

# Schools must start confronting tougher 2008 lunch rules



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**Primary schools and local authorities need to start taking action soon if they are to meet the second set of the Government's school meal standards, says an independent dietician.**

The Government's two-pronged approach to improving school meals begins this September with the introduction of the food-based standards, with the more stringent nutrient standards coming into force in September 2008.

Of most concern are around half the country's local authorities and the estimated 20% of schools that do not come under local authority control for catering, that are yet to invest in external resources to meet the standards.

**Independent dietician and nutrition advisor Luci Daniels** is urging schools and their caterers to consider sooner rather than later how they are going to meet the 14 nutrient standards. This will require the development of new menus and the adaptation of recipes.

Luci explains: *"Schools may think they have plenty of time to implement the changes in their school menus but there are some very challenging aspects in the second set of standards. Specific targets are set for nutrients including total fat, saturated fat, sugar, salt as well as vitamins and minerals averaged over five consecutive lunches.*

*"It will take some effort to provide a varied diet that children will want to eat and will meet the standards. For instance, the standards for zinc and iron will be hard to achieve, and similarly calcium levels will be difficult to meet unless a milky sauce, a yogurt or a glass of milk is available each day.*



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*“Many local authorities and the bigger contract caterers have invested in the resources such as nutritional analysis software to simplify the process. However there are a significant number of schools that are either opted-out of local authority catering or are independent that will really struggle without outside help to meet the food and nutrient standards within existing budgets.”*

Schools and local authorities that have already taken action, are either employing the services of a dietician to analyse each term’s menus or have invested in nutritional analysis technology such as the **Saffron Nutrition** subscription-based web service. The service is specifically designed for schools and caterers to benchmark their menus against the 14 nutrient standards, and obtain a detailed forward costing of a term’s menus.

Catering software specialist **Fretwell-Downing Hospitality** has developed the web version of the **Saffron Nutrition** programme to make the technology more accessible to individual schools and the smaller caterers without having to make a significant investment in the software.



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