



## Food & Healthy Eating Policy

The Walnuts School recognises the important connection between a healthy diet and a child's ability to learn effectively and achieve high standards in school. We also recognise the role a school can play as part of the wider community, to promote family health.

We recognise that sharing food is a fundamental experience for all people, and an excellent way to nurture and celebrate cultural diversity.

Our school aims to improve the health of the pupils by teaching them ways to establish and maintain life-long healthy eating habits. This should be achieved through food education skills (cooking), the food served and curriculum content in the classroom.

### Aims

- To promote the health of pupils and staff by helping to influence their eating habits. This will be achieved by increasing their knowledge and awareness of food issues, including what constitutes a healthy diet.
- To ensure pupils are well nourished at school and that every pupil has access to safe, tasty and nutritious food and a safe, easily available water supply during the school day.
- To ensure that food provision in the school reflects the ethical and medical requirements of staff and pupils e.g. religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs.
- To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.
- To promote practices within our school to reinforce these aims.
- To teach the skill of food preparation through cookery sessions.
- To involve pupils projects growing their own vegetables through use of the allotment and growing areas.
- To involve pupils in the development of healthy school meals through the School Councils.
- To promote independence and choice making at lunchtimes supported by Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).

### Objectives

To work towards ensuring that this policy is both accepted and embraced by:

- Governors.
- School Management.
- Teachers and Support Staff.
- Pupils.
- Parents.
- Catering team.

- The school's wider community.

To integrate these aims into all aspects of school life, in particular:

- Food provision within the school.
- The curriculum - healthy eating issues are incorporated into PSHE, Science and other subjects.
- Pastoral and social activities.

## Methods

- Food and eating issues are discussed by student councils and at staff meetings.
- Provide details of the level of service and uptake of meals served to governors.
- Develop an understanding and ethos within the school of safe, tasty, nutritious food through education and example e.g. School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme, staff and children eating lunch together.
- Food topics, covered within curriculum areas. For example:
  - PSHE - food and health, nutrition, hygiene.
  - DT - food preparation, menu planning.
  - Literacy - food diaries, menus, shopping lists.
  - Art - healthy eating poster, observational drawings of food.
  - Science - growing food, nutrition, effects of heat on food, tasting sessions.
  - PE - links between healthy eating and exercise.
  - Numeracy - weights and measures.
  - RE - food and celebrations such as Eid.
  - Geography - farms and shops.
  - History - diet during Second World War.

Middle leaders are responsible for including food and healthy eating topics within their curriculum area.

Activities which help create an environment, both physical and social, that is conducive to the enjoyment of safe, tasty and nutritious food could include:

- Relationships with local food businesses eg farms, shops & restaurants.
- Tasting sessions, integrating a range of eating experiences into classroom work e.g. tasting fresh, dried, juiced, frozen and canned fruits or vegetables. Pupils are encouraged to explore new foods using their senses.
- Cooking demonstrations and activities.
- Healthy eating projects.
- Eating experiences integrated into the curriculum for all subjects.
- Cooking sessions at After School Club.

## School Lunches

For many pupils, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, the school lunch may be the only substantial meal they eat during the whole day. It is therefore important that the school lunch provides a tasty and nutritious meal for all pupils.

We have our own catering team committed to providing the highest standard of school lunches to all children and staff (in line with Government food-based

standards and good practice guidance). Our catering manager receives up to date training on healthy catering. In accordance with the Department of Education and the Food Standards Agency guidance if any of the 14 allergens identified (see list below) are used as deliberate ingredients then these are declared in writing on school menus and in writing and using PECS symbols in the school/residential dining area.

### Identified Allergens

- Cereal containing gluten, namely wheat (spelt and Khorasan wheat), rye, barley and oats.
- Eggs
- Soybeans
- Mustard
- Crustaceans, like prawns, crabs, lobster and crayfish.
- Fish
- Milk
- Celery
- Sesame
- Nuts, namely almonds, hazel, walnuts, pecan, Brazil, pistachio, cashew and macadamia (Queensland) nuts
- Peanuts

The Walnuts Infant Department is based at another location in Bletchley, however, good quality hot meals are still available for pupils there. Food is cooked at the main site, hygienically stored in food boxes designed to retain the heat and transported to the Infant Department.

We treat lunch time as a social occasion, and classes sit in 'family style' groupings with adults, to promote the development of social interaction and social skills (such as using a knife and fork, and respecting others). The dining rooms are kept as clean and attractive as possible. Some of the younger pupils choose to eat lunch in their class as this can provide a quieter setting to encourage food tasting and utensil skills. For day pupils there is just one meal cooked each day, as there would be in a family home. We recognise that ASD children have complex issues surrounding food, but have found opportunities to experience new foods can result in a wider range of foods being eaten. Small quantities of a new food are encouraged to be tasted. Pupils may begin by just licking or smelling a food. Water is always available to drink with meals, and fresh fruit is available every day. Bread and butter and cheese is available as an alternative should a pupil dislike the hot meal on offer.

Individual dietary needs arising from pupils' autism, religious or cultural needs, or allergies and intolerances are also catered for. Staff are kept aware of children's food intolerances and allergies with reminder notices on classroom/dining room walls and/or placemats. The same applies to food which cannot be eaten by specific children for religious reasons. Vegetarian options are available every day.

Children wash hands (and faces where appropriate) before and after eating. Some pupils incorporate teeth brushing as part of their routine after lunch.

Our catering manager regularly tries out new recipes and prepares meals which reflect a range of cultures and festivals, monitoring the preferences of the children. The catering manager is responsible for health, safety and hygiene, and should be informed in writing of all allergies relating to food of all pupils at Walnuts School by the school admin team.

## **Packed Lunchboxes brought from home**

Some parents prefer to send their children with a packed lunch from home. We believe every child is entitled to a healthy lunch, and are always willing to work with parents to promote healthy eating. Parents will be informed when their children begin to eat new foods during snack times or food tasting sessions.

### Safety issues

- At the moment we ask parents to provide ice packs in the lunch box to help keep the contents cool.
- Parents are requested not to send glass bottles and tins in lunchboxes
- Staff will be made aware of pupils with food allergies and a risk assessment undertaken for that individual pupil e.g. because of pupils with severe nut allergies, The Infant Department is a nut free environment

The Walnuts has a long tradition of using snack time as a social occasion and communication opportunity. We now also see snack time as an opportunity to maintain our children's energy and hydration levels, and to develop healthy eating habits.

Pupils are offered a piece of fruit and are offered water to drink. Following the Department for Education's change in new food standards all children up to the end of Year 2 or on Free School Meals, are offered milk unless they have a dairy free diet. To encourage children to drink milk it may be offered with added flavours e.g. chocolate (in accordance with government guidelines.) High juice (at least 50% volume) may also be added to water at snack time to encourage consumption.

After fruit time, other healthy snacks may be offered, such as breadsticks, oat cakes, popcorn or rice cakes. We may offer a range of different snack options in order to encourage tasting of new foods. Healthy options will always be our target, but flexibility may be required to achieve this goal with our pupils.

Treats such as cakes and biscuits are reserved for celebrating special occasions e.g. birthdays and festivals. However, to motivate some pupils to communicate, less healthy foods such as crisps or chocolate buttons may be used. Where this is the case, small pieces of food are used to encourage maximum communication opportunities with a minimum impact on health.

In the Secondary Department there is more emphasis on allowing students to make their own choices. However, snack time is still seen as an opportunity to promote healthy eating habits in line with government guidance.

## **Sensory Issues**

Sensory difficulties experienced by pupils may also impact upon their willingness to try new foods. Tolerating certain textures can be difficult some preferring crunchy textures and others only smooth. The temperature of food may also be a consideration.

## **Water**

The health benefits of drinking water are widely acknowledged. Our school is committed to promoting water consumption in order to keep children hydrated.

We aim to encourage pupils to drink water at frequent intervals through the day. All pupils have easy access to fresh drinking water throughout the school day.

We recognise that because our children all have ASD and very different development levels, one approach towards meeting these aims may not fit every class. For example children may enjoy tipping water around the classroom, or constantly drink from others' bottles. The emphasis with youngest children may be to offer water frequently and teach how to request a drink using the drink symbol.

Older children may be able to recognise their own bottle of drinking water, and have free access. Care is taken to ensure adequate water is available during hot weather, meal times and after physical activity.

## **Children's Home and Residential**

Where pupils access the Children's Home and residential, for a tea visit or overnight stay, we offer a healthy snack on arrival. All children and young people are provided with a healthy choice of meal in line with our food policy. All meals are cooked on site to provide a healthy, balanced and nutritious diet. Our catering manager is responsible for the planning of these meals in consultation with the children and young people and residential staff. Activities that promote the healthy eating agenda such as cookery or growing food will also be provided.

The Site Manager is responsible for health and safety and food hygiene, working in conjunction with the Catering Manager.

## **Public Policy and School Campaigns**

We aim to ensure maximum uptake of meals and that all pupils who are entitled to a free meal (either cooked or a packed lunch) receive one.

*Review date: April 2018*