



Food for Thought

Company background

Food for Thought is a “not for profit” school meals provider owned by its partner schools. Any financial surplus is shared amongst the schools. With a team of 80 staff, the company serves over 40,000 meals each month in 17 Liverpool schools.

Food for Thought was created before the era of Jamie Oliver’s improvements to school meals, at a time when its founders considered school food to be of poor quality, low nutritional content and far from sustainable or ethical. In 2003 the team began liaising with the local council and, as a result of much commitment and lots of hard work, Food for Thought was launched at the start of the autumn term in 2005.

With no binding contracts, hidden costs or profit motive, Food for Thought aims to provide a cost effective, sustainable and transparent business model that puts pupils and the environment first.



“We are very proud of our not for profit school company – we now have control over the quality and ethical approach of our school meals service.”
**Jan Potter, Former Headteacher,
Belle Vale Primary School**

Healthy/environmental achievements

Food for Thought has achieved the Food For Life Gold Award.

“Despite some opposition at first, often from adults, Meat Free Monday is now accepted as a normal menu day.”

Mike Carden, Project Leader, Food for Thought



Company policy

Food for Thought’s aims are as follows:

- To provide a sustainable school catering service for the benefit of children, parents, schools and local communities by offering fresh, nutritious and locally sourced food.
- To maintain the cost of school meals as the lowest in the UK – at £1.60.
- To provide nursery and reception meals for £1.
- To offer a varied choice of freshly prepared hot meals, salads, homemade soups and sandwiches and allow pupils to select what they want in the quantities they require.
- To increase the uptake of Food for Thought school meal service by serving meals in a friendly and supportive setting.

Price of meals:

£1.60/£1

Percentage of pupils eating school meals:

70-80%

Lunchtime provision

All Food for Thought's meals are cooked on schools' premises from scratch. There is no portion control and every day children select from main meals, salad bar, sandwiches and fresh vegetable soup. The company serves over 2,000 meals per day costing £1.60 each (or £1 for nursery/reception children). Over 50 per cent of Food for Thought's food is locally sourced and 30 per cent is organic. The company only uses free range eggs and farm-assured meat.



Initiatives

As part of its sustainable, holistic food philosophy, Food for Thought is working with the Plunkett Foundation, the YMCA and the Liverpool Food Alliance to grow its own organic vegetables for schools at Dutch Farm, in Speke.

Meat Free Monday launch

Food for Thought started participating in Meat Free Monday in May 2011. The company had previously promoted the daily vegetarian option as the most sustainable, but felt Meat Free Monday offered a better way for children to understand the importance of where food comes from. Meat has always been a key part of the Liverpool diet so Meat Free Monday was not easy to implement. However, Food for Thought felt that Meat Free Monday was a relatively small change to make which would have a meaningful impact, both on the environment and children's health.

"Our meals are great and we can tell our cook what we like and what we eat the next day... like pasta and things."

Jason, Pupil, Belle Vale Primary School



"It is a big improvement. Being not for profit, and keeping costs low while using organic and free range, is great."

Carol, Parent, Belle Vale Primary School

Meat Free Monday evaluation

Meat Free Monday is now going very well and is seen as a normal part of the menu cycle. As well as providing meat-free meals on Mondays, Food for Thought's partner schools teach cookery to their children (and some parents) and classes include how to prepare meat-free dishes. The children also learn the environment, healthy eating and farmed animals.



Company contact details

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Example menu



Week 1

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main dish	Vegetable shepherd's pie Filled jacket potatoes	Cowboy casserole Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Chicken & vegetable pie Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Vegetable curry Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Salmon fillet nibbles Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna
Alternative dish	Vegetable fingers Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Cheese and bacon pasta Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Vegetarian sausages Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Chicken Tikka wraps Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Fish fingers Soup, sandwiches and salad bar
Starchy food	Mashed potato	Wholemeal bread	Baby potatoes	Rice	Homemade chips
Vegetable	Cabbage and beetroot	Baked beans	Broccoli	Seasonal vegetables	Garden peas
Dessert	Apple crumble & custard Fresh fruit	Homemade bakewell tart Fresh fruit Yoghurt	Fresh fruit salad Yoghurt	Homemade scones Fresh fruit	Jelly & ice cream Fresh fruit

Week 2

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main dish	Vegetable lasagne Filled jacket potatoes	Lamb casserole Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Vegetable curry Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Roast chicken dinner Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Fish fingers Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna
Alternative dish	Homemade pizza Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Vegetable mixed bean casserole Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Chicken curry Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Quorn sausages Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Fish crunchy Soup, sandwiches and salad bar
Starchy food	Pasta Hot garlic bread	Potatoes	Rice	Roast potatoes	Homemade chips
Vegetable	Seasonal mixed salad	Carrots & cauliflower	Mixed seasonal vegetables	Carrots, swede & broccoli	Peas & sweetcorn
Dessert	Pear sponge & custard Fresh fruit	Homemade flapjacks Fresh fruit Yoghurt	Homemade cherry biscuits Fresh fruit	Fresh fruit salad Yoghurt Cheese & biscuits	Fruit jelly Fresh fruit

Week 3

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main dish	Homemade pizza Filled jacket potatoes	Scouse Filled jacket potatoes	Spaghetti bolognese Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Chinese chicken noodle curry Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Fisherman's pie Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna
Alternative dish	Tagliatelle in a tomato, garlic and herb sauce Soup, sandwiches	Cheese & tomato quiche Soup, sandwiches	Tuna pasta Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Vegetable and cheese bake Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Quorn sausages Soup, sandwiches and salad bar
Starchy food	Garlic & herb potato wedges	Potatoes	Spaghetti Hot garlic bread	Noodles	Homemade chips
Vegetable	Homemade coleslaw	Beetroot	Broccoli	Sliced cabbage and spring onion	Garden peas & sweetcorn
Dessert	Rice pudding Fresh fruit	Homemade Manchester tart Fresh fruit	Fresh fruit salad Yoghurt	Apple crumble Yoghurt Fresh fruit	Fresh fruit Yoghurt Homemade scones

Week 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main dish	Vegetable bolognaise Filled jacket potatoes	Beef casserole Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Sausage & scrambled egg Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Roast chicken dinner Filled jacket potatoes	Vegetable curry Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna
Alternative dish	Quorn sausage cowboy casserole Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Vegetable chilli Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Broccoli and cauliflower pasta bake Soup, sandwiches	Vegetable sausage rolls Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Fish fingers Soup, sandwiches and salad bar
Starchy food	Pasta Hot garlic bread	Crusty wholemeal bread	Toast	Roast potato	Rice Homemade chips
Vegetable	Mixed seasonal salad	Green beans	Beans	Cauliflower & cabbage	Seasonal vegetables
Dessert	Homemade biscuits Fresh fruit	Mixed fruit salad Yoghurt Cheese & biscuits	Apple & pear crumble & custard Fresh fruit	Fresh fruit jelly Fresh fruit	Flapjacks Fresh fruit Yoghurt

Week 5	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main dish	Garlic, basil and tomato pasta Filled jacket potatoes	Chicken curry Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Spaghetti bolognaise Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Braised beef hash Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Homemade pizza Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna
Alternative dish	Vegetable fingers Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Leek & potato bake Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Vegetable spaghetti Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Vegetable bake Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Fish crunchy Soup, sandwiches and salad bar
Starchy food	Pasta Hot garlic bread	Rice Wraps	Spaghetti	Mashed potatoes	Homemade chips
Vegetable	Mixed seasonal vegetables	Broccoli	Mixed seasonal vegetables	Green beans & carrots	Mixed seasonal vegetables
Dessert	Homemade scones Fresh fruit	Syrup sponge pudding & custard Fresh fruit. Yoghurt	Homemade flapjacks Fresh fruit	Fresh fruit salad Yoghurt Cheese & biscuits	Rice pudding Fresh fruit Yoghurt

Week 6	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main dish	Homemade vegetable lasagne Filled jacket potatoes	Chicken in tomato basil stew Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Lamb hotpot Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Quorn shepherd's pie Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Curry rice & chips Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna
Alternative dish	Vegetable sausage rolls Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Tuna pasta Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Cheese bake Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Tagliatelle with tomato & basil sauce Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Fish fingers Vegetable bakes Soup, sandwiches and salad bar
Starchy food	Pasta Hot garlic bread	New baby potatoes	Potatoes	Pasta, garlic bread and potatoes	Homemade chips
Vegetable	Seasonal salad Coleslaw	Seasonal vegetables	Cauliflower & carrots	Broccoli	Garden peas
Dessert	Fresh fruit salad & ice cream Cheese & biscuits	Flapjacks Fresh fruit Yoghurt	Homemade scones Fresh fruit	Homemade cookies Yoghurt Fresh fruit	Homemade sponge & custard Fresh fruit

Week 7	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Main dish	Homemade vegetable lasagne Filled jacket potatoes	Chicken curry Filled jacket potatoes	Lamb hotpot Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Quorn shepherd's pie Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna	Fish pie in a light cheese sauce Jacket potatoes with cheese, tuna
Alternative dish	Vegetable sausage rolls Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Tuna pasta Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Cheese bake Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Tagliatelle with tomato & basil Soup, sandwiches and salad bar	Fish fingers Vegetable bake Soup, sandwiches and salad bar
Starchy food	Pasta Hot garlic bread	Rice Baby new potato	Potatoes	Pasta, garlic bread and potatoes	Homemade chips
Vegetable	Seasonal salad Coleslaw	Seasonal vegetables	Cauliflower & carrots	Broccoli	Garden peas
Dessert	Fresh fruit salad & ice cream Cheese & biscuits	Flapjacks Fresh fruit Yoghurt	Homemade scones Fresh fruit	Homemade cookies Yoghurt Fresh fruit	Homemade sponge & custard Fresh fruit