

{ How to fund
your foodservice
and protect pupil
wellbeing



The **challenge** for schools



8.4 million people in the UK are in **food poverty**



Higher rates of **FSM eligibility** than ever before



3 million children in poverty are still **unable to access FSM**



Schools need to serve more meals with **lower budgets** to fund this



Plugging the FSM eligibility gap

Ensuring the meals served in schools prioritise nutritional quality and inclusivity can contribute to the overall wellbeing and success of pupils

School meals have a multifaceted impact on pupil wellbeing, influencing physical health, cognitive function, emotional stability, social interactions, and educational attainment.

For pupils facing deprivation and food insecurity at home, school meals can be a crucial source of nourishment. Free school meal programs contribute to a more equitable learning

environment by ensuring that all students have access to nutritious meals.

Despite higher rates of free school meal eligibility than ever before, many pupils in poverty are still missing out. Around 3 million* children are believed to be in food poverty, but are not able to access FSM because the threshold hasn't been met.

Some school leaders are opting to fund meals for children who fall outside of eligibility criteria. However, support for socio-economic deprivation in the school funding system has fallen, with a 14%** real-terms reduction in the value of the Pupil Premium since 2015. So, with high food and energy prices, and low budgets, how can they plug the funding gap?

Civica has more than thirty years' experience of working with caterers who serve the public sector, and we've drawn on this to offer some tips that could make a difference.

Read on to learn:

- How school meals can improve attendance and attainment
- How you can help pupils make healthy, and safe, food choices
- How your catering team can save serious money and resources
- How you can use this to fund pupils in need.

* <https://www.foodservicefootprint.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Footprint-Report-Covid-Proof-13.pdf>

** <https://ifs.org.uk/news/schools-serving-disadvantaged-children-have-faced-biggest-funding-cuts>

The role of school meals in improving attendance and attainment

Being in school is important to a child's achievement, wellbeing and wider development.

Evidence shows that students with higher attendance throughout their time in education gain the best exam results.*

School meals can play a key role in getting children into school and ensuring they're sufficiently physically and mentally healthy to attend regularly.

Healthy food is key to keeping pupils physically healthy and improving mood, so that they can attain.

Attendance and attainment are strongly linked



The **physical health** of pupils ensures they are present in school



The **mental health** of pupils ensures they are engaged in lessons, can concentrate and retain information



Healthy food served in schools impacts both **physical and mental** wellbeing

The offer of a nutritious school meal is a significant pull for pupils and families facing food poverty. In some cases, it will be the only hot meal the child will eat in a day.

84% of key stage 2 pupils with **100%** attendance achieved the expected standard compared to 40% of pupils who were persistently absent.*

* <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/the-link-between-absence-and-attainment-at-ks2-and-ks4>



Help pupils make **healthy and safe** food choices

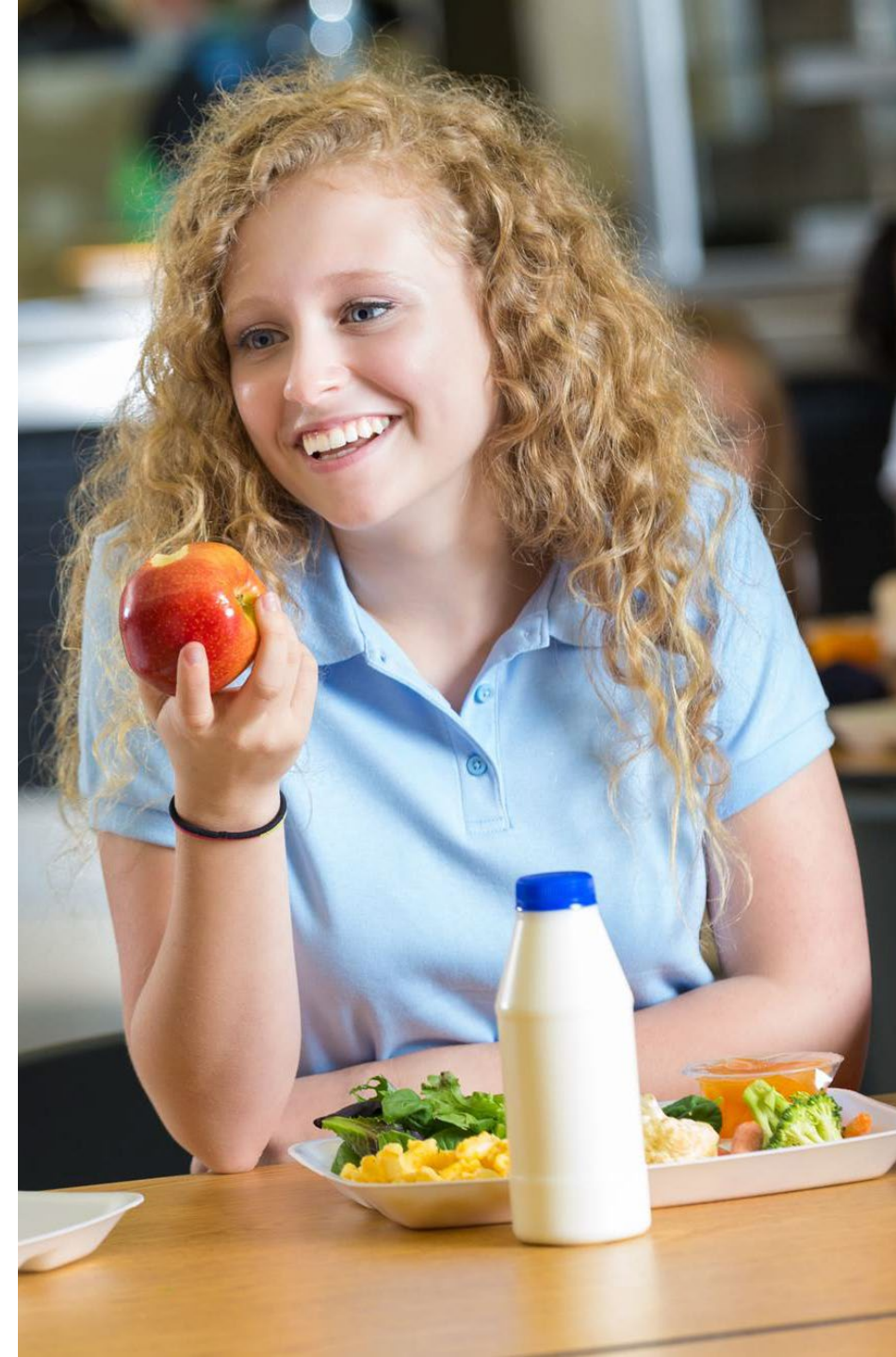
With childhood obesity on the rise, nutritional quality counts and schools have a key role in driving healthy behaviours.

According to data from NHS Digital, around 20% of children in Reception (ages 4-5) and 34% of children in Year 6 (ages 10-11) are classified as overweight or obese in England.

The [Healthy Schools](#) programme, run by the Department for Education, encourages schools to promote the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of students. In 2020, over 90% of state-funded schools in England were registered with the programme.

So, aside from engaging in this key DfE programme, what else can you do?

- Follow the [School Food Standards](#)
- Promote '[The Eatwell Guide](#)' principles by creating attractive meal deals in the [CivicaEats](#) app. This makes it easy and appealing for students to choose healthier options
- Ensure access to drinking water throughout school
- Comply with Public Health England's [sugar guidelines](#) and limit the availability of sugary snacks and drinks in school.



- Emphasise the use of local and seasonal produce in school meals.
- Initiate or participate in school gardening projects, integrating lessons on food production, sustainability, and healthy eating.
- Engage parents with activities that focus on healthy eating habits and the importance of a balanced diet. They can then help their children make healthier choices when pre-ordering, with visibility of offline purchases that have been made.

Learn how Civica catering tech is supporting sustainability and buying local. [Find out more.](#)

Staying safe: Managing special dietary needs

Where children have allergies or other special dietary needs, eating outside the home can be very worrying – particularly for parents. [Natasha's Law](#) highlights the risks.

Civica Cashless Catering integrates with your MIS to mitigate the risks of students purchasing restricted dietary items, keeping pupils safe and your school compliant. Unsafe options can be removed from a student's individual menu, stopping the student from inadvertently ordering the wrong item – and giving you peace of mind.

We take data directly from suppliers to keep recipes and menus up to date and make it easy to share this information with parents.

“Civica Catering Management is invaluable for individual menu planning. The data is reliable because it comes straight through from our suppliers' database, so we don't need to update it, and if something changes, it automatically changes that product. Parents love it – and they feel really confident that we're providing the right thing that their child needs.”

Sharon Ainsworth, Head of Catering and Cleaning. North Lincolnshire Council.

Case study: North Lincolnshire Council

Improving visibility, efficiency and control for North Lincolnshire Council.

As head of catering and cleaning for North Lincolnshire Council, Sharon Ainsworth heads up a team responsible for delivering 3,500 meals each day across 30 primary schools and 100 hot meals on wheels for vulnerable adults in the community, all freshly cooked from scratch.

North Lincolnshire Council is taking steps to reduce and reuse food waste, as part of its wider sustainability approach. The Council is using Civica's Catering Management software to support sustainability goals and deliver cost-effective, centralised procurement and menu management.

"This system helps to ensure my team can produce a menu that's within our cost budget, that's affordable to schools and parents, while at the same time producing a menu that's full of dishes that kids love to enjoy."

Sharon Ainsworth, Head of Catering and Cleaning, North Lincolnshire Council.

[Watch the case study ▶](#)



How you can save serious money and resources

Tip #1: Reduce food waste.

Food waste is estimated to account for almost half of the waste, by weight, from primary schools in England and almost a third of waste, by weight, from secondary schools in England.

An estimated 80,382 tonnes of food waste are produced by schools in England per (40 weeks) school year, of which 63,099 tonnes (78%) are avoidable (WRAP).

Food waste covers overordering produce, preparing too much food and

uneaten plate waste, with multiple opportunities to make savings throughout.

Here are some tips on where to focus your efforts:

- **Create more appealing menus**

Keep menus fresh and keep track of what's popular and what's not. Civica Cashless Catering shows the most and least popular food options, giving the kitchen greater insight to plan menus accordingly. In addition, [Civica Catering Management](#) software provides menu engineering and recipe support, which makes it easier for catering teams to update and optimise menus regularly,

The UK throws away

9.5 million

tonnes of food waste a year

8.4 million

people in the UK are in food poverty

Over **33%** of all food produced globally goes to waste

- **Promote menus in advance**

Knowing what they will be eating can help reduce food anxiety for children and this is where pre-ordering food can really help. Civica Cashless Catering includes pre-order options for the primary classroom, for parents and via the CivicaEats app for secondary-age children.

- **Speed up the lunch queue**

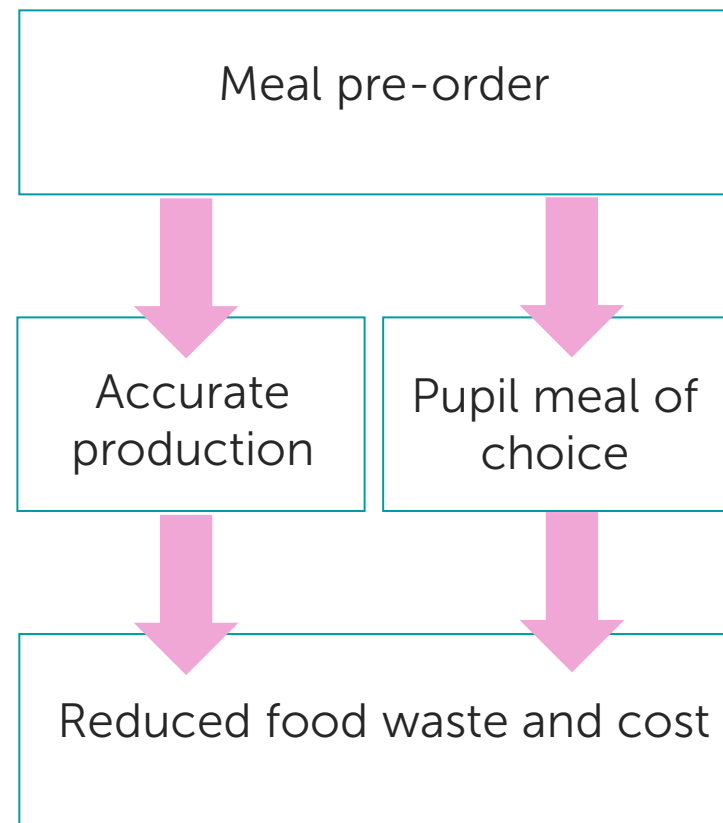
Lengthy queues eat into important playtime, and noisy environments can impact children's eating. Make the most of pre-order tech and cashless tills for quicker throughput, keeping the dining room calmer and quieter.

- **Track improvements**

Take time to accurately measure and record waste and report on this in terms of a percentage of revenue and percentage of consumption.

With Net Zero at the forefront of many agendas, you should also consider reviewing the total CO2 value of waste, linked to CO2 values for individual ingredients and menu items.

Civica Catering Management offers an all-encompassing view of operations to drive efficiency, support compliance and enhance visibility. This helps school caterers to take the right steps to minimise the amount of food wasted.



“Reducing the amount of food being prepared and served means that the catering team has been able to move away from overloading regeneration trolleys. They function better, the food looks better because it has been reheated correctly, it is more appetising and served at the right temperature. All of this will have reduced plate wastage too.”

Caron Bromley, General Manager, Sodexo.

Case study: Lancashire County Council

Lancashire County Council partners with Civica for sustainable catering goals.

Lancashire County Council delivers 66,000 meals per day, providing a traded service to around 520 schools, residential care homes and day care centres across Lancashire and the surrounding areas.

In our video case study, Nigel Craine, Head of Schools & Residential Care Catering at Lancashire County Council, explains how they aspire to be the best, what sustainability means to him as a caterer and how Civica Catering Management software is at the heart of everything they do.

“We drive down food waste using the Civica system. It gives us our menu production sheets, which go out to our kitchens. We’re able to carefully define the volumes of ingredients that go into producing meals by a multiple of ten. That really helps to drive down unnecessary production in our kitchens.”

Nigel Craine, Head of Schools & Residential Care Catering at Lancashire County Council.

Watch the case study ▶



Tip #2: Tightly control purchasing

Have you got full visibility and control of what is being purchased to deliver the menu?

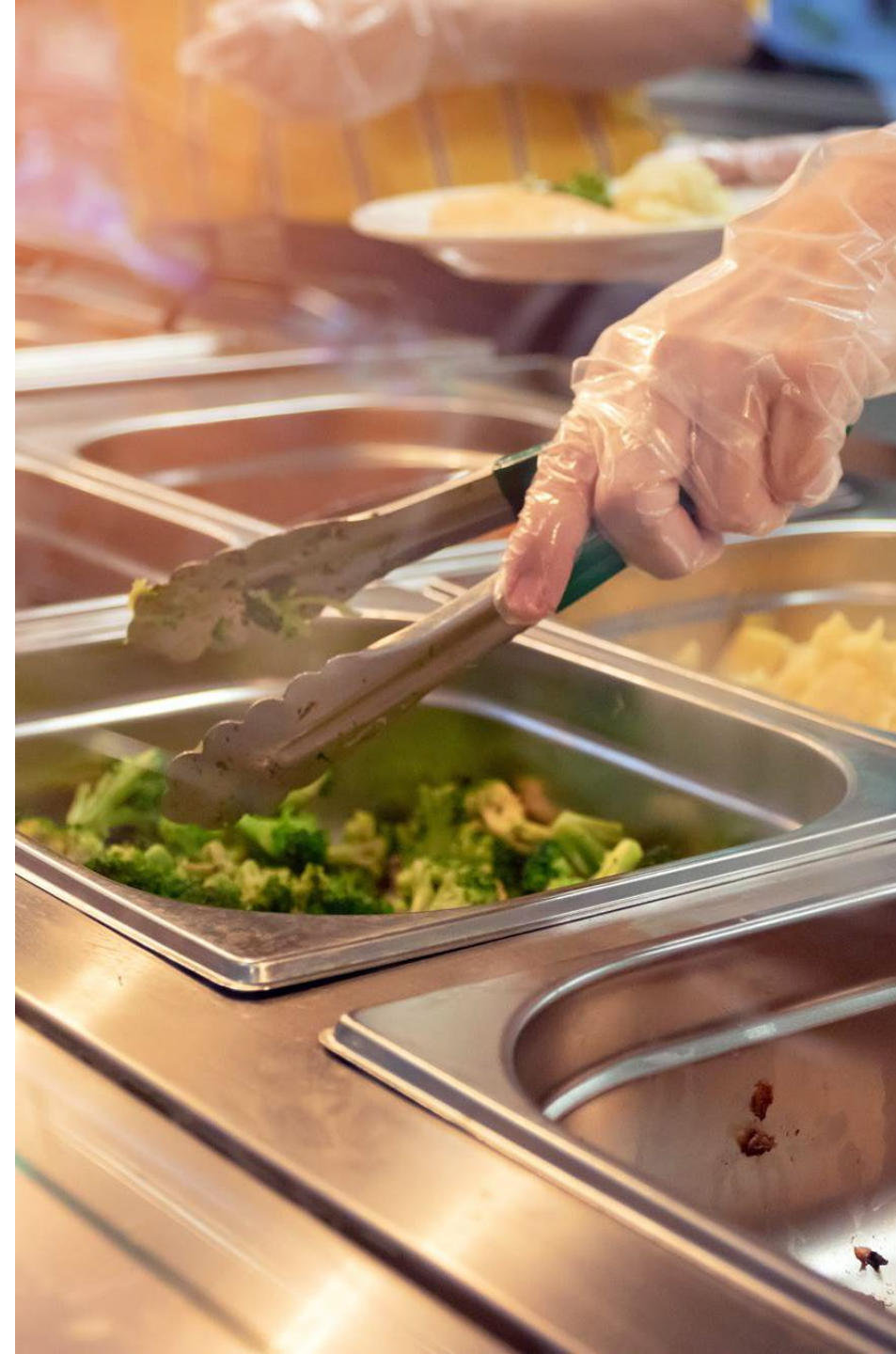
It's important to ensure that everybody within the organisation is buying approved products from approved suppliers, where volumes and discounts have been negotiated.

With the Civica Purchase to Pay (P2P) module, caterers can manage stock levels and recipe costings more easily, automatically raise and place purchase

orders and trade with any supplier, whatever their size – all through one, simple to use platform. Automating and simplifying the process can save up to 70% of the associated costs of a paper-based system.

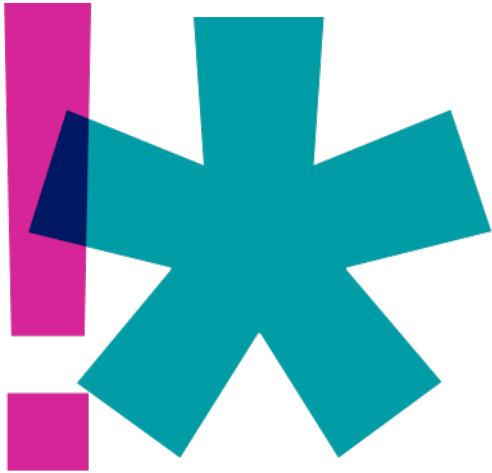
“Civica catering software really helps us control our purchasing. It's been revolutionary. The functionality has allowed us to control our costs very well.”

Sharon Ainsworth, Head of Catering and Cleaning. North Lincolnshire Council.



Tip #3: Control the food cost percentage

For effective menu control and management, school caterers need accurate data and insight. Here are some tips on areas to look at.



Serve the dishes pupils love to eat

It's possible to capture real time data from EPOS and pre-ordering systems, to evaluate dish performance and make informed decisions. Civica Catering Management manages this process and highlights variances, enabling organisations to act upon increases and impacts quickly. This interoperability also ensures the correct selling price is passed to the customer immediately and margin managed effectively.

Improve menu management

Menu management can mean making substitutions, switching to cheaper or more readily available options, or switch from scarce products if they become more expensive. Civica Catering Management's purchase to pay module manages this process and highlights variances, enabling organisations to act upon increases and impacts in a timely manner.

Stay compliant, stay safe

While keeping an eye on profitability, it's important to understand the risk substitutions can pose to pupils and also to compliance with FIR and Natasha's Law. Civica Catering Management instantly shows the impact that changes have on cost, allergens, nutrition and carbon footprint.

Tip #4: Optimise the sales/cost mix

Staff are an important piece of the budget busting puzzle.

Acquisition and retention in the foodservice sector can be challenging. The right tech will make the working day better for your staff and reduce administration costs too.

In the current climate, it has never been more important to take advantage of those benefits.

School catering tech to consider:

- **Paperless kitchen management**, like [Civica Catering Management](#), for centralised control and easy repeatable processes, that are quick for people to learn and adhere to.
- **Online payments** for parents and guardians, like [CivicaPay Education](#), to reduce the administration burden on your back-office team.
- **Fast tills and ID management** like Civica's [EPOS](#), to support rapid cashless payments.
- **Pre-order apps**, portals and whiteboard solutions, like [Civica Cashless Catering](#). These make sure your kitchen staff know what to buy and cook in advance.



Funding free school meals for pupils in need

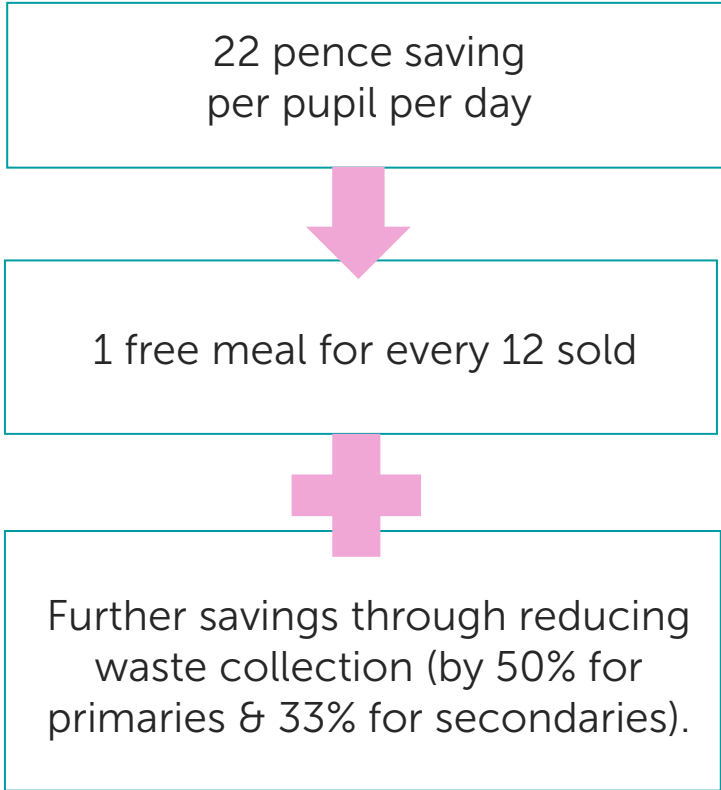
We've shown you some ways schools can stretch the catering budget and do more with less. What type of savings could these deliver?

For context, according to [WRAP](#), in one school year, schools in England waste over 80,000 tonnes of food, at a cost of £250m. Cutting food waste could reduce the cost of a school meal by 22 pence.

On average, primary schools waste 75 grams of food per pupil per day, and secondary schools waste 42 grams per student per day.

Based on LACA surveys, the average price of a paid-for school meal in 2023 is £2.65.

Cutting food waste could deliver:



Additional digital transformation in a catering operation could deliver:



80%

Reduction in paper use in the kitchen



1 hour a day

Back for every kitchen manager



70%

Reduction in purchasing and invoicing costs



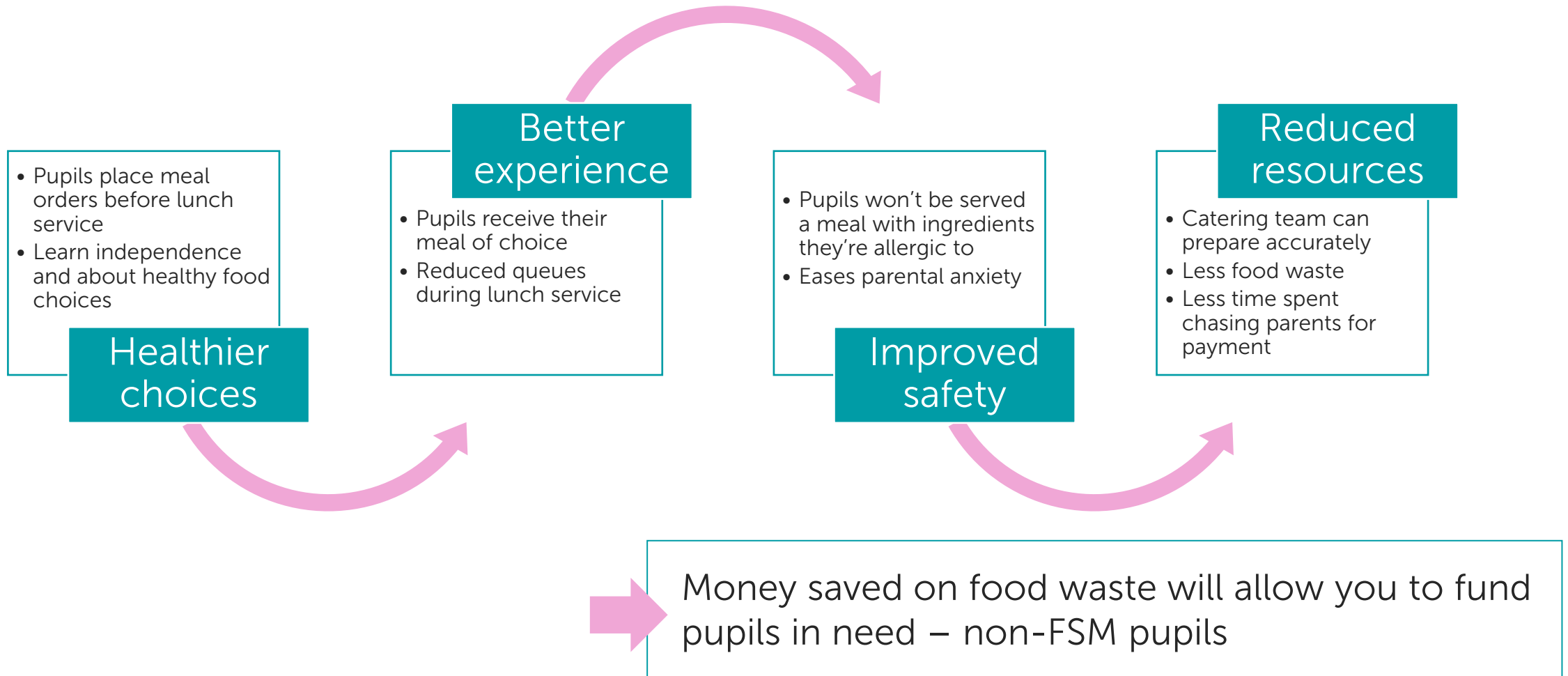
5%

Reduction in stock held



Improved staff wellbeing and retention

If you do just one thing: implement meal pre-order



CIVICA Catering Management

To find out more and book a demonstration
email catering@civica.co.uk




Cert No. 663

ISO 9001, ISO 27001, ISO 22301, ISO 14001,
OHSAS 18001, ISO 20000

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