



Packed Lunches

Policy Statement 2021-2024

Every child has the right to the best possible health (Article 24)

1. Overall aim of the policy

To ensure that all packed lunches brought from home and consumed in school (or on school visits) provide pupils with healthy and nutritious food that is similar to food served in schools, which is now regulated by national standards (Government link below).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england>

2. How and why the policy was formulated

Monitoring evidence shows that many children are eating a packed lunch which consists mainly (and in some cases solely) of high fat, sugar and salt products such as chocolate, pastries, biscuits and crisps. This is replicated across the country and raise major concerns regarding the future health of society.

The problems associated with a poorly balanced diet are well documented through clear scientific evidence. In the short term, there can be a negative effect on concentration and behaviour but ultimately, in the long term, a poor diet can lead to diseases and conditions that are life-threatening. The pandemic over the last two years has also highlighted how poor health can leave people very vulnerable to serious negative outcomes. This policy is aimed at:

- *making a positive contribution to children's health;*
- *encouraging a happier and calmer population of children and young people;*
- *promoting consistency between packed lunches and food provided by schools which must adhere to national school food standards.*

3. Where, when and to whom the policy applies

This policy applies to all pupils and parents/carers providing packed lunches to be eaten within school or on school visits during normal school hours.

4. Responsibility of the school

To support all children to eat and drink in a healthy manner:

- The school will provide facilities for pupils bringing in packed lunches and ensure that free, fresh drinking water is readily available at all times.
- The school will work with the pupils to provide attractive and appropriate dining room arrangements.

- The school will work with parents to ensure that packed lunches meet the standards listed below.

5. Food and drink within packed lunches

Ideally, packed lunches should include:

- **at least** one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables every day (preferably two);
- meat, fish or other source of non-dairy protein (e.g. lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus and falafel) every day;
- oily fish, such as salmon, at least once every three weeks;
- a starchy food such as any type of bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles or potatoes every day;
- dairy food such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard every day;
- water or still juice.

We are aware that children can be ‘fussy’ eaters and they cannot be forced to eat things they do not like. Nevertheless, this does not mean that children are unable to eat food items that are healthy options, if the expectations are clear from school and home.

Treats

Research shows that processed products which contain high levels fat, sugars and salt (e.g. biscuits, chocolate, crisps and pastries) are exceptionally addictive and are causing most problems in children’s health. These products can be part of a healthy diet but **should be a small part, only**.

As a result, packed lunches are to be limited to one treat per day
e.g. a packet of crisps **or** a biscuit.

Carbonated (fizzy) drinks, either in bottles or in cans, are not permitted.

6. A Typical Packed Lunch

A typical packed lunch would contain the following:

- A sandwich (no chocolate spreads) or pasta/rice dish or meat/fish salad.
- Two portions of fruit or veg (e.g. a banana, an apple, a pear, strawberries, grapes, pineapple pot, carrot sticks, cucumber slices, cherry tomatoes).
- A yoghurt.
- Some cheese and possibly a cracker.
- One treat product (see above).
- Water or juice.

7. Special diets and allergies

There will be children in school with special dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarians/vegans, those that don't eat pork). The school will endeavour to support these children, especially where medical support is being given.

Inevitably, there will be children who have food allergies. It is essential that children do not share their food with others so that children with allergies do not eat something that could potentially harm them.

Although the school is not officially a nut free environment, we will work with all parents/carers, inform them that there are children with nut allergies and request that their children do not bring nut products into school.

8. Assessment, evaluation and reviewing

Packed lunches will be regularly monitored by senior management, and lunch time supervisors.

Where parents and pupils do not adhere to the packed lunch policy, the following process will be implemented:

- In the first instance, a reminder of the policy will be provided.
- If there is a continuation of a child regularly bringing in a packed lunch that does not conform to the policy, the school will contact the parents/carers to hold a meeting. The meeting will be held with the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher to discuss the need to follow policy.
- If the situation continues, a meeting will be convened with a Governing Body committee.

9. Responsibility of parents/carers

Pupils have the opportunity to eat the lunch provided by the school and we ensure flexibility so that children can have school meals at any time of their choosing. However, we understand that there will be parents and children who do not want a school meal and prefer packed lunch. Parents of pupils wishing to have packed lunches are expected to provide their children with packed lunches which conform to this packed lunch policy. In turn, the school will keep the parents informed as outlined below.

10. Sharing the policy

- The school will tell all parents/carers about the policy. It will be referred to in the school newsletter, website and shared in assemblies.
- The Rights Respect group will discuss the policy and support its implementation.
- The school will use opportunities such as parents' evenings and curriculum events to promote this policy as part of a whole school approach to healthier eating.
- It will be shared with all school staff, including teaching and catering staff and the school nurse, securing their support its implementation.

How to make your packed lunch healthier

A child's healthy lunchbox



The sandwich

Experts say the "main event" should be something filling, such as bread, rice, pasta or potatoes. Choose wholegrain where you can.

When it comes to the filling of a sandwich, wrap or bagel, **always add salad if you can** because it will count towards your child's recommended five a day of fresh fruit and veg.

The study, published in **BMJ Open**, which looked at how healthy children's packed lunches were, in 2006 and again in 2016, found the most popular filling was ham, followed by cheese, chicken, tuna and then a chocolate nut spread or jam.

Veg, such as sweetcorn and carrots, rarely featured although experts say these would be good, healthy fillings to give children, along with hummus or coleslaw, especially as an alternative to sugary jam or chocolate spread.

Try to avoid using lots of mayonnaise, butter and spread - a little bit can go a long way. Reduced-fat alternatives are available for many spreads and cheese.

The snack

The study found while the amount of sugar in packed lunches was declining overall, many still contained foods too high in sugar, salt or fat.

Most lunchboxes in the surveys of nearly 1,500 children contained crisps or other savoury snacks, while about one in three included a chocolate biscuit.

To make lunches healthier, choose:

- malt loaf, fruited teacakes, fruit breads or fruit instead of cakes, chocolate, cereal bars and biscuits
- plain rice cakes or popcorn instead of crisps
- low-sugar yoghurt or fromage frais or a pot of sugar-free jelly instead of full-sugar ones

Extra fruit and veg

Try chopped apple, peeled satsuma segments or melon slices to make it easier for young children to eat and enjoy. A squeeze of lemon juice can stop the fruit going brown.

Cherry tomatoes, peppers and celery also count.

The drink

Water is the obvious choice but milk or unsweetened (no added sugar) fruit juice is also good.

Other expert tips

Study author Dr Charlotte Evans said getting children involved in shopping for and preparing packed lunches could help with educating them about making healthy choices.

"Changing behaviour is very difficult," she said. "We know that. And we do need the food industry to help by making the choices that are available healthier.

"But involving children and getting them engaged with food choices from a young age is important.

"Encouraging a child to go to the shops with you and buy a pepper, then go home and slice some off and put it into their lunchbox would be great.

"It's about making it feel normal to have vegetables."

Loughborough University's Dr Emma Haycraft has studied the psychology of getting kids to eat more veg. She said: "Research has shown that children need to be exposed to foods a number of times before they learn to like them. So, it's important that foods are offered in lunchboxes on multiple times.

"These can be small portions initially, to minimise waste, but this will allow children time to become familiar with foods that they might not be used to eating."

What goes into a healthy packed lunch?

Bread, cereals, potatoes and other starchy foods

- How many? At least one item from this food group.
- Examples: sandwiches, pitta bread, wraps, pasta salad, potato salad, potato or sweet potato wedges, rice dishes, couscous, bread sticks, crackers, rice cakes, plain popcorn.
- Why? These foods will provide energy, fuel for vital tissues and organs including the brain, as well as fibre, B vitamins and other minerals.
- Top tip: try to include some wholegrain varieties from this food group each week - they provide extra fibre. Wholegrain starchy foods include, brown, wholemeal, granary or 50/50 bread, whole wheat pasta and brown rice.

Fruits and vegetables

- How many? At least one fruit and one vegetable.
- Examples: fresh fruit, tinned fruits, dried fruits, salad items, any type of vegetables. You could include vegetable sticks for dipping or add veggies to salads, pasta or rice or couscous dishes.
- Why? Fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals, fibre and antioxidants.
- Top tip: aim for a variety of colours. Not only will it make the lunchbox look more appetising but it also provides a variety of different vitamins and minerals. If using tinned fruit, make sure it is tinned in juice and not syrup to keep sugar content low.

Dairy and dairy alternatives

- How many? At least one portion of dairy or fortified dairy alternative.
- Examples: cheese, yoghurts (or dairy-free alternative e.g. soya yoghurts), custard (soya custard), rice pudding, a carton of milk or yoghurt-based smoothies, carton of milk or a dairy-free alternative such as soya, oat milk or coconut milk.
- Why? Dairy foods provide calcium, iodine, vitamin B12, vitamin A and protein.
- Top tip: If you're using a dairy-free alternative check the label to ensure it has been fortified with calcium and other vitamins and minerals.

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

- How many? At least one portion from this food group.
- Examples: chicken, turkey, pork, beef, lamb, beans, fish, shellfish, lentils, chickpeas, pulses, hummus, Quorn or soya products such as tofu.
- Why? These foods provide protein, iron and zinc. Iron is particularly important as our bodies cannot make iron, so we rely on obtaining it solely from the foods we eat. Children who do not eat enough iron are at risk of iron deficiency anaemia which can affect both mental and physical development and performance.
- Top tip: Unless your child is vegetarian or vegan try to include at least one portion of fish each week. Oily fish is particularly beneficial for children's cognitive development. Oily fish, includes fresh, tinned or frozen salmon, sardines, pilchards, mackerel and herring.

Drinks

- Milk and water are the best drinks for children because they are tooth-friendly.