

It is good to see more schools in Sunderland insisting that pupils remain on the premises during lunchtime: an idea that Sunderland Conservatives have long promoted for a variety of reasons.

First, we cannot expect children to opt for healthy food at school if, as soon as the bell rings, they are allowed to head for one of the many fast food outlets that surround most schools. Healthy school meals have come as a shock to many so some insistence will be needed to change attitudes.

Apart from the arguments about the take-up of lunches, there is simply something sloppy about children loose on the streets during school time. Away from the vigilance of teachers a few will always behave in a way they would not at school.

It really is time for all schools to keep school pupils where they should be at lunchtime: making the most of a short day to catch up on work; play sport or take part in some other beneficial activity.

With the best performing schools in Sunderland already keeping pupils in at lunchtime, and therefore establishing a link with achievement, it's time for other schools to follow and the Local Authority to demonstrate it's commitment to improving standards by pressing them to do so.

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Conservative Children's Services Spokesman