



## **PRUE LEITH APPOINTED CHAIR OF THE SCHOOL FOOD TRUST**

Education and Skills Secretary of State Alan Johnson has announced the appointment of Prue Leith OBE as the new Chair of the School Food Trust (SFT). She will take up her post on 15 January 2007.

The renowned businesswoman, charity founder and food writer will head the SFT board's work to raise nutritional standards in schools, increase the uptake of school meals and build awareness of healthy eating and food skills among young people.

Alan Johnson said:

"I am delighted to announce the appointment of Prue Leith as the chair of the School Food Trust to strengthen its work in continuing to drive up catering and nutritional standards in our schools. Her business acumen, high-profile and passion about changing public attitudes towards healthy eating, make her an outstanding candidate for this role.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Acting Chair of the School Food Trust, Baroness Maggie Jones, for her continued hard work in leading the School Food Trust following Dame Suzi Leather's departure in July."

Prue Leith said:

"This is the most important job I have ever had and I cannot wait to start work. Convincing young people, parents, teachers and caterers of the importance of good food is essential if we want our children to grow up healthy and energetic. It is crucial we equip pupils with the practical skills and knowledge to help them learn at school and make the right choices during the rest of their lives. I believe we can really change attitudes through the Trust's mission to help schools teach every pupil about food and nutrition and to give them cooking lessons."

School Food Trust Chief Executive Judy Hargadon, said:

"We are extremely pleased that Prue will be joining the Trust as its new chair. Her vast experience of the food and education worlds will be hugely beneficial as we continue on the journey of transforming food in schools."

Prue Leith built her reputation after founding three renowned companies - catering firm Leith's Good Food, Michelin starred restaurant Leith's and Leith's School of Food and Wine - in the 1960s and 1970s, which eventually employed 500 people and turned over £15million a year when she sold them in 1995.

Since then, she has opened The Prue Leith College of Food and Wine in South Africa, which has become the country's most successful chef school with its own catering company and restaurant. She has also founded a charitable restaurant, The Hoxton Apprentice, which trains long term unemployed residents of Hackney. Profits are returned to the parent charity, Training for Life, to train more apprentices.

Prue Leith chairs The Focus on Food Campaign, the largest food charity working in schools to help the teaching of cooking in the curriculum, and the British Food Trust, promoting food education to the general public and developing qualifications for professional cooks. She also chairs 3E's Enterprise, a not-for-profit company which project managed the building and opening of The Business Academy in Bexley 2002. It is continuing to project manage seven other Academy projects. She will be resigning from these posts to concentrate on working for the Schools Food Trust.

Prue has also had a parallel career in business, sitting on the boards of British Rail, Safeway, Halifax, Whitbread and Woolworths. She is also on the boards of Nations Healthcare, Omega plc and Orient-Express Hotels.

A food columnist for four national newspapers between 1969 and 1998, she has written 12 cookbooks, including the best selling Leith's Cookery Bible, and presented television shows and documentaries, with her most recent appearance being BBC 1's 2006 Great British Menu series. She has published three novels, published by Penguin, and is writing her fourth.

She was appointed OBE in 1989.

Prue Leith's appointment followed an open competition, following the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments Code of Practice. The post involves remuneration of £15,000 a year. The board presently meets six times a year.

The key responsibilities of the Chair are:

- To oversee the successful delivery of the Trust's targets in relation to the supply of the demand for healthy food in schools
- To maintain and develop the overall direction of the work of the Trust
- To provide strategic leadership to the Board, chairing its regular meetings and bringing together a diverse range of interests and stakeholders to work on common ground
- To supervise the efficient conduct of the Board's functions and operations
- To represent the board to Government and stakeholders
- To direct the Chief Executive in the interpretation of the Trust's policies and their implementation against agreed financial, quantitative and qualitative targets
- To act as the public face of the Trust and build relations with range of organisations including the Government and industry and voluntary organisations.

Prue Leith presently acts as a consultant to Compass, a company involved in delivering school meals. To avoid any conflict of interest and as a condition of taking up the School Food Trust role, she will make an undertaking not to advise them on school meals in the future. The previous School Food Trust Chair, Suzi Leather, resigned when she took an appointment with the Charity Commission. Deputy Chair Baroness Maggie Jones has headed the board in the interim.

The School Food Trust was set up in 2005 with £15 million of funding from the Department for Education and Skills to promote the education and health of children and young people by improving the quality of food supplied and consumed in schools. Please view [www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk) for more information.

The key goals for the Trust to achieve are to:

- Ensure all schools meet the food based and nutrient-based standards for lunch and non-lunch food
- Increase the uptake of school meals
- Reduce diet-related inequalities in childhood through food education and school based initiatives
- Improve food skills through food education, and school and community initiatives.

Following the Government's response to the report 'Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food' published by the School Meals Review Panel in October 2005, the Trust is now charged with taking forward the transformation of school food and food skills to improve health and education for school age children and young people. The Trust's Strategic Plan sets out, at a high-level, how the Trust plans to do so during the current Spending Review period and beyond.

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