

DAILY MAIL ONLINE

A DAY'S CALORIES IN ONE SCHOOL LUNCH

PRIMARY school children are being served up nearly a day's worth of calories in one sitting for lunch.

Calorie counts are rocketing in schools across Scotland, with

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parents given little control over menus that include pizzas, burgers, puddings and other high-fat foods.

The Scottish Government recommends that the school dinners of primary

age children should contain only 557 calories per day.

But while that might be met on average across the week, some of the unhealthiest single meals are almost twice that amount.

In Dumfries and Galloway, children can consume 1,056 calories in one meal, comprising a sausage roll, baked

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beans and sautéed potatoes, with a drink, side salad and sticky toffee pudding.

This is not far short of the daily intake of 1,200 calories that experts recommend for moderately active children aged four to eight - and is 201 more than a Big Mac meal with medium fries and a diet Coke.

Among local authority areas that provide calorie counts, Edinburgh, West Dunbartonshire and Tayside are the worst offenders, the Mail has found.

In some schools, few healthy choices are offered, despite Scots children consuming, on average, only around half of their recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

Nearly a quarter of a million Scots children are overweight or obese, with some as young as 12 now being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

Lorraine Tulloch, of Obesity Action Scotland, said: 'This data shows alarming levels of potential calorie intake for children from school lunches.'

'The eating habits we set for our children will remain with them for life.'

On one of its primary school menus, City of Edinburgh Council offers a meal of almost 740 calories, which includes macaroni cheese, coleslaw and coconut sponge.

West Dunbartonshire offers a menu with fish, chips and beans, followed by sponge and custard, coming in at 743 calories.

According to the Scottish Government Healthy Eating in Schools report, children

consume 'too many foods high in fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar'.

A typical primary school lunch should contain 557 calories, when averaged out over a week. In principle, councils are meeting this target. But some high-fat, high-sugar meals on offer contain hundreds more calories.

Tayside Contracts, which provides school food in Angus, Dundee and Perth and Kinross, allows children to order a 607 calorie meal, which includes burger and chips.

Primary pupils in South Lanarkshire, meanwhile, can have spicy wedges and rice pudding as part of a 576 calorie meal.

Tam Fry, of the National Obesity Forum, said: 'Children will eat what is put in front

'Alarming levels of calorie intake'

of them so it is up to schools and parents to ensure what they eat is as healthy.'

The calorie counts were provided by Scots councils under Freedom of Information legislation. Where the information for a full meal was not supplied, it was taken from menus on local authority websites.

However several councils do not supply nutritional information, making it impossible for parents to check what their children are being fed.

School food providers said their meals were analysed regularly for nutritional content in compliance with legislation.

A Dumfries and Galloway Council spokesman said: 'All our menus comply with The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007.'

A City of Edinburgh Council spokesman said: 'These figures aren't reflective of the average two-course lunches prepared in our schools and enjoyed by our pupils.'

A spokesman for Tayside Contracts, which also serves low-fat burgers and 'hidden' vegetables in its meals, said: 'The nutrient standards represent the amount of energy (calories) and nutrients required to be provided by the average day's lunch.'

'This means that caterers must plan their lunch menus to ensure that the food and drinks on offer over a week average out to meet the nutrient standards.'

A spokesman for West Dunbartonshire Council said menus were fully compliant with guidelines, and added: 'The council is committed to the health and wellbeing of all our schoolchildren and provides them with a balance of healthy meals.'

Stephen Kelly of South Lanarkshire Council said its calorie values were based on a three-course menu so would be higher than the two courses served by many local authorities. He added: 'Unlimited fresh fruit, salad and vegetables are contained within every menu.'

The Scottish Government was unable to comment because of election purdah rules, but has previously said all councils have a duty to provide school meals which meet strict nutritional requirements.