Rosie Boycott Urges London Schools Not To Miss Out On Food Funding

Monday 23 February, 2015

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On 24th February Archbishop Lanfranc Academy in Thornton Heath, Croydon will play host to local MPs, health professionals and students from local schools. As part of the School Food Plan's actions, launched by Henry Dimbleby and John Vincent, the Food for Life Partnership is working with schools across London to help them increase school meal uptake and ensure access to a tasty and healthy school meal. This fully-funded package of support is worth over £2,000 and will help heads, cooks and students to make changes through training, improving the dining experience and ensuring those eligible for free school meals are taking them.

Unlike Archbishop Lanfranc Academy, dozens of schools in London are set to lose out a £2,000 funding package available through the 'Increase Your School Meal Take Up' programme funded by the Department for Education. Today Rosie Boycott, food advisor to the Mayor Boris Johnson, along with chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group of school food, Sharon Hodgson will visit a state-of-the-art cooking bus and see for themselves how the programme is making a difference in London's schools.

A staggering 10.8 per cent of London's children are already dangerously obese when they start primary school and by age 11, one in five are obese. In London, child obesity levels are the highest in England. Poor diet is linked to further complications later in life, ranging from Type 2 diabetes to cancer whilst the cost to health budgets has been estimated at £5billion a year currently and is rising.

Rosie Boycott said: "The fantastic Cooking Bus is guaranteed to inspire and will send families away brimming with ideas for cheap, healthy and nutritious meals. This initiative supports our work to tackle obesity in Croydon in a range of imaginative ways. Schools can play an absolutely vital role in promoting healthy eating habits and I would urge them to take up this package of practical support that's available to help them do this."

Also benefitting from the programme, and visiting the Cooking Bus on Tuesday 24 February for a cookery session are:

· Thomas More RC School

· St Mary's Catholic School

· Shirley High Performing Arts School

There will be many more heads, food teachers, governors, parents and children from 11 different schools enjoying the Cooking Bus during its week-long stay in Croydon.

The Cooking Bus sessions are just one part of an important initiative to increase take up of school meals. London schools are invited to apply for a package of support, funded by the Department for Education, worth over £2,000 to increase the number of school meals eaten by pupils and improve their lunchtime experience. The programme is open to all junior, secondary, PRUS and special schools, including free schools and academies, with below average meal take up.

The 'Increase Your School Meal Take Up' programme is delivered by national school food experts the Food for Life Partnership across Greater London. It comprises of up to six training events for school leaders, caterers and school cooks, a tailored action plan, specialist resources and support from expert regional staff. The benefits for schools are that not only will this help ensure the long-term viability of the school meal service and increase access to good school food but it has real potential to kick start a process of improving behaviour, attainment and attendance at the same time.

Former school cook and co-founder of the Food for Life Partnership, Jeanette Orrey MBE, said: "With free support and training on offer there is no better time to put great food at the heart of your school and reap the rewards across the school day."

The programme is funded by the Department for Education and is one of the resulting actions of the School Food Plan – an independent review into school food which was published last year. One of the key actions set out by the plan is to improve the viability of the school meal service by increasing take up.

For more information about the programme and to apply, please visit www.foodforlife.org.uk/takeup or contact a member of the team (details below)

ENDS

Photo opportunity:

Tuesday 24 February

11am for Rosie Boycott, Chair, London Food Board

1pm for Sharon Hodgson MP, Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food

Archbishop Lanfranc Academy, Mitcham Rd, Croydon CR9 3AS

Contact: Stephanie Wood 07948 247 692

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

The 'Increase Your School Meal Take Up' programme.

This programme has been funded by the Department for Education to help increase school meal take up by five percentage points and support the viability of the school meal service as a result. The package is worth over £2,000 to each school and consists of training, a bespoke online action plan and expert regional support. To be eligible, schools must meet the following criteria:

All junior, middle, secondary, PRUs and special schools (including academies and free schools) in the North of England, the Midlands and London who meet one or more of the criteria below will qualify for support:

§ an overall take up of school meals lower than 43% of pupils and / or

§ less than 76% of pupils eligible for free school meals are taking up their meal entitlements and / or

§ less than 35% of non-free school meal pupils are purchasing school meals.

For further information or to apply, please go to www.foodforlife.org.uk/takeup

The Food for Life Partnership has created a network of thousands of schools and communities across England committed to transforming their food culture. In addition to their work for the Department for Education, they run a successful, national award programme that provides a framework for schools to provide fresh, well-sourced and nutritious meals and improve their overall lunchtime experience. It helps children, adults and teachers understand the importance of good nutrition and where their food comes from through practical cooking and growing activities and farm visits. www.foodforlife.org.uk

School Food Matters is a charity based in London with the mission to ensure that every child enjoys fresh sustainable food at school and understands where their food comes from. The charity campaigns for excellent school food and, with partners, devises, develops and delivers exciting food education programmes for schools.www.schoolfoodmatters.com

Focus on Food is a charitable food education programme that champions cooking as an essential ingredient for healthy, happy lifestyles. They support the whole school approach to food, offering cooking resources, training and support for schools and head teachers. This includes their free COOK SCHOOL online database of recipes and resources, and Skills Snippets to make the teaching of cooking skills easier for teachers and other cooking leaders.

The School Food Plan

The School Food Plan is a plan for school food which resulted from an independent review

commissioned by the Department for Education in 2012. It was published in 2013 and is a series of actions and recommendations which aim to ensure that school food leaves children healthy, happy and able to learn. www.schoolfoodplan.com

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