

Believe and Achieve



HEALTHY PACKED LUNCHES AND SNACK POLICY

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HEAD TEACHER

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November 2025

November 2026

DATE

DATE TO BE REVIEWED

Healthy Packed Lunches and Snack Policy

Introduction

To grow and stay healthy children need to eat a nutritionally well-balanced diet. Schools are an influential setting and can contribute significantly to improving the health and well-being of pupils. We are also keen to reinforce our PSHE work and would refer readers to the UNCRC Article 6 'Governments should ensure that children develop healthily' and also Article 24 'Children have the right to clean water and nutritious food'.

Good nutrition in childhood can help to prevent a variety of health problems, both in the short term and later in life. There is increasing concern that many children are consuming too much fat, sugar and salt and too little fibre, fruit and vegetables.

Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly food intake and therefore need to be balanced and nutritious.

Rationale:

- Schools are required to positively promote the health and well-being of its pupils. Work around healthy eating is a high priority of our school and is incorporated across the curriculum.
- The content of lunchboxes needs to reflect the requirement of schools to meet minimum food and nutrition standards for school meals.
- We aim to encourage healthy eating habits from an early age and improve the overall nutrition of pupils
- The short term effects of unhealthy packed lunches and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration and behavioural problems which may have an impact on a child's learning.
- The longer term effects of a poor diet in childhood can be an increased risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease and diabetes in adulthood.
- The contents of lunchboxes in some schools can be extremely unhealthy. Many of our school lunchboxes do contain healthy items, but there are still too many that contain foods which are high in fat and salt content, especially processed type snacks and chocolate coated products such as cakes and biscuits.

Aim:

To ensure that packed lunches and snacks brought in from home reflect the new standards for school meals introduced in January 2015.

Objectives

- To improve the nutritional quality of packed lunches and snacks in schools and the eating habits of children during the school day.
- To develop an awareness in pupils, parents, staff and the wider community that the school takes a pro-active approach to promoting healthy eating.
- To encourage healthy eating habits in childhood that can influence health and well-being in later life.
- To ensure that food brought into school (packed lunches and snacks) reflect and meet the School Food Standards – which can be found at www.schoolfoodplan.com

Implementation

- This policy fits within a wider context of promoting a whole school approach to food and healthy eating.
- The Eatwell Plate demonstrates how to get the balance right, by showing the proportion of each of the five food groups that should be eaten each day.
- School meals and packed lunches can represent a third of a child's daily intake of foods and nutrients, which presents a great opportunity to promote healthy food choices for children and young people. The School Food Trust (SFT) provides regulations for healthy school meals and packed lunches and this recommends that foods from the high fat and /or sugar group on the Eatwell Plate (eg. crisps and chocolates) should not be included in a packed lunch. This advice is based on the 'School food in England' (January 2015) document which provides the links to the legislation.

Content of Packed Lunches Foods to include:-

We ask that all packed lunches be based on the School Food Trust's food-based standards for packed lunches and should include the following:

- Fruit and Vegetables; at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetable.

Chop Grapes and Other Hazardous Foods Whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, and similar round or firm foods pose a serious choking risk for young children. Please ensure these items are cut lengthwise into quarters before placing them in your child's lunchbox.

- Protein; meat, fish, egg or other source of non-dairy protein (e.g. lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus or dhal).
- Oily Fish; such as tinned or fresh mackerel, sardines, salmon or tuna.
- Carbohydrate; starchy food such as bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes, chapattis and roti.
- Dairy; foods such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, or calcium fortified Soya products, reduced fat versions of these should be used where possible.

- Puddings; should be fruit based such as fruit salad, tinned fruit with yoghurt or custard, fruity rice pudding, fruit smoothies, fruit-based crumble.

Foods to avoid or limit:

- Meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies, corned meat and sausages. These items should be included in packed lunches no more than twice per week.
- toffee/salted popcorn
- Cakes and biscuits can be included, as part of a balanced lunch, but must be limited to one per day.

Packed lunches must not include the following:

- confectionary such as chocolate bars and sweets
- nuts – **Please note we are a nut free school**
- squash and fizzy drinks
- chewing gum
- Chocolate spread and high sugar spread as a sandwich filling
- Foods and drinks high in fat and / or sugar. It is important not to fill up on too many foods that are high in fat and / or sugar at the expense of other more nutritious foods. Limiting high fat and sugar foods will help protect young people from becoming overweight as well as helping prevent tooth decay, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

Please support school by limiting the following items in a packed lunch (i.e. one item occasionally as a treat)

- Chocolate coated food - this includes chocolate coated cakes and biscuits
- Crisps or any similar snacks that are high in salt and fat.

Many packets advertise clearly that they are lower/reduced fat. The specific guidelines are that there should be less than 17.5g per 100g, however the salt content remains fairly well hidden.

- Please check the labels for content, comparing the per 100g measure. Low salt would be classed 0.3g or less per 100g (or 0.1g sodium) and high is more than 1.5g salt per 100g (or 0.6g sodium).
- Please do not include snacks that exceed the 1.5g per 100g measure.
- Examples of crisps/snacks that contain less than 1.5g salt include some varieties of Walkers Lites, Walkers Baked, Lidl's Linessa crinkle cut, Jacob's Oddities. This is not an exhaustive list, but in general 'baked' varieties tend to meet the criteria more often than other types. Flavours within brands also differ – so please check.

Following guidance from the Department for Education and in line with best practices for early years settings **popcorn is not permitted as a snack for children in Reception Class.** This decision has been made to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children, as popcorn poses a significant choking risk for young children due to its texture and shape. We kindly ask that you do not include popcorn in your child's packed lunch or snack contributions. Safer alternatives such as soft fruits, yogurt, or small pieces of cheese are encouraged.

Additional information is available with ideas and examples of foods that can be included in packed lunches at <http://www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/childrens-food-trust/schools/>

Waste and Disposal

We will, within reason, send any un-eaten packed lunch food items back home. The rationale for this is that parents can also monitor what their child has consumed during the day and then raise any concerns over their child's food intake with the school.

Promotion of Healthy Packed Lunches

There will be ongoing promotion of the need to provide healthy packed lunches through: Pupil, parent / carers newsletters - School prospectus / brochure - Whole School Packed Lunch Policy - Healthy eating activities - Curriculum content - Parents evenings / parent consultations - Discussion through School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG)

It is the responsibility of the parents / carers to provide an appropriate packed lunch container where food items can be stored securely and appropriately until the lunchtime period. Parents are advised to include an ice pack. Food products prepared and stored in ambient temperatures after a period of time can have increased levels of bacteria in them.

Storage of Packed Lunches

School will provide storage area / facilities for packed lunch bags, in the most convenient and appropriate place possible. However, we cannot provide cooled storage areas and therefore cannot take legal responsibility for foods prepared at home and then brought into school.

Snacks and Drinks:

Suggested snacks for playtime

Playtime snacks should be healthy, nutritious and energy-providing to sustain the children from breakfast until lunchtime. Snacks should be small and manageable, ideally something your child can eat quickly and safely during their short break. The following suggestions are a guide to healthy snacks but by no means a comprehensive list.

- Fruit

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- Hummus with vegetable batons e.g. cucumber, peppers, celery etc
- Flapjack
- Cheese cubes
- Rice cakes
- Yoghurt or fromage frais
- Malt loaf
- Scotch pancakes

More ideas can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/food-facts/healthier-snacks-for-kids/100-calorie-snacks>

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The following snacks are not allowed at playtime.

- Crisps
- Chocolate
- Sweets
- Cake
- Biscuits
- Nuts

Drinks

Cool filtered water is available at all times. Children are encouraged to bring a water bottle to school everyday which they can refill as necessary. Please do not provide any drinks other than water unless required for medical reasons. If this is the case, please contact Miss Armstrong to discuss this further.

Monitoring and Evaluation

School will monitor packed lunch provision - where there may be concerns over a child's food / nutrition intake and / or content of packed lunches, then this can be dealt with timely and sensitively, if necessary through contact with parents. OFSTED are required to report on how the school promotes the personal development and wellbeing of all pupils – this can include food provision including packed lunches brought into school.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed yearly or as required. In addition, any major legislative or governmental changes regarding school food may lead to this policy being amended.

Thank you to the School Council for their contribution to the development of this policy.

COXHOE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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We aim to offer our children engaging and enriching opportunities to allow them to develop the knowledge, skills and resilience they need to achieve in our everchanging and culturally diverse world.

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