



PACKED LUNCH GUIDANCE



A POSITIVE LUNCHTIME ENVIRONMENT

To create a positive lunchtime environment, schools also need to look at food being brought in from home – primarily, packed lunches. Packed lunches can be incredibly varied, so it is important to adopt a packed lunch policy. This will support families with clear guidance and provide your school with a set of standards for monitoring and supervision.

It is important to remember that a packed lunch policy will be most effective as part of a whole school approach to good food. If you have communicated your Food for Life work and why this is important for pupils and staff, parents will be less surprised by a packed lunch policy, and more cooperative!

As part of your whole school approach to good food, and before you create a packed lunch policy: have you made efforts to increase your school meal numbers?

- Are the children entitled to free school meals taking their entitlement?
- Do the pupils on packed lunches sit with school dinner pupils so they can see what's on the menu?
- Are children entitled to opt-in for a school dinner on special theme days and festivals?
- Do you cater for the dietary needs of the school population?
- Do you invite parents and carers into school so they can enjoy your school meals with the children?

STEPS TO HELP IMPROVE LUNCH BOXES

- Discuss which foods make up a healthy balanced lifestyle through classroom activities and assemblies – tying this in to homework activities will help to communicate with parents too.

- Use your School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) to carry out a lunchtime audit using either the school food standards or eatwell guide as a monitoring tool.
- Ask the SNAG to present their findings at assembly, parents evening, school events and the school newsletter.
- Put on lunch box displays, workshops and send information (including a packed lunch policy) home to parents.
- Re-audit lunch boxes after a term to assess progress.

TOP TIPS

Keeping Food Safe

- Encourage parents to pop in a freezer gel/ice pack.
- Store packed lunches in a cool place.
- Ensure packed lunches are kept in a clean air tight container or bag.

Keeping you Healthy

- Include some energy food – choose wholegrain varieties like bread, pasta, couscous, rice, chapattis and wraps.
- Include some foods to help you grow like meat, fish, dairy, eggs and beans.
- Choose at least 1 or more portions of vegetables and 1 portion of fruit.
- Choose water or plain milk to drink.

Positive Dining

- Allow children on packed lunches and school dinners to sit together.
- Trial a plate system where the packed lunch children queue along the servery and collect a plate for their packed lunch. This reduces the status associated with having the latest character lunch box and means that lunch boxes can easily be monitored.
- Allow packed lunch children to have drinking water from cups in the dining hall. This can dramatically reduce the number of sugary drinks coming into school.
- Allow children enough time to eat their packed lunch.
- Rewards for healthy lunches such as certificates or stickers – or praise from a teacher or midday supervisor that works with the pupils around healthy eating.

Looking after the Environment

- Think about recycling – can any packaging be put in a recycling bin?
- Composting – does the school compost food waste?
- Promoting seasonality – design your own seasonal wall chart/poster.

RESOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION:

<https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/>

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

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes>

PACKED LUNCH POLICY TEMPLATE

This policy template can be used as a framework to help you shape your own school packed lunch policy. It can be amended and tailored to your schools needs as appropriate.

AIM

All packed lunches brought into school are packed safely, are healthy, (based on the national standards set for school lunches) and consumed around a positive dining experience.

RATIONALE

Provide an overview of your school lunch box audit process and results here.

OUR SCHOOL

- Pupils in Reception and Key Stage One will be supported to take – up their Universal Infant Free School Meal entitlement.
- We will provide a safe, clean environment for pupils to eat their packed lunch.
- We will store packed lunches in a cool, dry place.
- We will allow pupils on packed lunches and school dinners to sit together.
- We will provide free drinking water for pupils on packed lunches.
- Pupils on packed lunches with food allergies and intolerances will be supported by lunchtime supervisors.

PACKED LUNCHES SHOULD INCLUDE THESE ITEMS EVERY DAY

- Energy food – choose wholegrain varieties like bread, pasta, couscous, rice, chapattis and wraps.
- Protein food - like meat, fish, dairy, eggs, lentils and beans.
- At least 1 or more portions of vegetables.
- 1 portion of fruit.
- A dairy food – like milk, cheese, yoghurt, custard or calcium-enriched plant-based dairy alternative.
- A drink of water, milk or fruit juice.

PACKED LUNCHES CAN OCCASIONALLY INCLUDE (approx once per week)

- Meat based food items like sausage rolls and pies.
- Cakes and biscuits.

PACKED LUNCHES SHOULD NOT INCLUDE

- Snacks high in salt like crisps – instead include plain popcorn, vegetable sticks, seeds, savoury crackers or breadsticks.
- Confectionery like sweets, chocolate bars – instead include fruit, flapjack.
- Soft drinks – fizzy drinks, squash (those labelled no-added sugar or sugar free contain harmful sweeteners and encourage a taste for sweet food and drinks).

ASSESSMENT & REVIEW

- The School Nutrition Action Group will carry out an annual lunch box audit.
- Lunchtime supervisors will reward healthy packed lunches in line with our lunchtime reward scheme.
- The packed lunch policy will be sent home when items are brought in to school that don't meet the standards. If this continues on a regular basis, parents will be invited into school to discuss the matter.

Useful links for further information:

<https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/>

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

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes>

Date Policy Approved:

Review Date:

PACKED LUNCH AUDIT TOOL

Carrying out a school lunch box audit is a step towards addressing the food bought in from home. Through a whole school approach to food your school can use the results of an audit to run some practical support sessions and launch a packed lunch policy.

This template can be used by your School Nutrition Action Group to audit packed lunches in school.

	FOOD GROUP	TICK BOX
✓	An item of Energy Food (wholegrain bread, pasta, rice, chappati)	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓	An item of Help to Grow Food (Meat, fish, eggs, beans, pulses)	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓	At least 1 portion of veg/salad and 1 portion of fruit	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓	An item for healthy bones and teeth (yoghurt, cheese, milk)	<input type="checkbox"/>
✓	A drink (milk, water, pure fruit juice)	<input type="checkbox"/>
✗	Savoury fried snack (like crisps)	<input type="checkbox"/>
✗	Chocolates or chocolate coated biscuits, sweets etc	<input type="checkbox"/>

Once you have completed your audit share the information with the whole school community through your website, parents evening and a school display. Invite health professionals like your healthy schools team or your school nurse in to run a packed lunch workshop with children and families.

Share useful links for further information to parents:

<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes>

Repeat the audit after a term and share the comparative results again with the school community. The children can incorporate the data into a maths lesson and display the information in graphs and pie charts.

You can now launch your school packed lunch policy incorporating your findings. Through this participatory approach children and families are likely to be more accepting of a policy that encourages a healthy balanced diet.