



Out to lunch

By Diana Cormack, Rebecca Smith and Helen Drake
Since TV chef Jamie Oliver got stuck into the school dinners scene, schools all over the country have been looking closely at what their children are given to eat. This term local schools Martin and Holy Trinity have had their own lunchtime revolution.



Tucking in: Daniel Weir (left) and Sam Mugridge, Year 3 pupils at Holy Trinity, enjoying the new, improved school dinners.

'Restaurant Ecole' aims to improve school catering services at no cost. It was set up by Barnet headteacher Peter Kent and parent Francois Nouilliat, both of whom were unhappy with the quality of meals served at Osidge School, Southgate.

Since they formed the company the headteacher and the highly experienced French chef have received nationwide press and television coverage. Their philosophy is to provide meals that are prepared and cooked daily from fresh and, where possible, local ingredients.

The proof of the pudding

The daily menus include freshly baked bread and fruit and raw vegetables on the table and a choice of milk or water to drink. The meat is free range; fish comes fresh from Billingsgate and the fruit and vegetables are prepared on site. At Holy Trinity for example, 'fresh' vegetables used to come pre-peeled, part cooked and vacuum packed or frozen.

The puddings so far have included homemade chocolate muffins, banana cake with freshly-made custard and ice cream, with not a colouring or additive in sight.

Both schools are now report-

ing a significant increase in the number of children taking school meals, much to the delight of their head teachers.

Better than mum's cooking

Tim Bowden, the new head teacher at Holy Trinity, said: "The response from our children has been fantastic and there is a real buzz in the restaurant. Our parents are also delighted as the pupils are no longer complaining that they're hungry the moment they leave the school gates. One child was even heard to say that their mum's cooking was not as good as the lunches at school!"

Kevin Ancombe and Maggie Driscoll, head teachers at Martin Infant and Juniors, added, "It is noticeable that the children really appreciate the 'real food' on offer and are taking the time to sit and enjoy their meal." One Martin Infant boy confided, "Do you know, I didn't like broccoli, but I do now."

Studies have shown the effects that food and drink can have on children, so this seems a perfect opportunity to make them more aware of healthy eating, as well as perhaps leading to an improvement in behaviour and application in the classroom.

Terms of endearment

Story and photographs by Diana Cormack

The new school year has brought a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher to East Finchley's primary schools.

Katie Dawbarn (pictured right) is the new deputy head at Martin Infants. Since starting her teaching career at Brookland Infant School ten years ago, Katie has gone a long way in more ways than one. As her husband works for the Foreign Office, Katie has lived and taught abroad in some very diverse schools. Prior to teacher training, she worked for three years in a Belgrade nursery school. Recently she taught in the private sector at King Alfred School and then in Barnet's Moss Hall School.



As well as that wealth of experience, Katie has a keen interest in drama and in environmental issues. At Moss Hall she led an award-winning environmental initiative, which she intends to pursue at Martin School as well as bringing more creativity to the curriculum.

At infant level the emphasis is changing back to a more interesting, appropriate and holistic one, Katie told THE ARCHER. Her other responsibilities include working with gifted and talented children, helping to develop the outdoor area and bringing creativity into the pupils' ICT (Information and Communication Technology) skills on the computer.

The atmosphere of the school has impressed Katie. "It's so friendly, so welcoming and so happy," she said.



Holy Trinity has had similar comments from its new headteacher Tim Bowden (pictured left), who spoke about the warmth of his welcome to the school.

Formerly deputy head of Merryhills Primary in Enfield, Tim has also taught in Waltham Forest and Havering. His special interests include science, design and technology and physical education.

As well as running the after-school football club, Tim will continue youth rugby coaching at Saracens, where his teenage son plays. He also has a teenage daughter and a younger son. Tim's wife is a pharmacist.

Mr Bowden told THE ARCHER how pleased he is with the support he is getting from staff, parents and pupils, whom he finds very engaging. He wants to give of his best to the children and believes that a safe, happy, comfortable child is one who can learn.

Both he and Katie Dawbarn intend to maintain and build on the impressive base already established at each school.



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