among low income and minority ethnic young people

Promoting good eating behaviour among low income and minority ethnic groups is not an easy task. This recently commissioned research project aims to determine and quantify factors that inhibit healthy food choice in girls aged 14–18 years from low income and minority ethnic groups.

Using this information, the project will develop a computer-based programme. This will provide individual tailored advice on how to increase the amount of fruit, vegetables and complex carbohydrates these girls eat in a way that is still in keeping with their cultural and social lifestyles.

The project is due to end in 2006 when, if successful, the Agency will look to promote the programme both within and outside the school setting.

A summary of this project is on the Agency's website at:

www.food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/nutritionresearch/foodchoice/n14programme/n14projilist/n14002/

School governors: a whole-school approach

A whole-school approach needs the support and involvement of governing bodies. With this in mind, the Agency worked with the National Governors Council (NGC) in 2003 to disseminate an information pack for school governors.

The pack contained information on salt targets for children and young people as well as the Agency's lunchbox survey and lunchbox menu suggestions. A range of issues was identified to school governors as a checklist to stimulate discussion with governing bodies. The report is available on the Agency's website at: www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/ngcreport.pdf. You can find more information about the NGC at: www.ngc.org.uk

The survey carried out in 2003 by the NGC found that the overwhelming majority of governors agree that schools should have policies in place to provide healthy food and to promote healthy eating. But far fewer reported that they actually play a role as a governing body in developing or monitoring such policies. They reported that they lacked the necessary information and were unclear about their strategic role.

Based on the feedback from governors, NGC and the Agency are developing a Strategic Framework for Governors regarding food issues in schools. The Framework will identify the governor's role, how they can contribute strategically and influentially to the whole-school approach to food and nutrition. It will also provide case studies of what can be achieved. It is anticipated that the framework will have been launched in May 2005.

Keep up-to-date by checking the Food Standards Agency's website: www.food.gov.uk

Further information on food and nutrition

More information about the work carried out by the Food Standards Agency including details of resources and work developed by the Agency in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, can be found on the Agency's website at: www.food.gov.uk.

If you want to know more about food and nutrition, visit eatwell the Agency's advice and information site. It is packed with reliable and practical advice about healthy eating, understanding food labels and how what we eat can affect our health: www.eatwell.gov.uk.

Other interactive games and quizzes with educational messages, which you may find useful, are available at: www.eatwell.gov.uk/info/games and www.eatwell.gov.uk/info/quizzes.

Food Hygiene Mission Control is an interactive resource for children aged 7 to 14 and their teachers. Through quizzes, games and fact pages it educates young people about food hygiene issues. The teachers' section contains downloadable activity sheets for further teaching. Visit: www.food.gov.uk/hygcampaign/hygmissioncontrol/

Food Standards Agency publications

If you would like to order any publications produced by the Food Standards Agency, including The Balance of Good Health leaflet: FSA/0008/0802 and The Balance Of Good Health A3 poster: FSA/0009/0201, many of these can be ordered free of charge by contacting:

Food Standards Agency Publications

orderline: 0845 606 0667

minicom: 0845 606 0678

fax: 020 8867 3225

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