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# WHOLE SCHOOL FOOD POLICY

## ***Whole School Food Policy V26.1***

<b>Whole School Food Policy</b>	
<b>Version History</b>	
V26.1	New policy.

# Whole School Food Policy V26.1

## 1. Purpose of Food Policy

This policy has been written to give clear guidance to staff, outside visitors, parent and carers, and pupils about the provision of food during the school day and our approach to the positive promotion of healthy eating. Good food provision in schools has been shown to lead not only to healthier children, but to improved attainment.

### *The school will aim too:*

- Provide safe, nutritious, and appealing meals that meet School Food Standards.
- Ensure strict food hygiene and safe preparation practices.
- Support pupils' sensory, physical, and medical needs around eating.
- Create a calm, structured, and positive dining environment.
- Work closely with families, therapists, and medical professionals.

## 2. Food and Drink Provision Throughout the Day

### *2.1 Food Standards for Schools*

As part of the School Food Plan, a new set of standards for all food served in schools was launched by the Department for Education. These standards are mandatory for all maintained schools. All academies and free schools are also expected to comply with these standards, and since 2014 is an explicit requirement within funding agreements.

These school food standards are intended to help children develop healthy eating habits and ensure they obtain the energy and nutrition they need across the whole school day, which includes food provided for breakfast, mid-morning snacks, lunch, tuck shops and after school clubs.

### *The standards do not apply to:*

- Parties or celebrations to mark religious or cultural occasions
- Fund raising events
- Rewards for achievement, good behaviour or effort
- For use in teaching food preparation and cookery skills, including where the food prepared is served to pupils as part of a school lunch
- On an occasional basis by parents or pupils
- Food and drinks provided after 6pm, or during weekends or school holidays

### *For more information, please refer to:*

- The DFE Standards for School Food in England (updated 2021)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england>
- The DFE School Food Standards – Resources for schools including a practical guide, checklists, portion sizes and allergy information (updated 2021)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools>
- The School Food Plan – provides a range of resources including recipes ideas, portion sizes and learning from others <https://www.schoolfoodplan.com/>

### *Given the high proportion of pupils with PMLD/SLD:*

- Texture-modified diets must be prepared exactly as prescribed.
- Staff must supervise all eating and drinking.
- High-risk foods (e.g., whole grapes, hard raw vegetables) must be avoided or modified.
- Staff must be trained to support students with eating/ drinking difficulties.
- Staff follow individual students' dysphagia feeding plans where appropriate.

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- Staff must follow the EYFS-aligned guidance on choking risk reduction for vulnerable children.

## **Supporting Pupils with ARFID (Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder)**

Our school recognises ARFID as a diagnosed eating disorder that can significantly affect a pupil's ability to eat a wide range of foods. We are committed to providing a supportive, non-pressurised environment for pupils with ARFID and will work closely with families and professionals to understand each child's individual needs.

Reasonable adjustments may include allowing pupils to bring preferred or "safe" foods from home, offering flexible and calm eating arrangements, and avoiding any pressure-based approaches to eating. Staff will use supportive, non-judgemental language and will not comment on the quantity or variety of food consumed

## **2.2 Breakfast**

Breakfast is an important meal and contribution towards energy requirements and is an opportunity to provide essential vitamins and minerals. Due to the vast distance our pupils travel to get to school, breakfast club provision will be offered on arrival to school or throughout the day to meet the ongoing sensory needs of the pupil.

### **We provide the following foods/drinks at breakfast:**

- Low sugar cereals
- Toast/bread
- Low fat spread
- Fruit
- Semi skimmed milk
- Water

### **Schools cannot provide the following foods as part of the school's breakfast provision:**

- Starchy food cooked in fat or oil on no more than two occasions each week (applies across the whole school day across all food provision)
- A meat or poultry product on more than one occasion each week (applies across the whole school day across all food provision)
- No more than two portions of food that has been deep fried, breadcrumb coated each week (applies across the whole school day across all food provision)
- No more than two portions of food that include pastry each week (across the whole school day across all food provision)
- No confectionary (includes cereal bars and processed fruit bars), chocolate, chocolate coated products, cakes, biscuits, pastries, desserts.

## **2.3 Snacks**

Snacks can play an important part of the diet of children and young people and can contribute positively towards a balanced diet. Snacks provide an opportunity to have 1 of your 5-a-day, as well as include other important nutrients in the diet.

We recognise that some pupils may have specific dietary needs, sensory preferences, or medical requirements that influence the types of food they can eat. For this reason, pupils may bring snacks that differ from typical school recommendations; however, all items must still meet the following expectations:

- Snacks should support pupils' health, regulation, and learning needs.

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- Foods that pose a risk to others—such as items containing allergens that affect pupils within the class or school—may not be permitted.
- Snacks should be manageable for the pupil to eat safely and independently where possible.
- Highly sugary, highly processed, or unsuitable items (e.g., energy drinks, large confectionery items) may be restricted unless they are part of an agreed individual plan.

Where a pupil requires specific foods that fall outside general guidance, this will be discussed with parents/carers. The school aims to balance flexibility for individual needs with a safe and inclusive environment for all pupils.

## **2.4 School lunches**

The school lunches meet the statutory school food standards. Lunch is provided by our in-house catering team. All our lunch menus include a range of healthy, quality ingredients and we ensure to make the choice of meals appealing for all pupils. All our lunches address cultural, religious and special dietary needs including food allergies and medical conditions. In September 2014, the Government introduced universal free school meals for all children from Reception to Year 2.

### **Schools cannot provide the following foods for lunch:**

- Starchy food cooked in fat or oil on no more than two occasions (previously days instead of occasions) each week (applies across the whole school day across all food provision)
- A meat or poultry product on more than one occasion each week (applies across the whole school day across all food provision)
- No more than two portions of food that has been deep fried, breadcrumb coated each week (applies across the whole school day across all food provision)
- No more than two portions of food that include pastry each week (across the whole school day across all food provision)

## **2.6 Drinks**

Water is available for all pupils throughout the day as well as low sugar squash.

## **3. Menu Development and Consultation**

**Our school engages with key stakeholders before implementing any menu changes and these include:**

- Essex County Council School Meals Service
- nutritionist/dietitian
- Parents / carers
- Catering staff at school

Our school ensures that the pupil's voice is heard when reviewing our food and drink provision through consultations with all pupils through the School Council.

## **4. Food and Drink brought into school and parent engagement**

### **4.1 Packed lunches**

We encourage parents to provide healthy well-balanced packed lunches.

We recognise that some pupils may have specific dietary needs, sensory preferences, or medical requirements that influence the types of food they can eat. For this reason, pupils may bring lunches that differ from typical school recommendations.

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Where a pupil requires specific foods that fall outside general guidance, this will be discussed with parents/carers and documented as part of the pupil's individual support plan. The school aims to balance flexibility for individual needs with a safe and inclusive environment for all pupils.

## ***5. School events, trips, birthdays and special occasions***

At our school, we recognise that birthdays and special occasions play an important role in pupils' social, emotional, and communication development. Many of our pupils travel significant distances to attend school, which can limit opportunities to celebrate these events with peers outside the school day. For this reason, shared celebrations are considered valuable learning experiences and form part of our wider curriculum.

To support inclusion, wellbeing, and consistency, the following principles guide our approach to food during birthdays and special occasions:

**Celebrations as Learning Opportunities:** Events such as birthdays provide meaningful opportunities for pupils to practise social communication skills, develop relationships, and participate in shared experiences that enhance their personal development.

**Food Safety and Dietary Needs:** Any food brought into school must comply with our allergy, dietary, and health guidelines. Families are encouraged to provide non-food items or pre-packaged, clearly labelled treats where possible to ensure the safety of all pupils.

**Equity and Inclusion:** We aim to ensure that all pupils can participate fully in celebrations. Staff will support inclusive alternatives for pupils with dietary restrictions or sensory needs.

**Consistency with School Values:** While we acknowledge the importance of celebration, we also promote healthy choices. Staff may guide families toward options that align with our healthy eating principles.

**Staff-Led Coordination:** To maintain a safe and positive environment, all celebration activities involving food must be planned in consultation with class staff, who will ensure they are appropriate, inclusive, and aligned with pupils' individual needs.

## ***7. The Dining Experience***

Our school is committed to providing a dining environment that supports the sensory, social, and developmental needs of all pupils. For many of our learners, particularly those with complex needs, the classroom offers the most appropriate and supportive setting for eating. This environment allows pupils to feel secure, reduces sensory overwhelm, and enables staff to provide individualised support that promotes positive eating habits and independence.

As part of our curriculum and preparation for adulthood, some older pupils may be supported to transition to a more traditional dining hall experience when it is appropriate for their needs. This progression is carefully planned and monitored, ensuring that pupils are introduced to larger, shared dining spaces in a way that is gradual, meaningful, and aligned with their personal development goals.

Our approach ensures that every pupil has access to a dining environment that is safe, inclusive, and conducive to their wellbeing, while also offering opportunities to build confidence, social communication skills, and independence over time.

## ***9. Cooking and Food Education in the Curriculum***

Teaching pupils how to engage with food and cooking is an important part of our whole-school approach to health, wellbeing, and preparation for adulthood. In our SEND setting, cookery is

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delivered in a highly flexible and personalised way to ensure all pupils can participate meaningfully, regardless of their sensory, physical, or cognitive needs.

Pupils may access a range of food-related learning experiences, including:

- **Cookery Lessons:** Structured sessions that introduce pupils to basic food preparation skills, safe use of equipment, and simple recipes. These sessions build independence, confidence, and an understanding of healthy choices.
- **Sensory Cookery Exploration:** Opportunities for pupils to explore food through touch, smell, sound, and visual experiences. This supports sensory regulation, reduces food anxieties, and helps pupils develop positive associations with food in a safe and supported environment.
- **Enterprise Cooking Opportunities:** For some learners, cookery forms part of enterprise projects where pupils prepare, package, or sell simple food items. These experiences develop functional skills, teamwork, communication, and an understanding of real-world processes.

## ***11. Monitoring and Evaluation***

SLT, School Governors monitor and review this policy, including all menu provision, annually.

## ***12. Policy Review***

This policy will be reviewed annually by the senior leadership team.