

This briefing pack is designed for both central drafters and policy teams **using the contents page/navigation bar (under view in Word)** to find the information you need. Drafting notes are included throughout to support individuals with the various questions we answer. Feedback is always welcome and should you find any errors and omissions please contact heather.lonsdale@education.gov.uk , School Food team. This document last had a full review in August 2021.

SCHOOL FOOD POLICY BRIEFING PACK

January 2023

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Vanessa Mynard Jackie O'Neil (pilot)
Updates Requested?	Yes/No (Date/name)
Date Cleared	

■ **FATE Flag:** content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: [Obesity in Childhood > Lines to take > School Food](#)

The Department for Education supports the provision of nutritious food in schools to enable pupils to be well nourished, develop healthy eating habits and to concentrate and learn in school. Government does this by:

- Providing the requirements for school food regulation to ensure the provision of healthy school food;
- Providing free school meals to every pupil in reception, year 1 and year 2.
- Providing free school meals to the most disadvantaged pupils.
- Providing a cross-departmental electronic checking system for free school meal eligibility.

The government encourages all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink. Compliance with the [School Food Standards](#) is mandatory for all maintained schools (including academies). This includes maintained nurseries and nursery units attached to primary schools, pupil referral units and sixth forms that are part of secondary schools. [Information and guidance](#) on the School Food Standards is available from gov.uk at:

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

In March and October 2020, we wrote to schools again to thank them for the hard work on getting their meals services up and running, supporting all children with healthy food, and to remind them of the importance of providing hot meals that meet the school food standards.

In February 2022 the Levelling Up White Paper outlined a number of things the department is doing to strengthen adherence with the school food standards. This includes piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, investing up to £200k in a pilot Governor Training Scheme and encouraging schools to develop and publish a school food policy on their websites which sets out their whole school approach to food.

Drafting note: for DfE's strategic aims for childhood obesity and school food, refer to the Childhood Obesity Plan section.
LUWP content added February 2022.

See also: [#COOKING/HEALTH EDUCATION - CURRICULUM](#), [#Food Standards Agency \(FSA\) Pilot](#), [#Compliance#Evaluation of the Standards](#), [#Governor Training](#), [#Website Reporting](#), [#MONITORING](#)

BRIEFING / LINES TO TAKE

ACADEMIES/FREE SCHOOLS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Jackie O'Neil
Updates Requested?	No (Date/name) JO 07/02/2023
Date Cleared	

TOP LINES:

The government encourages all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink. Compliance with the [School Food Standards](#) is mandatory for all maintained schools including academies and free schools.

Drafting note – if pressed line: Compliance with the standards is mandatory for all maintained schools including academies and free schools regardless of when they signed their funding agreement (section 512B Education Act 1996).

Drafting notes: if the correspondence refers to quality of food, include reference to the School Food Standards.

Funding agreement

A [model funding agreement](#) for academies and free schools was published in summer 2014 and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academy-conversion-process#model-funding-agreements>

The food sections read:

School meals

- The Academy Trust must provide school lunches and free school lunches in accordance with the provisions of sections 512(3) and 512ZB(1) of the Education Act 1996 as if references in sections 512 and 512ZB to a local authority were to the Academy Trust and as if references to a school maintained by the local authority were to the Academy.
- The Academy Trust must comply with School Food Standards legislation as if it were a maintained school.
- Where the Academy Trust provides milk to pupils, it must be provided free of charge to pupils who would be eligible for free milk if they were pupils at a maintained school.

Compulsory charging (academies/free schools)

Drafting note: refer to policy team

ALLERGENS/ALLERGIES

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Jackie O'Neil
Updates Requested?	Yes/No (Date/name) – JO 09/02/2023 (FSA lines redrafted following commission).
Date Cleared	

TOP LINES

The department understands that food allergies can be complex and worrying for parents. Because of the complexity and individual nature of food allergies, it would not be appropriate for the department to legislate that food providers cater for all dietary requirements. However, through legislation, the minimum standards for school food have been set out. Beyond this headteachers, school governors and their caterers are best placed to make decisions about their school food policies that take into account local circumstances.

In doing so, schools are expected to make reasonable efforts to cater for pupils with particular requirements, for example to reflect medical, dietary and cultural needs. In the case of pupils in reception, year 1 or year 2, schools do have a legal requirement to offer free school meals to all pupils whose parents want them and we would expect them to make every effort to ensure that pupils with allergies are able to benefit from that entitlement. In deciding what is reasonable, schools and their caterers are expected to take into account factors such as the type of diet required by the child with allergies, the number of children in a similar position, and the cost of making suitable food available. In exceptional circumstances, it may be considered reasonable for the school not to make special provision for particular children – for example, where this would be very difficult and costly to achieve.

Further information is available on gov.uk at:

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

Allergen rules

Overview

In the UK, food businesses, must inform consumers if they use any of the 14 mandatory allergens as ingredients in the food they provide.

This includes food provided by institutions, such as school caterers, who have a responsibility to protect the individuals in their care.

Schools should ensure they are aware of any pupils in their care with a food allergy and have processes in place to ensure those allergies can be managed. Practices to identify children with dietary needs could be as simple as:

- coloured wrist bands
- a photograph of the child alongside details of their allergy in the kitchen or serving area

Schools will also need to ensure that the parents/carers of children with food allergies or intolerances are given information about the allergenic ingredients used in the foods available. [Source: Food Standards Agency 09/02/2023](#)

Allergen Regulations – Overview

Rules on the provision of food labelling are set out primarily in Retained EU Food Information Regulations (2014). These include a requirement to identify the presence of any of the 14 mandatory allergens to consumers.

The 14 allergens are: **celery**, **cereals containing gluten** (such as barley and oats), **crustaceans** (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters), **eggs**, **fish**, **lupin**, **milk**, **molluscs** (such as mussels and oysters), **mustard**, **peanuts**, **sesame**, **soybeans**, **sulphur dioxide and sulphites** (if they are at a concentration of more than ten parts per million) and **tree nuts** (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts).

How allergen information should be provided depends on whether the food is prepacked, non-prepacked or prepacked for direct sale (PPDS):

- **Prepacked food** (which is food packed at one premises before being sold from another e.g. a tin of beans bought at a supermarket) must be labelled with full ingredients information with any of the 14 mandatory allergens emphasised (e.g. in **bold**).
- **Non-prepacked food** (which is food not in packaging when it is ordered e.g. from a bakery, in a restaurant or takeaway food) allergen information can be communicated through a variety of means, such as on a menu, chalkboard or information pack. Where caterers choose not to provide this information in a written format (for example allergen information on the menu), clear written signposting which directs the customer to where this information can be found must be provided.
- **Prepacked for direct sale (PPDS)** (food that is packaged at the same place it is offered or sold to consumers e.g. a sandwich made and packed in a school kitchen before being placed on sale/display). Legislation introduced in October 2021 requires PPDS foods to be labelled with the name of the food and a full ingredients list with any of the 14 mandatory allergens emphasised (e.g. in **bold**).

[Source: Food Standards Agency 09/02/2023](#)

Precautionary Allergen Labelling

The use of mandatory allergen labelling refers only to ingredients and processing aids intentionally used in the production of foods. Where there is a risk of an unintentional

presence of an allergen, food businesses can use a precautionary allergen label (PAL), such as 'may contain' statement to inform customers that there may be small amounts of an allergen in a food product.

There is no specific legal requirement to label food with 'may contain'. However, food must be safe to eat and information to help people with allergies make safe choices, and manage their condition effectively, must be provided. 'May contain' statements should only be used if an unavoidable risk of allergen cross-contamination has been identified that cannot be sufficiently controlled. **Source: Food Standards Agency 09/02/2023**

Free-from claims

A "free-from" allergen claim is an absolute claim unless a regulatory threshold has been set and should only be used following a rigorous assessment of the ingredients, process and environment.

There is no specific UK or EU legislation covering "free-from" claims (with the exception of "gluten-free" which requires food to contain 20 parts per million (ppm) or less of gluten). Any such claims are therefore regulated in accordance with the provisions of General Food Law which provides that voluntary labelling information shall not mislead the consumer or be ambiguous or confusing to the consumer. **Source: Food Standards Agency 09/02/2023**

Allergens outside of the 14 covered by FIC

The 14 mandatory allergens food businesses have a duty to inform customers of are the allergens which are recognised across Europe as the most common allergic ingredients or processing aids of public health concern.

However, there are a large number of potential food allergens outside of the 14 that people might be sensitive to. If a child has an allergy to a food outside of the 14 allergens covered directly by the food information regulations, schools still need to safeguard those in their care. **Source: Food Standards Agency 09/02/2023**

Pupils participating in food technology activities

There are no specific references in the legislation as to how these rules apply to pupils participating in food technology activities. It is unlikely that these activities would warrant food business registration and the legislation would only apply if food business registration was required. However, schools should consider any allergies or intolerances that pupils may have as part of their duty of care, and it is best practice to offer and communicate allergen information to those who require it. **Source: Food Standards Agency 09/02/2023**

Resources and Guidance

The FSA has published a range of resources to support food businesses:

- [FSA Think Allergy poster](#)
- [FSA Think Allergy Chef Cards](#)

- [Guidance for schools, colleges and nurseries on the prepacked for direct sale \(PPDS\) allergen labelling changes](#) which came into force in October 2021.
- [Safer food, better business for caterers | Food Standards Agency](#): Information pack on food safety management procedures and food hygiene regulations including information for caterers on allergy management
- Technical guidance: the [FSA Food allergen labelling and information requirements technical guidance](#) and other allergen support tools are available on the [allergen pages](#) of the FSA website.
- FSA [Food allergy and intolerance online training course](#): the FSA provide a free Food allergy and intolerance online training course which offers practical advice to local authority law enforcement officers and anyone wanting to learn more about food allergy, such as those working in the food manufacturing and catering industries.

Source: Food Standards Agency 09/02/2023

- Allergen guidance for schools: There is also guidance and further information (including links to resources provided by allergy charities) on the [allergen guidance for schools](#) pages of gov.uk.

Medical needs/Individual Health Plans

Drafting notes: source lines from the [School Medicines - Supporting pupils with medical needs FATE pages](#). Medical Needs team contact is Jo Fitzgerald.

Contact

Any queries where we need additional lines on providing for children with allergies can be sent on to the SEND and Alternative Provision Directorate mailbox PQ-Correspondence.SEND-AP@education.gov.uk.

Draft Letter 1

Drafting notes: tailor appropriately and use for all allergies.

I am sorry to hear about the challenges faced by xx. The department understands that food allergies can be complex and worrying for parents. Because of the complexity and individual nature of food allergies, it would not be appropriate for the department to legislate that food providers cater for all dietary requirements. However, through legislation, the minimum standards for school food have been set out. Beyond this headteachers, school governors and their caterers are best placed to make decisions about their school food policies that take into account local circumstances.

In doing so, schools are expected to make reasonable efforts to cater for pupils with particular requirements, for example to reflect medical, dietary and cultural needs. In the case of pupils in reception, year 1 or year 2, schools do have a legal requirement to offer

free school meals to all pupils whose parents want them and we would expect them to make every effort to ensure that pupils with allergies are able to benefit from that entitlement. In deciding what is reasonable, schools and their caterers are expected to take into account factors such as the type of diet required by the child with allergies, the number of children in a similar position, and the cost of making suitable food available. In exceptional circumstances it may be considered reasonable for the school not to make special provision for particular children – for example where this would be very complex and costly to achieve.

Drafting note: add appropriate allergen lines.

It is important that schools have a culture of inclusivity and so we expect schools to do what they reasonably can to ensure that no child is unnecessarily disadvantaged or made to feel disadvantaged.

FSA contacts

Drafting Notes: The Food Standards Agency lead on this area – contributions should be requested from: hypersensitivitypolicy@food.gov.uk

Additives – FSA

Drafting Notes: The Food Standards Agency lead on this area – contributions should be requested from:

Query inbox: foodadditives@food.gov.uk

Both Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 on additives and Regulation (EC) No 1334/2008 on flavourings are FSA policy areas (referenced in the standards) – DEFRA lead is:

Adam Hardgrave
Head of Food Additives, Flavourings and Contact Materials Branch
Food Policy Directorate
Food Standards Agency
6th Floor, Clive House, 70 Petty France, London, SW1H 9EX.
020 7276 8957
0721238153

Contact: GM foods

gm.Inquiries@food.gov.uk

AWARDS/ACCREDITATIONS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	TBC
Updates Requested?	Yes /No (30/08 – James Pride)
Date Cleared	

The government encourages all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink. Compliance with the [School Food Standards](#) is mandatory for all maintained schools (including academies).

Some schools and caterers choose to demonstrate their compliance and their focus on quality and sustainability by achieving accreditation, however there is no legal requirement to do so and it is possible to meet the School Food Standards without one. Such accreditations are run by independent organisations and therefore the department is not able to comment on **xx**. **Drafting notes: tailor appropriately**

BIOMETRIC RECOGNITION SYSTEMS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed Killick
Updates Requested?	Yes
Date Cleared	20.03.23

Updated 20/03/23

Biometric systems can have a number of advantages, including removing issues around lost money, reduced queueing times and reducing the stigma associated with free school meals. However, the government does not endorse any particular approach, and governing boards are responsible for the day to day running of schools and decide what is the best system for collecting payment for school lunches. It is important that all parental complaints follow the school's formal complaint procedure. I would therefore suggest that you put your concerns formally in writing to the headteacher or Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the headteacher.

You may find our guidance to schools about [biometric recognition systems](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protection-of-biometric-information-of-children-in-schools) useful, you can find this on gov.uk at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protection-of-biometric-information-of-children-in-schools>

COMPLAINTS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Vanessa Mynard
Updates Requested?	Yes/No (Date/name)
Date Cleared	

I am sorry to learn that you want to make a complaint about **xx**. It is important that all parental complaints follow the school's formal complaint procedure. I would therefore suggest that you put your concerns formally in writing to the headteacher or Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the headteacher.

I would recommend that you obtain a copy of the school's complaint procedure, which by law the school is required to publish. This should fully explain its complaint procedure and you will also be able to establish whether the school is adhering to its complaint policy when dealing with your complaint.

By working through the school's complaint procedure, I hope that you will be able to resolve your concerns.

Drafting notes: Always include the school's own complaint procedure where appropriate. If a parent states the school are not handling their complaint, refer to the School Complaints Unit – First Stage Complaints Cases on FATE.

CHARGING FOR FOOD

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Tom Crowley
Updates Requested?	Yes/No (Date/name)
Date Cleared	

Section 512ZA of the Education Act 1996, as amended, gives schools the freedom to offer all pupils free meals, fresh fruit, milk or other refreshments during the school day, regardless of family income. They are also free to make special offers to groups of children as they judge appropriate.

Drafting note: Refer to Free School Meals knowledge/policy team for more information on free school meals, universal infant free school meals and further education free school meals.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY PLAN

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Heather Lonsdale
Updates Requested?	Yes HL 6/03/22
Date Cleared	20.03.23

TOP LINES

Obesity is a complex problem caused by many different factors to which there is no single solution. It is a leading cause of serious diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, some cancers and is associated with poorer mental health. It also increases the risk of serious illness and death from Covid-19. This represents a huge cost to the health and wellbeing of the individual, the NHS and the wider economy.

We launched “Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives” in July 2020. The strategy demonstrates an overarching campaign to reduce obesity, takes forward actions from previous chapters of the childhood obesity plan, including our ambition to halve the number of children living with obesity by 2030, and sets out measures to get the nation fit and healthy, protect against Covid-19 and protect the NHS.

Actions include banning the advertising of high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) products being shown on TV before 9pm and consulting on a total HFSS advertising restriction online, restricting promotions of HFSS products, calorie labelling in restaurants, expanding weight management services and making conversations about weight in primary care the norm.

Editing note: In May 2022 Maggie Throup (the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Vaccines and Public Health) wrote to the Rt Hon Rishi Sunak (then the Chancellor of the Exchequer) to notify him of plans to delay the implementation of the volume price promotion restrictions by 12 months, so they will come into force October 2023; and to delay the introduction of further advertising restrictions on TV and online for HFSS products by 12 months, so they will come into force 1 January 2024.

In December 2022 the introduction of further advertising restrictions on TV and online for products high in fat salt or sugar (HFSS) was further delayed until October 2025, in order to allow time for an SI consultation. (Note added 20/03/23)

LTT: the implementation of the volume price promotion will come into force in October 2023; and the introduction of further advertising restrictions on TV and online for HFSS products will come into force 1 January 2024. (Note added 30/09/22)

We have seen some important successes since the publication of chapter 1 of the childhood obesity plan in 2016, including average sugar content of drinks subject to the soft drinks industry levy decreasing by 43.7% in the total sugar content per 100ml between 2015 and 2019, and significant investment being made in schools to promote physical activity and healthy eating. We are also working with councils to reduce child obesity locally through ground-breaking schemes.

There has also been success in some categories of the sugar reduction programme including around a 13% reduction of sugar in breakfast cereals, yogurts and fromage frais.

"Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives" is available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives

Policy notes: Department of Health lead on obesity, Source DHSC [25/05/2021]

DfE Top Lines

■ FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: Obesity in Childhood > Key Points

Policy notes: refer to DfE actions as listed under COP actions below.

Many DfE policies, some of which have already been implemented, are expected to make a direct contribution to reducing the incidence of childhood obesity, such as the introduction of universal infant free school meals, the School Food Plan, the addition of food education in the national curriculum, and the primary PE and sport premium. From September 2015, Ofsted inspectors look at how provision supports pupils' knowledge on how to keep themselves healthy, including through exercising and healthy eating. We are not complacent however, and recognise that there is more to do.

Background

■ FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: Obesity in Childhood > Overview

On 18 August 2016, the government published its plan for action to significantly reduce childhood obesity by supporting healthier choices.

Policy responsibility lies with the Department of Health. The obesity strategy is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/546588/Childhood_obesity_2016_2_acc.pdf and further information is available at: <https://engage.dh.gov.uk/childhoodobesity/>

The second chapter of the plan was published on the 25 June 2018 and is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action-chapter-2>

Facts and Figures

■ **FATE Flag:** content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: Obesity in Childhood > Facts and Figures

DRAFTING NOTE: updated March 2023 with the latest stats for 2021/22 available here: [National Child Measurement Programme, England, 2021/22 Annual Report](#)

Alison Gahagan is the point of contact for OHID: Alison.Gahagan@dhsc.gov.uk

Content updated 20/03/23

Findings from the 2021/22 NCMP annual report show decreases in the proportions of children who are overweight (including obesity), living with obesity, and living with severe obesity compared to 2020/21. Decreases are seen in both Reception and Year 6, with Reception seeing the biggest relative decrease.

Though the percentage of children living with obesity, and severe obesity has decreased compared to the 2020/21 data, prevalence levels remain higher than before the pandemic and are still the highest since the NCMP began if the 2020/21 figures are excluded.

More than 1 in 5 children aged 4-5 years (22.3%) and more than 1 in 3 aged 10-11 years (37.8%) are overweight or living with obesity. Around 1 in 4 children (23.4%) leave primary school living with obesity.

Disparities – deprivation

Updated 20/03/23

The data shows a further widening of the inequalities gap in obesity prevalence between children in the most and least deprived areas in England. For reception-aged children living with obesity, it is over twice as high for children living in the most deprived areas (13.6%) than for children living in the least deprived areas (6.2%). This difference is also seen in year 6 children - with 31.3% living with obesity in the most deprived areas compared with 13.5% in the least deprived areas.

Ethnic Disparities

Policy Note: if we receive any request for lines contact OHID

Policy note: For further facts and figures, refer to the paper on “Evidence on the effectiveness of school-based anti-obesity initiatives” produced by the Schools Research Team (June 2015) - filename '[240615 school obesity interventions](#)'. This presents a rapid evidence review on the contribution school-based interventions can make towards reducing obesity.

COP Actions:

Advertising

Restrictions are currently in place on TV to prohibit advertising of products high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) around children's programming and programming of particular appeal to children, and similar protections are in place in non-broadcast media. The Government has recently consulted on introducing further restrictions to HFSS advertising, with a focus on TV and online.

Drafting note: for further lines, please refer to Ed Little at DCMS (lines sourced: 09/10/2019)

Breakfast clubs

Drafting note 30/09/22: for lines refer to the Breakfast Club Team (Mandy Brown).

Early Years

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework requires that: Early years settings 'promote the good health of children attending the setting'.

There are seven areas of learning and development that must shape educational programmes in early years settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. Three areas are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, building their capacity to learn, and helping them to form relationships and thrive. Physical development is one of these three prime areas.

Any meals, snacks and drinks provided to children in a setting must be 'healthy, balanced and nutritious'. Children must be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food.

Before a child is admitted to the setting the provider must also obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that the child has, and any special health requirements. Fresh drinking water must be available and accessible at all times. Providers must record and act on information from parents and carers about a child's dietary needs.

Providers must also provide access to an outdoor play area or, where this is not possible, ensure that outdoor activities are planned and taken on a daily basis.

To increase awareness of the importance and advised level of physical activity, the Department for Education published an updated version of the EYFS in March 2017 which includes specific reference to the UK Chief Medical Office published guidelines for physical activity in the early years.

The Department for Education, Public Health England and the [Department of Health published downloadable example menus and guidance](#), to support early years settings in England to provide meals and snacks in line with current government dietary recommendations for infants and children aged six months to four years. Early years settings may make use of these to inform and help them prepare healthy, balanced and nutritious meals, as set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage framework.

Drafting note: Source, Early Years team (25/05/2021)

Food Labelling

Drafting note: content updated 27 April 2022. Refer to COP top lines for latest action. Contact DHSC for further details.

The Calorie Labelling regulations 2021

The [Regulations](#) apply to food offered for sale, either on or off the premises, by specified food businesses. There are a number of exemptions which are itemised in clause 4, and include:

- Food provided by charities
- Food which has been on a menu for less than 30 consecutive days
- Food provided at an institution providing education to pupils below the age of 18

More detailed guidance can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Drafting note: if pressed on why schools are exempt, the lines/arguments we used in the write rounds were:

We already have a robust set of regulations in place around food standards in schools, established by The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014.

The School Food Standards regulate the food and drink provided at both lunchtime and at other times of the school day, including, for example, breakfast clubs, tuck shops, mid-morning break, vending and after school clubs.

The standards restrict foods high in fat, salt, and sugar, including high sugar foods and confectionery.

See also: [#SCHOOL FOOD STANDARDS \(SFS\)](#)

Note: Guidance on health claims on school food menus is available in section 2.8 and 2.9 of [Nutrition and Health Claims Guidance](#) (22/9/2020)

Food technology and nutrition education

■ FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: Obesity in Childhood > Lines to take > Food Technology and Nutrition Education

All schools in the country are required to follow a broad and balanced curriculum, as exemplified by the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum sets the expectation that pupils are taught about the importance of healthy eating and nutrition.

Healthy eating and opportunities to develop pupils' cooking skills are also covered in the design and technology (D&T) curriculum in Key stages 1-3. More information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-design-and-technology-programmes-of-study>.

The curriculum aims to teach children how to cook, with an emphasis on savoury dishes, and how to apply the principles of healthy eating and nutrition. We have also introduced a new food preparation and nutrition GCSE to provide pupils with practical cookery experience and teach them about the underlying scientific concepts of nutrition and healthy eating. More information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-food-preparation-and-nutrition>.

The principles of a healthy and varied diet is also covered in health education, which became compulsory in state-funded schools in England from September 2020. There is an emphasis on empowering young people to make choices and adopt lifestyles that will increase their chance of living happy and healthy lives, supporting the agenda on tackling obesity. To support teachers to deliver the healthy eating topic we have developed a teacher training module which can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-about-relationships-sex-and-health#train-teachers-on-relationships-sex-and-health-education>

Drafting note: Source: Design & Technology team (25/05/2021), Policy contacts: Michael Haxell/Alex Fuller

Healthy pupils capital fund

£100m of revenue generated from the Soft Drinks Industry Levy is being used for the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund. This one-year fund is intended to improve children's and young people's physical and mental health by enhancing access to facilities for physical activity, healthy eating, mental health and wellbeing and medical conditions. These facilities include kitchens, dining facilities, changing rooms, playgrounds and sports facilities.

Drafting note: further lines from Liam Hogg/Liz Kendall, School Sport, 07/10/2019

Healthy Schools Rating Scheme

Drafting note: refer to the main Healthy School Rating Scheme section within this brief.

Healthy Start Scheme (DHSC lead)

Drafting note: contact the team directly for lines: Nicola Hamilton, Policy Manager Healthy Food Schemes. OHID, nicola.hamilton@dhsc.gov.uk

Inspection and accountability

Drafting note: for lines refer to the Monitoring section in this brief – policy contact is Megan Tilby or Malcolm D'Souza, Inspections and Accountability Team.

PE and school sport

Drafting note: refer to the PE/physical education FATE pages.

PSHE

From September 2020, health education became compulsory in all state funded schools as part of relationships, sex and health education. The statutory guidance for Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>) includes content on the importance of daily exercise, good nutrition and the risks associated with an inactive lifestyle, including obesity.

To support teachers to deliver the content effectively the department has developed teacher training modules that are available on GOV.UK. The [Healthy Eating](#) module contains key knowledge and facts to help teachers understand what they must teach. It includes information on a healthy diet; understanding calories; planning healthy meals; the impacts of unhealthy diets; healthy eating choices and poor diet and health risks. It also supports the [physical health and mental wellbeing](#) section of the statutory relationships, sex and health education curriculum.

As with other aspects of the curriculum, schools will have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs and background of their pupils.

Drafting note: source PSHE team 24/03/21, policy contact is Nikki Chowdry

School Food

The government encourages all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink. Compliance with the [School Food Standards](#) is mandatory for all maintained schools, academies and free schools.

Due to the priority of responding to the COVID-19 outbreak and the pressures on schools this presents, and considering the robustness of the existing standards, the government will not be taking further action during the course of the covid-19 outbreak on updating the School Food Standards.

Drafting note: alternative para:

We already have robust School Food Standards set in legislation which require school caterers to serve healthy and nutritious food and drinks which make sure children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day. The Standards restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, including drinks and confectionary. A summary of the standards and a practical guide are available from the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). Due to the priority of responding to the COVID-19 outbreak and the pressures on schools this presents, and considering the robustness of the existing Standards, the government will not be taking further action during the course of the pandemic on updating the School Food Standards.

The School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme provides over 2.2m children in Key Stage 1 with a portion of fresh fruit or vegetables each day at school. Approximately 450m pieces of fruit and vegetables are distributed to children annually.

Over 16,500 England Primary Schools are signed up to this scheme. Schools are encouraged to use it as an opportunity to educate children about fruit and vegetables and to assist a healthy, balanced diet.

(Drafting note: further detail if needed – contact the school food team if you would like to use this paragraph – the testing contract is currently on hold 25/05/2021)

On 7 May and 6 November 2019 we brought together an advisory group comprising of key stakeholders in the food, nutrition and health sectors who hold a wide breadth of knowledge and expertise in relation to school food. This was to discuss the proposed updates to the standards. PHE launched an invitation to tender for organisations interested in testing the proposed updates to ensure these are practical and can be easily implemented by schools and caterers. Further information is available at: <https://phe.bravosolution.co.uk> (Project 5497/ITT 4280).

Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL)

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy was designed to encourage drinks producers to reduce the amount of sugar in their products and to move consumers towards healthier alternatives. In 2016 the government announced that the revenue from the levy would be invested in a number of children's health initiatives, and this includes doubling the primary sports premium to £320m a year from September 2017, £100m for the Healthy Pupils Capital Fund (2018-19) and introducing the National Schools Breakfast Programme from March 2018.

We continue to invest significantly in programmes that support children's health. In 2021 we invested up to £220m to expand the Holiday Activities and Food programme to all local areas. This programme provides healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children and will cover the Easter, summer and Christmas. We are committed to continuing funding school breakfast clubs and have recently confirmed that that an additional £24 million will be available to extend our support for school breakfast clubs until 2023. The position for the £320m a year PE and sport premium in the 2021/22 academic year will be confirmed as part of our further business planning.

The department also invests significantly in healthy free school meals for children, including universal infant free school meals, and we have made substantial additional support available to children on benefits-related free school meals during the coronavirus pandemic.

Universal Infant Free School Meals/Free School Meals

Universal infant free school meals (UIFSM), implemented in September 2014, provide free school meals to all children in reception, year 1 and year 2. According to our latest data, 88% of infant children ate a free school meal on census day. Benefits-related free school meals, which have long been available in schools, were extended to further education (FE) settings in 2014.

Drafting note: Refer to the UIFSM/FSM FATE pages, policy contact Aemelia Humfrey.

Contacts - DH

Department of Health lead on obesity – contributions should be requested from:

Robin Miles
Policy Support Officer
Obesity and Food Policy Branch
Department of Health
6th Floor, South Wing, Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road, SE1 8UG
020 7972 3374
robin.miles@dh.gsi.gov.uk

COOKING/HEALTH EDUCATION – CURRICULUM

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Heather Lonsdale
Updates Requested?	No
Date Cleared	

Drafting Notes: The latest lines are filed under the childhood obesity plan (food technology and nutrition) in this brief, beyond that, seek further advice from Alissa Lamb – Science Team, Standards Division.

Drafting Notes: if there is reference to how allergies are applied within cooking in the curriculum refer to the allergens/allergies section in this pack (top lines).

Cookery School/School Cooking Revolution

Please contact Curriculum Team for lines. Contact Michael.HAXELL@education.gov.uk or Kate.GALE@education.gov.uk or Zainab.ALI@education.gov.uk.

DO NOT USE - FOR CONTEXT ONLY: 'We will invest up to £5m to launch a school cooking revolution, including the development of brand new content for the curriculum and providing bursaries for teacher training and leadership. We will be developing a whole-school approach to food, through a £5m programme over three years, providing bursaries, training, governor support, and content development. We will unveil a new pilot programme to ensure secondary-age children leave school able to cook six tasty and nutritious meals. We will say more about all these in the forthcoming Government Food Strategy White Paper'. Briefing note: content correct as of 16 February 2022, according to announcements made in the LUWP ([Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom)).

See also [GENERAL OVERVIEW](#), [#Food Standards Agency \(FSA\) Pilot](#), [#Compliance#Evaluation of the Standards](#), [#Governor Training](#), [#Website Reporting](#), [#MONITORING](#)

EATING DISORDERS/BODY IMAGE

Drafting note: it will depend on the angle of the question as to the way we respond. This is a cross-government issue and drafters can source lines from the following sources:

DfE - School Food Standards (**found in this core brief**)

DfE - Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs (draft letter available in the Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs core brief)

DfE – Child Mental Health – contact Daniela Durso

Department of Health – re: Medical conditions/body image

Government Equalities Office – body image

Contacts

Department of Health

Emmanouela.Kritikaki@dhsc.gov.uk

Government Equalities Office

Josie Delves

Senior Policy Adviser

Gender Representation

Government Equalities Office

0207 340 7917

Email: Josephine.delves@geo.gov.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/geo

Background

Drafting note: these lines are for information only and will need checking if/when needed.

s are serious health problems and their causes are complex and often multi-factorial. These factors include how an individual interprets and negotiates wider social messages around food, appetite, bodies and ideals of physical appearance. Drafting note: source GEO, July 2016

You may also be interested to know that the government has a programme of work which aims to promote positive body image and to challenge cultural messages that undermine young people's confidence and resilience. Drafting note: source GEO, July 2016

The body confidence programme works with the media, advertising, retail and fashion industries to encourage more diverse and realistic representation of human bodies. It

also helps to provide tools for young people, their parents and teachers to promote media literacy and resilience. It promotes and encourages public debate about body image to foster positive cultural change. *Drafting note: source GEO, July 2016*

It is important to have the right knowledge and resources when supporting children and young people with difficult issues, and we know that sometimes schools and teachers have not always been sure what is appropriate and how to best approach sensitive topics. This is why we have funded the PSHE Association (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education) www.pshe-association.org.uk to provide new guidance and lesson plans on mental health to help children to be more aware of their emotions, anxieties and problems, and more confident about discussing them and asking for help. In secondary school the lesson plans include teaching about specific mental illnesses, including eating disorders, anxiety and depression. *Drafting note: source DfE Mental Health Team, July 2016*

FOOD CONTAMINATION

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Jackie O'Neil
Updates Requested?	Yes/No (Date/name) JO 07/02/2023
Date Cleared	

Drafting notes: The Food Standards Agency lead on this area – seek contributions from:

News Team
Food Standards Agency
Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London WC2B 6NH

Direct line: 020 7276 8818
Press Office: 020 7276 8888
www.food.gov.uk

Drafting note: refer to policy colleagues if TB in food is raised (confirmation of lines to use will be needed at that time) - these lines were sourced from FSA and are out of date – useful for background information only.

Food businesses are required under EU legislation to keep traceability records relating to both their suppliers and their customers (both one step forward and one step back in the food chain).

If there is a need to trace meat for any reason it should be possible to trace the meat in the food chain and to take any action that might be required. To aid traceability, the meat must be marked with an identification mark which will indicate the approval number of the plant of origin. However, meat from TB reactors, once it has been passed as fit for human consumption, is not required to be marked in any way to distinguish it from other meat, so although such meat can be traced it cannot be identified as originating from an animal that is a TB reactor. There are beef labelling rules that are designed to ensure full traceability of beef.

FOOD PRICING

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Tom Crowley
Updates Requested?	Yes (25.08.2022/Meg Yeo)
Date Cleared	20/03/23

TOP LINES – School meal pricing

The department does not set a price for school meals whether paid for or free.

School governing boards are responsible for the provision of both free and paid for meals and it is for them to decide on the price depending on local circumstances. We know that many factors influence costs of school meals including, for example, catering arrangements, food price and existing numbers of pupils taking up school meals.

Drafting note: only use the following if pushed on cost of living:

Schools are responsible for the provision of school meals and may enter individual contracts with suppliers and caterers to meet this duty. We are confident that schools will continue providing pupils with nutritious school meals as required by the School Food Standards.

Commented [MV1]: Agree to adding this and can it have a DN to say something like 'if pushed on cost of living pressures'

Drafting note: for further information on FSM and UIFSM, refer to the Free School Meals team.

General food pricing

Drafting notes: Defra lead on food pricing.

FURTHER EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENTS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Meg Yeo
Updates Requested?	No (25.08.2022/Meg Yeo)
Date Cleared	

TOP LINES

The standards apply to all sixth forms which are part of a secondary school. The standards apply even if the sixth form section of the school was located in a separate building or on a separate site.

Students in FE are young adults. As such, they should be able to make decisions for themselves about what they eat. The current standards that apply to food provided in schools are set out in regulations. The power to make those regulations is set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and only extends to schools; it does not apply to the FE sector. Therefore, it is not possible to extend the school food standards to apply to FE institutions. However, Ministers are clear that institutions are expected to encourage students to make healthy choices and that hot meals should be available wherever possible (see the further information section of the guidance).

On a practical level, the study patterns of FE students are different to those of school pupils, as very few (if any) students will attend for a full day, five days a week.

Furthermore, some students will be with employers, rather than attending an institution. To enable institutions to meet their duty, we have also allowed them to provide vouchers or credit that can be spent off-site at other outlets, or even in exceptional circumstances to provide cash to students. It would be unreasonable to require meals to comply with food standards when there are so many variables. (Source: FSM team on 14/12/2021)

Full details of this policy are set out in guidance which you can access via this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-free-meals-advice-for-fe-institutions>.

The duty to provide both free and paid for meals rest with individual schools and colleges and only relates to pupils registered at the school or college. **Drafting notes: refer to free school meals knowledge page for more information.**

Background

If a pupil registered at the school also attends a college, for example on day release, the school still has a duty to provide the pupil with lunch on those days if the pupil (or somebody acting on their behalf) requested a school lunch and they were either eligible for free lunches, or it would not be unreasonable for the school to provide the lunch (though the school could choose to make arrangements with the college). Where free or paid for lunches are provided to registered pupils off-site (including at a college), schools must ensure they comply with the School Food Standards.

Students aged 14-16 who are directly enrolled in full-time provision at a college are no longer registered pupils at a school and therefore schools have no duty to provide them with meals. Colleges do, however, have an obligation to provide eligible 14-16 year-old direct entrants with free meals and also to provide paid for meals where it is not

unreasonable to do so. This is set out in guidance which you can access via this link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enrolment-of-14-to-16-year-olds-in-full-time-further-education>.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Jackie O'Neil
Updates Requested?	Yes/ Ne (Date/name) JO 07/02/2022 (Minor update to H&S lines from FATE pages)
Date Cleared	

TOP LINES

■ **FATE Flag:** content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: School Food Standards > Q&A > 'How can I be sure that food served at my child's school is safe?'

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) leads the work on food safety standards across government. Schools concerned about their catering supplies should go to the FSA's website www.food.gov.uk. Parents concerned about food safety should speak to the headteacher about the assurances the school has received from their caterer or suppliers.

Parents concerned about school food hygiene should raise this with the school.

Choking risks

Schools and caterers are responsible for the preparation of food, we do not issue specific guidance around how schools should prepare food to reduce the risk of choking for older children however, schools may wish to refer to the [Food Safety page](#) on the 'Help for early years providers' online platform for younger pupils:

To reduce the risk of choking for children age 5 and under:

- remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving
- cut small round foods, like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, lengthways and into quarters
- cut large fruits like melon, and hard fruit or vegetables like raw apple and carrot into slices instead of small chunks
- sausages should be avoided due to their high salt content, but if offered to children these should be cut into thin strips rather than chunks and remove the skins
- remove bones from meat or fish
- do not give whole nuts to children under five years old
- do not give whole seeds to children under five years old
- cut cheese into strips rather than chunks

Drafting note: further snack lines apply to early years settings – do not issue to schools (banned items):

- do not give popcorn as a snack
- do not give children marshmallows or jelly cubes from a packet either to eat or as part of messy play activities as they can get stuck in the throat
- do not give children hard sweets

Drafting note: source early years/Laura Lindon 26/01/2023

Definition of freshly cooked food:

The Department for Education cannot provide advice on the definition of fresh cooked and pre-cooked meals. Further advice on 'hot holding' and 'reheating' is available from the Food Standards Agency at: <http://food.gov.uk/business-industry/caterers/sfbb/sfbbcaterers/>

Drafting note: seek contribution from Food Standards Agency if further lines are needed.

Drafting note: for information only, do not issue this information without seeking a contribution from DEFRA:

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has advised that apart from general food law requirements on false or misleading labelling there is no specific legislation on the use of the term, "fresh", "fresh cooked" or "pre-cooked meal".

In particular:

- pages 6-7 – general legal background;
- pages 11-14 – guidance on use of 'fresh'; paras. 31-32. Para. 31: "Expressions such as "freshly cooked", "freshly prepared", "freshly baked", "freshly picked" should have no other connotation than the immediacy of the action being described. Where such expressions are used, it is recommended they be accompanied by an indication (e.g. of the date or time or period – "freshly prepared this morning") of when the action being described took place."

Health & Safety

All schools must adhere to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The employer in a school must take reasonable steps to ensure that staff and pupils are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. The employer in a school must take reasonable steps to ensure that staff and pupils are not exposed to risks to their health and safety. Employers, school staff and others also have a duty under common law to take care of pupils in the same way that a prudent parent would. More information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-advice-for-schools>

Drafting notes: Source [Health & Safety FATE page](#) (07/02/2023)

Food Safety – Hygiene and safe storage

Food Standards Agency lead on this area, contributions should be requested from:

Correspondence@food.gov.uk

Drafting notes: this paragraph is for information only.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is the government body with policy responsibility for food safety. All supply of food is required by law to be safe. School canteens that provide food on a regular basis are registered food businesses and inspected periodically by the local authority environmental health service to ensure hygiene procedures are compliant with the food hygiene regulations.

If schools are not registered as food businesses, the law still requires that any food supplied, for example on an occasional basis by a member of staff, should be safe to eat and free from contamination.

[Advice on the safe storage of food can be found on the NHS Choices web site](#) and the Food Standards Agency provides advice for catering businesses in its [Safer food, better business packs](#) and for community and charity events in its [catering advice for community groups page](#). (Drafting note: source - FSA 19/09/2017 – seek a new commission if lines are needed)

Drafting notes: this paragraph is for information only. All establishments that serve hot food, including pubs, restaurants, hospitals and schools, are rated by the Food Standards Agency in what's known as a 'scores-on-the-doors' test. They are rated on the cleanliness of kitchens and serving areas and good practice. The tests are done in conjunction with local authorities and the results are published online, both through local authorities and the FSA. Establishments are also obliged to display a sticker on their door advertising their star rating. The tests have their critics, as they apply the same standards to all kitchens and the advertised scores can be from tests up to a year previous. Any establishment identified as needing improvement – those that receive zero, one, or two stars – must comply or face action from the local authority.

Policy note: Reference in the standards to meat (safety) under Interpretation, meat: meat means the skeletal muscles of mammalian... (which has the meaning given in point 1.14 of Annex I to Regulation (EC) No853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin) (a) – **DEFRA lead – contact is Darren.Cutts@food.gov.uk**

HEALTHY FOOD/SCHOOLS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Chris Judge
Updates Requested?	
Date Cleared	

Top Lines

Government advice is that we do need to eat a variety of foods to achieve a healthy diet and that no specific foods should be excluded. However, some foods contribute fewer positive nutrients and greater negative nutrients to the diet and are therefore less healthy. We advise, therefore, that such foods should be limited within the diet and that we eat a diet consistent with the eatwell guide, which includes plenty of healthy foods, plenty of fruit and vegetables (at least 5 portions of a variety a day), and some milk, dairy products, meat, fish, beans and other sources of non-dairy protein (The eatwell guide can be found at <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx>).

Drafting note: source DHSC

Drafting note: The eatwell guide is published by Office of Health Inequalities and Disparities and is available at: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx>. Further lines can be commissioned from OHID (refer to the OHID page in this brief).

Definition of healthy food

The definition the department uses of healthy food is: food that meets the School Food Standards as set out in The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014.

Draft Letter 1

Schools are legally required to provide a lunchtime meal that meets the School Food Standards, where they apply. We know that school caterers do their utmost to provide tasty, nutritious meals that pupils want to eat so that they are well-fed and ready to learn. For too many children a school meal is their only nutritious meal of the day and schools take this duty incredibly seriously.

The School Food Standards set out what schools should and should not serve to children during the school day, while leaving chefs the freedom to be creative with their menus, to source local, sustainable foods and meet, wherever possible, children's dietary needs. Compliance with the [standards](#) is mandatory for all maintained schools (including academies and free schools). [Departmental advice](#) and [guidance](#) is available on gov.uk.

Drafting Notes: Tailor appropriately – always refer to the School Food Standards (refer to the School Food Standards section in this brief if further lines are needed).

Healthy Schools Ratings Scheme

Top Line

■ **FATE Flag:** content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: **Obesity in Childhood > Lines to take > Healthy Schools Rating Scheme**

The Department for Education has published details for its new healthy schools rating scheme. This is one of our key commitments under the government's Childhood Obesity Plan, which sets a national ambition to halve childhood obesity rates by 2030 and significantly reduce the health inequalities that persist.

The healthy schools rating scheme celebrates the positive actions that schools are delivering in terms of healthy living, healthy eating and physical activity, and supports schools in identifying further actions that they can take in this area.

This voluntary rating scheme is available for both primary and secondary schools. Schools engage in a self-assessment exercise and receive their rating based on their responses to questions around food education, compliance with the mandatory school food standards, time spent on PE in school and the promotion of active travel for pupils' journeys to and from school.

The first schools participating in the scheme received their reports and certificates in July 2019. We encourage all participating schools to use this scheme to reflect on their future actions, and to share their achievements with parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The scheme is part of a wider series of government actions to support children's health and wellbeing, which includes: delivering free school meals for over a million disadvantaged children each year; doubling the PE and Sport Premium to £320m a year; investing up to £35m to kick start sustainable school breakfast clubs; and **£200m in rolling out our holiday activities and food programme.**

We welcome any feedback on the scheme and will use this information to inform future scheme developments. Guidance for schools on the healthy schools rating scheme is available on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

Q&A Political / background

Why isn't this a mandatory scheme for schools?

The government stated in the first chapter of the Childhood Obesity Plan that this will be a voluntary scheme. We do not believe it is appropriate to introduce a new mandatory duty on schools in this area. We have designed this scheme to encourage schools to celebrate their achievements and reflect on their next steps.

Why has this taken so long to deliver?

This is a complex and wide-ranging project, and we have taken the time necessary to ensure we deliver a successful resource. We met with stakeholders and potential suppliers to discuss the best way to deliver the scheme. It was critical that we reflected

Commented [OJ2]: @LONSDALE, Heather; @PRIDE, James as a kind ask, could we please review this section? It is really difficult to draft from Q&A – could that be changed around to a thematic header?

I wonder if HSRS should just have it's own section rather than sitting in healthy food/schools which I think we could possibly remove. We used to get lots of queries asking us what was healthy food...

carefully on the feedback we received, to ensure we support schools as effectively as possible.

Drafting note: If pressed: The department has recently delivered a series of significant actions in this area, including investing up to £26m in a breakfast clubs programme, rolling out the holiday, activities and food programme nationally, doubling funding for the PE and Sport Premium to £320m a year, and delivering a £100m healthy pupils capital fund. We have now turned our attention to delivering this scheme.

Why didn't you communicate about this earlier? Why has this all been conducted behind closed doors?

Since the publication of the childhood obesity plan, we have met with a range of stakeholders to discuss the best way to deliver the scheme. This includes meeting with many interested suppliers during a pre-market engagement exercise, as well as school food stakeholders. We have taken into account a wide range of feedback in developing the scheme. We have now launched the scheme as a Beta phase for its first year and welcome feedback to help us improve it.

Why are Ofsted not regulating the scheme, as promised in the 2016 childhood obesity plan?

Schools can notify Ofsted school inspectors about the rating they have achieved in the healthy school rating scheme. They will be able to draw attention to the scheme as evidence of their provision to pupils. Where relevant, Ofsted inspectors may wish to consider the scheme as evidence when reaching the judgement on 'personal development'. Ofsted will provide their inspectors with details about the healthy schools rating scheme as part of their next School Inspection Update.

How was the scheme publicised?

Since the publication of the childhood obesity plan, we have met with a range of stakeholders to discuss the best way to deliver the scheme. This includes meeting with many interested suppliers during a pre-market engagement exercise, as well as school food stakeholders. We have taken into account a wide range of feedback in developing the scheme. We have now launched the scheme as a Beta phase for its first year and welcome feedback to help us improve it. Full guidance can be found on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

The Department for Education published details for its new healthy schools rating scheme on the 8th July 2019 by way of a written ministerial statement before the House and written guidance for schools on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). Additionally, the scheme was publicised on social media on 8 July, and its launch received coverage in education press such as Schools Week and TES. During the Beta phase, we will consider how we can best communicate the scheme in future.

What will happen to local health rating schemes?

We recognise the good work being carried out by local schemes. The Healthy School Ratings Scheme has not been designed to replace these. The scheme is voluntary, and schools can take part in the program alongside existing schemes.

Q&A - How it works

Which factors are included in the rating? How does the scoring work?

The scheme focuses on four overarching areas that we believe are important to children's healthy living – food education, school food standards, participation in PE and active travel to school. We have taken into account stakeholder feedback on which areas are most important. The questions have been tested with schools, and this has informed the scoring methodology, which we have published online. We have launched the scheme as a Beta phase for its first year and welcome feedback to help us improve the scheme.

How does my school participate/get a rating?

To participate in the survey, schools should contact their local Active Partnerships representative (who can be found through the [Active Partnerships website](#) if not known), who coordinate the survey for schools in their local area.

What will I actually get from this?

Each participating school receives a bespoke report summarising their results from the survey (sent to the school leadership only and not shared more widely, although schools can share it if they choose to). This report covers measures of children's activity levels, physical literacy, swimming proficiency, wellbeing, self-efficacy and levels of social trust, as well as their healthy schools rating. This will indicate whether they have achieved a Gold, Silver or Bronze award (or no award), and will contain a link to download the relevant certificate.

How long is a school's rating valid for?

Schools can only participate in the Active Lives Children survey once a year. The certificates and the accompanying report indicate the year in which the scheme was completed by the school.

We encourage schools to consider how they might improve their provision after receiving their certificate and report. Schools may then wish to participate in the scheme again at a later date to gain a new rating that reflects their new provision.

Why didn't my school get a Gold, Silver or Bronze rating?

Some schools may not achieve a Gold, Silver or Bronze rating. In these cases, it is likely that the school is not delivering against a key aspect of healthy provision for pupils – for example, not complying with the statutory school food standards or providing an insufficient amount of PE time each week for some year groups. We have published the scoring methodology within our [guidance](#).

Why doesn't my school's report include the Healthy Schools Rating Scheme page at all?

The healthy schools rating scheme is drawn from the teacher survey. If you receive a school report without the healthy schools rating scheme page (and certificate link) it may be because your school did not fill in the teacher survey, or did not answer all of the relevant questions that feed into the rating.

How can I challenge my rating if I don't agree with it?

The rating cannot be changed because it is based on information provided by the school, and which cannot be edited after it has been submitted. However schools can complete the survey again the following year and add missing answers or updated information to get a new rating.

To understand how your rating has been assigned, please visit our [webpage](#). The department will not publish details of schools' individual ratings and this information will not be shared with any third party. However, we encourage schools to share their rating and report with their pupils, parents and community. Schools will receive a certificate which they can display in their school or publish on their website.

Can I see which schools in my area have completed the survey and what their results are?

Each participating school will receive a bespoke report summarising their results from the survey. This is sent to school leaders only and is not shared more widely, although schools can share it if they wish. This report covers measures of children's activity levels, physical literacy, swimming proficiency, wellbeing, self-efficacy and levels of social trust, as well as their healthy schools rating. The rating will indicate whether the school has achieved a Gold, Silver or Bronze award (or in some cases, no award), and will contain a link for the school to download the relevant certificate... As we have provided our reassurances to schools that their data would remain confidential the department will not be routinely collecting individual school reports, we will only be provided with the aggregated high level data. We would welcome schools that wished to share their results and the actions they are taking to achieve their HSRS.

How will responses to the scheme be validated?

We have now launched the Healthy School Rating Scheme as a Beta phase for its first year and welcome feedback to help us improve it. The department intends to review distributed awards and data as part of the development process, following the completion of the Beta phase.

Q&A - Active Lives Children

Why are you delivering the scheme alongside the Active Lives Children and Young People survey? Wouldn't a standalone scheme be better?

The Healthy Schools Rating Scheme is delivered through the Active Lives Children and Young People survey but is a separate, standalone scheme. Using the framework of the Active Lives Children survey allows us to deliver the scheme efficiently and reach schools across the country through existing networks.

We met with a wide range of stakeholders, as well as a number of interested suppliers, to discuss the best way to deliver the scheme, and designed this approach based on testing and stakeholder feedback. We were determined that our scheme should be easy for schools to complete, and complement the many successful existing schemes that operate locally and nationally. We aimed to minimise any burden on schools who wish to take part in the scheme. Our delivery model ensures that the scheme is delivered efficiently, builds on existing successful resources for schools and represents good value for money.

Can't I just get my school's rating [or do the teacher survey] without doing the full Active Lives Children survey?

No. It is not possible to deliver a healthy schools rating without taking part in the survey, as the report cannot be generated without sufficient data.

Schools are encouraged to take part in the survey, both to access the healthy schools rating scheme and the broader report. The Active Lives Children survey gives schools a wealth of insight into how their pupils engage with sport and physical activity, as well as their physical literacy, swimming proficiency, mental wellbeing and levels of resilience and social trust.

How does the Active Lives Children survey work / what's the methodology / how do we know it's reliable?

The Active Lives Children and Young People survey was established to report on the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's *Sporting Future* outcomes and key performance indicators (KPIs) for children from the ages of five (where possible) to 15. Designed and delivered by Sport England and Ipsos Mori, the Active Lives Children and Young People survey provides a world-leading approach to gathering data on how young people engage with sport and physical activity. More information on the survey and its methodology can be found on Sport England's [website](#).

Are all types of schools able to access the healthy schools rating scheme / Active Lives Children survey?

Most types of schools should be able to access the survey. Very small schools, or those with some very small classes, may not have enough pupils to generate a full report (as data needs to be anonymous). However, in some cases smaller schools will be able to access a bespoke report containing the information possible to present (provided that they have responses from thirty pupils or more).

It may also be difficult for special schools to participate, as the survey is self-completed by individual pupils. Other research methods would be more appropriate for children and young people with more severe special educational needs and disabilities, and this is out of scope of the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey. Sport England is exploring alternative ways to ensure that special schools can take part in the Active Lives Children and Young People Survey or a suitable alternative going forward.

Drafting note: source – Childhood Obesity and School Food team, 09/07/2019

Background: Prior Information Notice

<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/310f15b1-9b00-43fc-a0df-9df403d0cac2>.

HOT MEALS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed-Killick
Updates Requested?	No (26/02/23 Lianna)
Date Cleared	

■ **FATE Flag:** content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: [School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Does a school have to provide hot meals?'](#)

Schools have flexibility within the School Food Standards around which products/foods they serve across the school week. There is no legal requirement that meals should be hot, however, we expect all schools to routinely be offering a varied hot meal option to pupils. It is much harder to comply with the School Food Standards through the provision of cold food alone.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Jackie O'Neil
Updates Requested?	No (Date/name) JO 07/02/2023
Date Cleared	

Drafting notes:

- Correspondence in relation to independent schools needs to be answered by the Independent Schools team, IFD.
- FSM eligibility criteria – refer to FSM team/core brief.

Policy note: Independent schools do not have to meet the School Food Standards.

Independent schools do not receive public money for the services that they offer and are therefore not required to follow the School Food Standards. We would of course encourage them to use the School Food Standards as a benchmark to help them provide nutritionally balanced meals for their pupils.

Pupils attending independent schools are not entitled to benefits-based or universal infant free school meals.

LUNCHTIME BREAK

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Heather Lonsdale
Updates Requested?	No. HL – 6/3/23
Date Cleared	

We encourage schools to give children enough time to eat and socialise at lunchtime.

Lunchtime is an important part of the school day, not only because children should be eating nutritious, tasty food as fuel for their learning, but for socialising and enjoying extra-curricular activities. Where the time available for lunch has previously been an issue, schools have found a range of innovative solutions, for example staggering lunch sittings, focusing on simpler recipes or improving the way queues are managed.

Drafting notes: refer to the School Day and School Year knowledge page for these more formal lines. Contact Alex Morris to check lines before using, and for further advice on the length of the school day'. Updated July 2022.

The government has set an expectation that by September 2023 the minimum length of the school week should be 32.5 hours. School leaders are responsible for deciding the length of each lesson and the timings for the morning session, the midday break, and the afternoon session. We recognise that adequate and active breaks are important for children's health and wellbeing and social development, and we advocate the need for pupils to have adequate breaks in their school day. However, schools should ensure that breaks and/or lunch times are proportionate and should not extend their existing week through excessively long breaks. The trend over the last 10 years has been to reduce breaks, with a one-hour lunch break now rare in secondary schools.

More information on the length of the school week is available on the department's published information note at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063520/Minimum_expectation_for_length_of_school_week_-_information_note.pdf.

MILK

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Jackie O'Neil
Updates Requested?	Yes/No (Date/name) JO 07/02/2023
Date Cleared	

TOP LINES

■ **FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: School Milk Briefing > Overview, Background**

Milk is an excellent food for children's growth and development. This is why from 1 January 2015 the [revised School Food Standards](#) requires lower fat or lactose reduced milk to be available to children who want it during school hours. **FATE – background**

Lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk must be available for drinking at least once a day during school hours. Milk must be provided free of charge to pupils eligible for free school meals. Schools may offer milk as many times as they wish, however it must be free to infant and benefits-based FSM pupils when it is offered as part of their school meal and free to benefits-based FSM pupils at all other times. **FATE - overview/key points/lines to take**

From September 2014 all infant school pupils are entitled to a free school lunch. Where milk is provided as part of this lunch, it must be provided free.

Whole milk can be provided for pupils up to the end of the school year in which they reach age 5, after that milk must be lower fat or lactose-reduced in accordance with the School Food Standards. **FATE - lines to take**

The [standards for school food](#) came into force on 1 January 2015. [Departmental advice](#) and [guidance](#) is available on gov.uk.

Charging pupils for milk

Lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk must be available to children who want it for drinking at least once a day during school hours. This sits alongside the legislative requirement that milk is provided free of charge to pupils who meet the free school meal criteria. Schools may charge all other pupils. You can find the [legislation](#), which has been in place since 1996, here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/512ZB>.

FATE: Q&A

Drafting note: Source: Free School Meals Team

Extending Free Milk (FSM regulations)

We know milk is excellent for children's growth and development. As part of the School Food Standards, lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk must be available to children who want it for drinking at least once a day during school hours. It is a legislative requirement that milk is provided free of charge to pupils who meet the free school milk criteria, and schools may charge all other pupils.

The government has no current plans to extend eligibility for Free School Milk to all children in primary school or assess the demand from parents. We already assist with the cost of providing milk: children under five are entitled to free milk under the Department of Health's Nursery Milk Scheme; schools can take part in the School Milk Subsidy Scheme and, as mentioned above, free school milk is provided free of charge to disadvantaged pupils. All infant school pupils are also entitled to a free school lunch, and where milk is provided as part of this lunch, it must be provided free.

Drafting note: Source: Free School Meals Team (07/02/2022)

Free Milk (FSM regulations)

Milk must be provided free of charge to pupils eligible for free school meals. Schools may offer milk as many times as they wish, however it must be free to infant and benefits-based FSM pupils when it is offered as part of their school meal and free to benefits-based FSM pupils at all other times.

Background:

The requirements relating to free milk are set out in section 512ZB(3) of the Education Act 1996.

Section 512ZB(2) relates to the provision of free lunches, and section 512ZB(3) relates to the provision of free milk (There have been further amendments to this section since 2002, but they don't change the wording of 512ZB(3) so I haven't included them here).

Section 201 of the Education Act 2002 replaced the whole of section 512 EA96, and added new sections 512ZA (duty (now a power) to charge for meals) and 512ZB (FSM).

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/section/201/enacted>

FATE: Q&A

The requirements for both are exactly the same – the child or parent must be in receipt of one of the listed benefits AND must make a claim.

Policy notes: a claim for FSM would not fulfil the requirements for free milk – the legislation requires a separate claim for each (which in theory means that a child might claim free milk, but not meals). For questions on protections and any further information, refer to the Free School Meals team. Source date: 14/06/2022

Funding

The Dedicated Schools Grant, which provides schools with their core funding, should be used to fund free school meals and milk. Schools should use this funding to provide milk at no cost to these pupils, where it is requested. The level of core funding that schools attract under the national funding formula (NFF) reflects the number of pupils in the school that are eligible for free school meals. For 2022-23, the funding schools attract through the "FSM factor" in the NFF is increasing (by £10) to £470 per eligible pupil, however both local authorities and schools have the freedom to apply their own local funding formulae. Please see further information here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-funding-formula-for-schools-and-high-needs>. Schools may charge all other pupils. **FATE: line to take**

A separate grant is provided to fund universal infant free school meals and milk at lunchtime. **FATE: line to take**

Drafting note: Source: Free School Meals Team (09/02/2023)

Lactose-free milk

The School Food Standards state that lower fat milk and lactose-reduced milk must be available on every school day at a time during school hours. Schools are therefore required to provide lactose-reduced milk to pupils where it is requested. It is for individual schools to decide how they determine pupil requirements for lactose-reduced milk and how they source their milk.

The definition of "lower fat milk" in the School Food Standards regulations is "milk the fat content of which has been reduced to not more than 1.8%". Semi-skimmed milk is typically 1.7% fat.

National School Milk Subsidy Scheme

FATE: key points/lines to take/Q&A.

To assist with the cost of providing milk, schools can take part in the [National School Milk Subsidy Scheme](#).

Where schools provide milk they can also choose whether to participate in the National School Milk Subsidy Scheme which can be used to reduce the cost of the milk. The rate for subsidy is topped up nationally for pupils in primary education (children under 5 receive free milk through the Department of Health's much larger Nursery Milk Scheme). Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-school-milk-subsidy-scheme-guidance>

Drafting note: source DHSC/DEFRA 18/01/2023 – 21/22 top line data is published at the above link.

Where schools provide milk, they can also choose whether to participate in the School Milk Subsidy Scheme which can be used to reduce the cost of the milk. The rate for the subsidy is topped up nationally for pupils in primary education (children under 5 receive free milk through the Department of Health's much larger Nursery Milk Scheme).

Please see further information available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-school-milk-subsidy-scheme-guidance>

The top-up scheme is available to primary school children from age 5 (children under 5 receive free milk through the Department of Health's nursery milk scheme).

The value of the subsidy is 3 pence per 189ml serving of milk, and the top-up is 0.7 pence per 189ml serving. **FATE: Facts and figures**

The school milk subsidy continues to be available in the current school year and we will keep the position under review.

Drafting note: source DEFRA/RPA/DHSC 15/06/2022

Background (not for issue)

The EU subsidy scheme was initially for primary schools only. In 2008 they opened this up to secondary schools. The department did not change the top-up as the funding was not available to do so.

Agricultural and Rural Development – EU website:

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/milk/school-milk-scheme/index_en.htm

Policy note: do not issue the background information – seek advice from the policy team.

Nursery Milk Scheme

Policy note: any references to fraud/error or changes to evidence requirements, speak to policy colleagues and/or seek a contribution from DHSC (under contacts below).

FATE: key points/lines to take/facts and figures/Q&A.

All of the information for registering can be found by looking at the Nursery Milk Scheme website <https://www.nurserymilk.co.uk/>

The Nursery Milk Scheme is funded by the Department of Health and operates in England and Wales. Since 1 August 2021, the Scottish Government have operated the Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme in Scotland. Northern Ireland have their own arrangements. **Drafting note: source DHSC 18/01/2023**

The Nursery Milk Scheme is funded by the Department of Health. Under the Scheme, all children under the age of five in attendance at a registered day care or early years setting for two or more hours per day are eligible to receive a free daily drink of cow's milk (1/3 pint or 189 ml). Children less than one-year-old receive dried infant formula suitable from birth made up to 1/3 pint. In a typical year, the Scheme costs around £50 million per year.

Over 40,000 childcare settings throughout Great Britain take part in the Nursery Milk Scheme. **Drafting note: source DHSC 18/01/2023**

It is the responsibility of the childcare setting to arrange for the supply of milk and seek reimbursement from the Nursery Milk Reimbursement Unit (NMRU). Childcare settings can purchase milk from a range of sources including supermarkets, local corner shops, milk roundsmen, and other alternative sources. Settings can also choose to use a “milk agent” to arrange for the supply and delivery of milk. **Drafting note: source DHSC 18/01/2023**

Where schools provide milk they can also choose whether to participate in the National School Milk Subsidy Scheme which can be used to reduce the cost of the milk. The rate for subsidy is topped up nationally for pupils in primary education (children under 5 receive free milk through the Department of Health’s much larger Nursery Milk Scheme). Further information is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-school-milk-subsidy-scheme-guidance> **Drafting note: source DHSC 18/01/2023**

Nutritional benefits

■ **FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: School Milk Briefing > Background**

Milk is an excellent food for children’s growth and development. That is why, under the School Food Standards, schools must ensure it is available to all pupils.

Thanks to Universal Infant Free School Meals, pupils under seven-years-old are already eligible for free milk when it is offered as part of their school lunch. Older pupils entitled to free meals are also eligible for free milk when made available during the school day. This is in addition to the free milk provided for children under-five-years-old thanks to the Nursery Milk Scheme. **(Drafting note - source: FSM 30/06/2022)**

Milk is a good source of energy and protein and contains a wide range of vitamins and minerals. It is also rich in calcium, which growing children and young people need to build healthy bones and teeth. The government’s position, based on the advice of expert nutritionists, is that up until the age of five children should be given either whole or semi-skimmed milk because these provide the extra energy and vitamins that they need. From the age of five children can be given lower fat milk to limit the amount of saturated fat consumed which can cause raised levels of cholesterol in the blood and is associated with an increased risk of a heart attack or stroke in the longer term. Too much fat in the diet is associated with excess calories that can lead to becoming overweight. **(Drafting note - source: OHID 30/06/2022)**

The School Food Standards are part of the government’s drive to help children adopt healthy eating habits from a young age. They ensure that children have opportunity to consume the necessary nutrients required for their growth and development through the range of foods that must be provided, for example meat, fish (in particular oily fish, which provides omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins A and D), eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein. **Drafting note, use only if needed:** For these reasons, the government

has no plans to introduce whole milk into schools. (Drafting note - source: OHID 30/06/2022)

Plant based drinks/Vegan Society Play Fair writing campaign

■ FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Can schools serve non-dairy milk alternatives?'

The government's School Food Standards regulates the food and drink provided at both lunchtime and at other times of the school day. Beyond this, we believe that head teachers, school governors and caterers are best placed to make decisions about their school food policies, taking into account local circumstances and the needs of their pupils. In doing so, we expect schools to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with particular requirements, for example to reflect dietary and cultural needs. Although schools are required to make milk available, the School Food Standards (Schedule 1) also enable schools to provide a variety of other drinks including plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium and combination and flavoured variations of these drinks.[*] School food policies work best when schools discuss them with parents and pupils, so that parents have the opportunity to raise pupils' particular dietary needs.

Drafting note, use only if pressed*: Beyond these, schools are able to provide plant-based drinks to suit particular medical, dietary and cultural needs.

Provide milk to every pupil?

There is no requirement for the amount of milk that should be available, but there should be sufficient available for all pupils who want to take it. It does not have to be provided free of charge to non-free school meals pupils, but many caterers choose to provide it at no additional charge as part of the school lunch.

Sourcing Milk

The new school food regulations state that lower fat milk and lactose-reduced milk must be available on every school day at a time during school hours. We expect schools to provide lactose-reduced milk to pupils where an individual pupil's need exists. Individual schools are responsible for where and how they source milk including lactose-reduced milk.

Contacts – DEFRA

Tom Hubberstey
Tom.Hubberstey@defra.gsi.gov.uk
0208 026 4221
Area 1B, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR

Contact – Nursery Milk Scheme

Judith Hind,
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Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1

MONITORING

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed-Killick
Updates Requested?	Yes Lianna 20/02/23
Date Cleared	20/03/23

TOP LINES

Good schools understand the benefits of healthy eating. They actively want to meet the standards, and the vast majority of parents support them in this.

Governing boards are legally responsible for meeting the School Food Standards. If they do not, they should be supported to address the issues and there are a number of organisations that can provide this support. If there are still concerns, the matter can be raised with the Secretary of State for Education who can issue a direction to the school if necessary.

School Governors have a responsibility to ensure compliance and should appropriately challenge the headteacher and the senior leadership team to ensure the school is meeting its obligations.

Policy note: DfE can issue a direction under 496 and 497 of the Education Act 1996 - we would want to work with the school first to address/correct any issues – to issue a direction we would have to investigate and deem the school's actions to be unreasonable.

The Department is doing a number of things to strengthen adherence with the Standards. This includes piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, investing up to £200k in a pilot Governor Training Scheme and encouraging schools to develop and publish a school food policy on their websites which sets out their whole school approach to food. Our intention is that this will become mandatory when schools can do this effectively.

Added Feb 2022 to reflect the Levelling Up White Paper announcements

See also [GENERAL OVERVIEW](#), [Cookery School/School Cooking Revolution](#), [#Food Standards Agency \(FSA\) Pilot](#), [#Compliance](#), [#Evaluation of the Standards](#), [#Governor Training](#), [#Website Reporting](#)

Background:

Ofsted's education inspection framework took effect in September 2019, under the arrangements inspectors make four graded judgements: quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management. They will also reach a graded overall effectiveness judgement. There is a strong focus on the curriculum and schools are expected to provide a broad, balanced and ambitious

curriculum for all pupils. As part of the personal development judgement, inspectors will expect pupils to know how to eat healthily, maintain an active lifestyle and keep physically and mentally healthy. Ofsted's school inspection handbook makes clear that the personal development judgement evaluates the school's intent and the quality with which it implements its work around personal development – recognising that the impact of the school's provision will often not be assessable during pupils' time at school. Ofsted notes that at the same time as the school is working with pupils, those pupils are also being influenced by other factors in their home environment, their community and elsewhere. Schools can teach pupils how to build their confidence, knowledge and resilience, but cannot always determine how well young people draw on this.

(Sourced from Accountability and Inspections team 20/02/2023)

Ofsted Contact:

Policy note: Check with inspections and accountability team (Megan Tilby/Sophie Lewis) before seeking contributions from Ofsted. Contributions can be sought from the Schools Policy Team at Ofsted (state deadline as Ofsted has a standard 6 day turnaround for emails). Schools.PolicyTeam@ofsted.gov.uk

NATIONAL FOOD STRATEGY

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Heather Lonsdale
Updates Requested?	No: HL 06/03/23
Date Cleared	

Top Lines

The National Food Strategy, led by Henry Dimbleby, is an independent review that examines England's food system 'from field to fork'. Part Two of the plan was published in July 2021.

Updated 30/09/22.

Briefing Note: Part One available here: [Part One - National Food Strategy](#), Part 2 'the Plan' available here: [The Report - National Food Strategy](#)

The plan informed the content of the Government Food Strategy, which is available here: [Government food strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

OFFICE FOR HEALTH IMPROVEMENT AND DISPARITIES

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed-Killick
Updates Requested?	Yes 21/02/23 Lianna
Date Cleared	20/03/23

Eatwell guide

Government advice on a healthy, balanced diet is encapsulated in the UK's national food guide, the Eatwell Guide. The Eatwell Guide shows the proportions in which different types of foods are needed to have a balanced, healthy diet. The proportions shown are representative of your food consumption over the period of a day or even a week, not necessarily each meal time.

The Eatwell Guide depicts a diet based on fruit and vegetables (contributing 40% of the main image) and wholegrain starchy carbohydrates (contributing 38% of the main image) along with some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins (contributing 12% of the main image); some dairy or alternatives (contributing 8% of the main image) and only small amounts of food and drinks that are high in fat and/or sugar (contributing 1% of the main image).

The Eatwell Guide is freely available to download via The Government website here: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/528193/Eatwell_guide_colour.pdf

The Eatwell Guide Booklet provides information about each section and supporting nutrition advice:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551502/Eatwell_Guide_booklet.pdf

Drafting note: source PHE 12/10/2020

Contacts

Drafting note: all requests for lines must be sent to the parliamentary team:

Parliamentary@dhsc.gov.uk

Policy note: Liz/Rachel are policy contacts only.

Elizabeth Tydeman
Nutrition Advice Team, Diet and Obesity
Health and Wellbeing Directorate
Office for Health Improvement and Disparities
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London SE1 6LH

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PACKED LUNCHES

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed-Killick
Updates Requested?	No (16/02/23 Lianna Reed-Killick)
Date Cleared	

Top lines

■ FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Is there a requirement for a school to provide tables and chairs for children who have a packed lunch?'

We encourage schools to have a whole school approach to healthy eating. Schools may use the School Food Standards as a guide, when writing their packed lunch policies. For example, confectionery is banned throughout the school day and foods high in salt, sugar and fat are restricted.

School governing boards are responsible for their school meals policies. By law, local authorities are required to provide such facilities as they consider appropriate for the consumption of any meals brought to the school by registered pupils at maintained schools. We would expect these facilities to be akin to those used for food provided by

the school to ensure all pupils have a positive dining experience and do not feel left out or unnecessarily segregated.

Maintained schools (through their governing bodies) are subject to public law principles and so should ensure that they act reasonably in all circumstances including in setting their charging and school food policies.

It is not for the department to advise schools on whether they are meeting their statutory duties. If you have concerns about the lawfulness of particular policies, then we suggest you seek independent legal advice.

Contents

■ FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: School Food Standards > Q&A > 'My child's school will not allow chocolate biscuits as part of a packed lunch, can they do this?'

We want to make it easier for parents to feel confident that they are preparing healthy balanced lunches for their children. Further information such as recipes, tips and swap suggestions that are practical and affordable for parents are available on the Change4Life website at: <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life-beta/healthier-lunchboxes>.

Drafting notes: Source: PHE (16/12/2020) PHE update the Change4 Life packed lunch guidance – seek further contribution if needed – refer to PHE page in this core brief for contacts.

Schools can confiscate items that are banned by the school rules, more information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

Drafting note: searching packed lunch boxes, refer to the Behaviour in Schools knowledge page, - guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

Figures

Based on 2013/14 survey data an average of **57.4%** pupils do not take-up lunch provided by the school. The majority of these pupils are likely to have brought packed lunches.

Drafting note: Only use if necessary – check with policy colleagues first.

PROCUREMENT OF FOOD

TOP LINES

FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefings:

- School Food Standards > Background

- [School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Who decides what ingredients should be used in school meals?'](#)

Schools are responsible for their school meals service and how and where they choose to buy their produce.

The School Food Standards allow school cooks more creative freedom to adapt to the preferences of the children at their school, source seasonal or local food, take advantage of price fluctuations, or create dishes that suit their particular talents, which they can be confident are also nutritionally sound. Parents will also more easily be able to know if the food served to their children meets the standards.

The [get help buying for schools service](#) is made up of various resources to help you buy goods and services efficiently and compliantly. This is a free advice and guidance service for [state schools](#). There is no cost to access it and could help to save you money on your existing contracts.

Source: The GBS are currently being reviewed – seek a contribution from Defra if these lines are needed.

[Sustainable procurement: the Government Buying Standards \(GBS\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Slaughter of animals

Drafting notes: seek a contribution from Defra.

Defra contact

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PROMOTION OF FOOD AND DRINK IN SCHOOLS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Tom Crowley
Updates Requested?	Yes/No (Date/name)
Date Cleared	

We encourage schools to create a whole-school culture that promotes health and well-being so that all our children are fit, healthy and able to learn. We know schools treat this seriously, and many take their own steps to limit the promotion of inappropriate products. School governing boards are responsible for their food policies (including their meals service) and we trust them to decide what is best.

PUPILS WRITING IN

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed-Killick
Updates Requested?	No (16/02/23 Lianna)
Date Cleared	

Draft letter

Drafting notes: tailor appropriately

Thank you for your letter of **XX**, addressed to **XX**. As you will appreciate, xxx receives lots of letters each week, and is unable to respond to all personally. He/she passed me your letter on xxx and asked me to reply as the Minister responsible for school food.

I was delighted to read your letter. I am always pleased to hear from young people who take such an interest in matters that affect them. The government leaves it to schools to decide how to provide their meals because schools know what works best for them and their school community. We see many different ways of organising and delivering school meals across the country; some of the best of those examples being where pupils have their say about what happens.

Drafting note: add a short para here about the issue raised e.g. standards

You may like to think about working for your school council, or directly with your head teacher, to share your views on what you would keep and change about your school meals.

Thank you for writing on this important issue. Please do write again and let me know how you get on helping to transform school meals in your school.

RELIGIOUS/CULTURAL PROVISION / EVENTS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Heather Lonsdale
Updates Requested?	No (HL 06/03/23)
Date Cleared	

Drafting / policy note: All vegetarian schools on the basis of faith is currently with the policy team for consideration – seek contribution if needed.

TOP LINES

The School Food Standards define the foods and drinks that must be provided, those which are restricted, and those which must not be provided. They apply to all food and drink provided to pupils on and off school premises and during an extended school day (up to 6pm), including school trips, breakfast clubs, tuck shops, mid-morning break, vending and after school clubs. They do not apply to food provided at celebrations to mark religious or cultural occasions.

Information and guidance on the School Food Standards is available at: [School food standards: resources for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools)

Furthermore, the Government expects schools to consult parents and carers when adopting school food policies, considering any difficulties these policies could cause, and ensuring that the policies are clearly communicated when implemented.

(Provision of Halal prepared food)

The government sets out required minimum standards for school food in the School Food Standards to ensure that children are served healthy, nutritious meals at school. The standards do not specify food requirements in terms of cultural and religious needs. The relevant regulations are available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/1603/pdfs/ukxi_20141603_en.pdf

Head teachers, governors and their caterers are best placed to make decisions about their school food policies. We expect schools to act reasonably providing choices that take account of cultural, religious and special dietary needs and to work with parents in making appropriate arrangements. In particular, schools should consult with parents when making changes to school food provision and ensure parents have access to information on the food provided. If parents are not happy with the food provided by the school they can take it up with the school and consider using the school's complaints policy.

Schools may consider providing both halal and non-halal food each day or ensuring that dishes are clearly labelled to allow pupils to select the appropriate choice. We would expect any significant changes to school food to be discussed with parents.

Drafting notes: Further lines if needed

The department does not collect information on the types of food provided in schools.

The government does not have a role in banning food on religious grounds in schools. The issues and informed choices are best managed locally by schools taking into account cultural, religious and dietary needs and by working with parents.

Other Relevant Content

[School Food Standards: Meat, vegetarianism, and veganism](#)

REQUEST TO SUPPORT A PROGRAMME/PROJECT

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Vanessa Mynard
Updates Requested?	
Date Cleared	

Government does not steer schools towards particular study materials, programmes or ideas developed by third parties, instead governing boards and head teachers have the freedom to decide what is best for their pupils.

SCHOOL FRUIT AND VEGETABLE SCHEME

Accountable	Kay Nicholls
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Jo Wilson
Updates Requested?	Yes/ No (31/08/22 - James)
Date Cleared	30/09/22 VM

TOP LINES

■ **FATE Flag:** content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: Obesity in Childhood > Lines to take > School Food

Drafting notes: Department of Health and Social Care lead on the SFVS and have requested, as the department leading the policy, to be made aware of all cases, and in most cases this results in us rejecting the case and sending on to them for a response.

For lines on single use plastics, refer to the plastics section of this brief.

The School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme provides over 2.2m children in Reception and Key Stage 1 with a portion of fresh fruit or vegetables each day at school. Approximately 450m pieces of fruit and vegetables are distributed to children annually.

Over 16,500 England Primary Schools are signed up to this scheme. Schools are encouraged to use it as an opportunity to educate children about fruit and vegetables and to assist a healthy, balanced diet.

Alternative para:

The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (SFVS) provides all Reception and Key Stage 1 children (typically four to six years old) in fully state-funded infant, primary and special schools throughout England with a free piece of fruit or vegetable every school day. The principle aim of the scheme is to encourage children to eat fruit and vegetables and to make improved nutritional choices in later life.

Additional Line: (updated 25/07/2022)

In the Government Food Strategy white paper (published by DEFRA on 13/06/22), DfE, alongside DHSC, committed to undertaking a joint review of the current policy and delivery method of the SFVS.'

Additional lines: (Drafting not: provided by DHSC 08/12/2021)

The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme is available to pupils in Key Stage 1 attending state-funded primary schools, where it plays a valuable role in helping to normalise the

daily consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables to help to build longer-term healthier eating habits.

As the Scheme is focused on schools, early years settings are not eligible. However, we are aware that early years settings already provide healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drink throughout the day to the children in their care, in line with the Early Years Framework.

Covid-19 response

Drafting note: The School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme was paused during the summer term 2020 so as little fresh produce went to waste as possible. The scheme was reintroduced from September 2020 when schools opened fully and paused temporarily w/c 4 and 11 January.

Drafting note: source – DHSC 10/03/2021

Contact - Department of Health and Social Care

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Department of Health
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79 Whitehall
London SW1

SCHOOL FOOD PLAN

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Heather Lonsdale
Updates Requested?	No (HL 06/03/23)
Date Cleared	

TOP LINES

In July 2013, the department published the School Food Plan, which was the outcome of the review of school food commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education in July 2012. The plan contained 16 specific actions aimed at further increasing the quality and take up of school meals; developing a whole-school food culture in every school; and exciting children about good food and cooking so that they can lead healthy lives. The plan can be downloaded at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-school-food-plan>.

Actions for the Department of Education from the School Food Plan included funding for breakfast clubs in areas of high deprivation, boosting take-up of meals in junior and secondary schools and making cooking part of the national curriculum (on which see below).

Further information is available on the School Food Plan website:
www.schoolfoodplan.com.

Drafting/policy notes: UIFSM was a positive change from the School Food Plan. This is the top line if questioned. Refer to FSM/UIFSM knowledge and core brief for specific UIFSM lines or seek advice from FSM/policy colleagues if needed.

School Gardens

We encourage schools to have a whole school approach to healthy eating. Having a school garden or setting up a gardening club was promoted in the School Food Plan that was commissioned by the department and published in July 2013. This is a decision for schools to make, dependent upon local circumstances. However, we know a lot of schools find creative ways to collaborate between head teachers, school cooks, children, teachers, governors and parents to make this happen. Some of the best examples of this is where enthusiastic volunteers from the community have gotten involved. Schools can use the excellent examples from the School Food Plan "What Works Well" website and they may also choose to work with charities who specifically support schools in this area.

SCHOOL FOOD STANDARDS (SFS)

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Heather Lonsdale
Updates Requested?	Yes (HL Feb 23)
Date Cleared	20/03/23

TOP LINES

Updated 30/09/22

FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefings:

- School Food Standards > Lines to take
- School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Who is responsible for ensuring that the School Food Standards are met?'
- School Food Standards > Q&A > 'How can parents complain about school food at their child's school?'
- School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Can the government enforce the School Food Standards?'
- School Food Standards > Q&A > 'How can I be sure that the meals provided by my child's school are healthy and balanced, and meet the standards?'

Drafting note: for School Food Standards update (reducing sugar) within the obesity strategy – refer to the obesity section in this brief.

The standards for school food are set out in the requirements for school food regulations 2014 and are to ensure that schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day.

The government encourages all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink. Compliance with the [School Food Standards](#) is mandatory for all maintained schools (including academies and free schools).

Governors have a responsibility to ensure compliance and should appropriately challenge the headteacher and the senior leadership team to ensure the school is meeting its obligations. Governors may wish to ask the headteacher for evidence that the school is compliant with the standards and the governing board may also wish to appoint

a named governor responsible for health and wellbeing, which could include school food. [Departmental advice](#) and [guidance](#) is available on gov.uk.

The School Food Standards regulate the food and drink provided at both lunchtime and at other times of the school day, including, for example, breakfast clubs, tuck shops, mid-morning break, vending and after school clubs.

The standards define the foods and drinks that must be provided, which foods are restricted, and those, which must not be provided. They apply to all food and drink provided to pupils on and off school premises and during an extended school day (up to 6pm), including school trips, breakfast clubs, tuck shops, mid-morning break, vending and after school clubs.

The standards allow school cooks more creative freedom to adapt to the preferences of the children at their school, source seasonal or local food, take advantage of price fluctuations, and create dishes that suit their particular talents, which they can be confident are also nutritionally sound. Parents will also more easily be able to know if the food served to their children meets the standards.

It is important that children eat nutritious, tasty food at school as fuel for learning, to help their growth and development and so that they develop healthy eating habits.

The School Food Standards restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, as well as low quality reformed or reconstituted foods. They ensure that pupils always have healthy options for their school lunch.

The standards state that schools must provide fruit and vegetables every day, at least three different types each week and no more than two portions of deep fried food a week. In several areas, such as salt, fruit juice and food cooked in oil, the standards are tighter. In trials, completed by the Children's Food Trust, the standards proved extremely popular with school cooks, 90 per cent of whom said they were easier to implement than the old standards. **Drafting note: source School Food Plan - [SFP pilot study evaluation report final v3](#) – part 2.1.1 states the 90% figure.**

Legislation and guidance:

■ **FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: [School Food Standards > Overview](#)**

The new [standards for school food](#) came into force on 1 January 2015. [Departmental advice](#) and [guidance](#) is available on gov.uk.

Drafting note: refer to the [academies](#) section for lines on all academies meeting the standards – refer to the [obesity](#) section for lines on the academies campaign, i.e. the government's commitment in the Childhood Obesity Plan to get all exempt academies to voluntarily sign up to the standards.

Additives: Artificial Sweeteners

Drafting Note: to commission lines from OHID if needed. Contact: nicola.hamilton@dhsc.gov.uk

Boarding schools

The regulations exempt evening meals provided before 6pm in boarding schools from having to meet the food-based standards. This exemption means that evening meals can include confectionery, snacks, cakes or biscuits.

Compliance

FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefings:

- School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Can the government enforce the School Food Standards?'
- School Food Standards > Lines to take > Strengthening School Food Standards Compliance

Compliance with the School Food Standards is mandatory for all maintained schools including academies and free schools.

Government encourages all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink. School Governors have a responsibility to ensure compliance and should appropriately challenge the headteacher and the senior leadership team to ensure the school is meeting its obligations.

Governors may wish to ask the headteacher for evidence that the school is compliant with the standards. The governing board may also wish to appoint a named governor responsible for health and wellbeing, which could include school food.

Added February 2022 to reflect announcements made in the Levelling Up White Paper:

In February 2022 the Levelling Up White Paper outlined a number of things the Department is doing to strengthen adherence with the School Food Standards. This includes piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, investing up to £200k in a pilot Governor Training Scheme and encouraging schools to develop and publish a school food policy on their websites which sets out their whole school approach to food.

See also [GENERAL OVERVIEW](#), [Cookery School/School Cooking Revolution](#), [#Food Standards Agency \(FSA\) Pilot](#), [#Governor Training](#), [#Website Reporting](#), [#MONITORING](#)

Consultation

We ran a public consultation on new School Food Standards regulations between 6 March and 16 April 2014. The new standards were tested by 31 schools and 24 caterers from across England, overseen by a group of school catering experts and nutritionists

with positive outcomes. These outcomes were fed into the proposed version that went out for public consultation in March 2014.

Drinks

■ **FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: School Food Standards > Lines to take > Drinks**

The School Food Standards define the foods and drinks that must be provided, which are restricted, and those which must not be provided. They apply to all food and drink provided to pupils on and off school premises and during an extended school day (up to 6pm), including school trips, breakfast clubs, tuck shops, mid-morning break, vending and after school clubs.

The standards restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, including high sugar drinks. The regulations permit only healthy drinks; full details of permitted drinks is available in the [school food regulations](#). [Departmental advice](#) is available on gov.uk. A [summary](#) of the standards and a [practical guide](#) are available from gov.uk

The only drinks permitted are:

- plain water (still or carbonated)
- lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk
- fruit or vegetable juice (max 150mls)
- plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; plain fermented milk (e.g. yoghurt) drinks
- combinations of fruit or vegetable juice with plain water (still or carbonated, with no added sugars or honey)
- combinations of fruit juice and lower fat milk or plain yoghurt, plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; cocoa and lower fat milk; flavoured lower fat milk, all with less than 5% added sugars or honey
- tea, coffee, hot chocolate

Combination drinks are limited to a portion size of 330mls. They may contain added vitamins or minerals, and no more than 150mls of fruit or vegetable juice. Fruit or vegetable juice combination drinks must be at least 45% fruit or vegetable juice

Drinking Water

■ **FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Are children allowed to drink water in the classroom?'**

Since 2012 the supply of free, fresh drinking water in schools has been required in law. Drinking water must be provided free of charge at all times to registered pupils on the school premises.

It is up to schools to decide how they want to offer this, but no teacher should be refusing a child water. If water is not available parents should raise this through the school's complaints policy.

As part of the 25 Year Environment Plan the Government has set an ambition to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste. Many schools have responded to this by encouraging their pupils to use reusable bottles for their water, instead of single use plastics.

The School Food Standards state that pupils should have easy access at all times to free, fresh drinking water. It is for individual schools to decide how best to offer drinking water. We would expect schools to work with parents where children have religious beliefs or cultural customs that affect what they eat and drink.

Where a parent is concerned about access to drinking water at their school, they should in the first instance contact the school to resolve the issue. If they are not happy with the result of this conversation, they can make a complaint through the school's own complaints procedure.

Drafting notes: If a child won't drink water, issue both the standards para above and health and safety lines (under health and safety concerns in this brief) – encourage the parent to resolve the issue with the headteacher and quote the complaints procedure.

Ramadan

It is a matter for individual schools on how to accommodate children observing Ramadan. All schools are subject to equalities legislation including the Equality Act 2010 and must ensure that any measures they take are in compliance with the requirements of that legislation.'

The equalities guidance is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

Energy drinks

The School Food Standards came into force on 1 January 2015. They define the foods and drinks that must be provided, which are restricted, and those which must not be provided. They apply to all food and drink provided to pupils on and off school premises and during an extended school day (up to 6pm), including school trips, breakfast clubs, tuck shops, mid-morning break, vending and after school clubs.

Energy drinks are not permitted within the School Food Standards. The only permitted drinks are: Plain water (still or carbonated); lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk; fruit or vegetable juice (max 150mls); plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; plain fermented milk (e.g. yoghurt) drinks; combinations of fruit juice and lower fat milk or plain yoghurt, plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; cocoa and lower fat milk; flavoured lower fat milk, all with less than 5% added sugars or honey; tea, coffee, hot chocolate. Combination drinks are limited to a portion size of 330mls. They may contain

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added vitamins or minerals, and no more than 150mls of fruit or vegetable juice. Fruit or vegetable juice combination drinks must be at least 45% fruit or vegetable juice.

School governing boards are responsible for setting their school food policies including food brought in from home. We encourage schools to have a whole school approach to healthy eating and some schools already ban energy drinks brought in from home. Schools can confiscate items that are banned by the school rules, more information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

A school must act reasonably when setting a school food policy. It should not disregard legitimate medical, dietary and cultural needs. Government also strongly recommends that schools consult parents and carers when adopting a school food policy giving proper consideration to any difficulties this policy may cause and ensuring it is clearly communicated when implemented.

If pressed:

Our world leading childhood obesity plan launched in August 2016, includes a soft drinks industry levy, sugar reduction and wider reformulation programme: which will encourage the food and drink industry to reduce the amount of sugar in products popular with children, including energy drinks. The government will continue to monitor the situation and any new emerging scientific evidence on the consumption of energy drinks by children and young people under the age of 18.

We are aware that the Science and Technology Select Committee have recently launched an inquiry into the consumption of energy drinks and we will consider the findings when they are available.

Drafting note: launched 8 March 2018

Update (sugar/fibre) of the standards

■ **FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: School Food Standards > Lines to take > Updating the School Food Standards**

Updated 21/03/23

We believe that the current standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils in England continue to receive high-quality and nutritious food, that builds healthy eating habits for life. We are keeping the standards under review.

If further detail is needed:

In February 2022 the Levelling Up White Paper outlined a number of things the department is doing to strengthen adherence, including piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, investing up to £200k in a pilot Governor Training Scheme and encouraging schools to develop and publish a school food policy on their websites which sets out their whole school approach to food.

Drafting note: If pushed, we can consider mentioning that update project was paused due to the covid-19 outbreak and our position is now on delivering on the announcements to increase compliance.

Food Standards Agency (FSA) Pilot

Briefing note: content correct as of 14 March 2023, according to announcements made in the LUWP: [Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom)

As announced in the Levelling Up White Paper, the Food Standards Agency and the Department for Education are launching a joint project, supported by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, to design and test a new approach for local authorities in assuring and supporting compliance with School Food Standards.

The project was launched across multiple local authorities in May 2022 with the pilot going live in September 2022 and running throughout the 2022/23 academic year.

The pilot will test whether:

- Food Safety Officers carrying out routine food hygiene inspections are able to ask additional questions and make observations related to School Food Standards to identify possible non-compliance.
- Where instances of possible non-compliance have been raised, appropriate teams (such as public health or food education) within local authorities will be able to instigate a supportive intervention.

By increasing levels of assurance of the standards we hope to see greater levels of compliance, and ultimately school children having access to healthier and more nutritious food.

We are delighted to announce that the following local authorities are taking part in the pilot:

- Blackpool Council
- Lincolnshire County Council*
- Plymouth City Council
- Nottingham City Council
- City of Wolverhampton Council
- City of Lincoln Council
- Derbyshire Dales District Council
- Oldham Council
- Herefordshire Council
- Bradford Council
- Telford and Wrekin Council
- Newham Council
- Chelmsford City Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Peterborough City Council
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

- Derbyshire County Council*
- Royal Borough of Greenwich

*Lincoln City and Derbyshire Dales are the only district councils within Lincolnshire and Derbyshire whose Food Safety Officers will be participating in the pilot.

Drafting note: Further lines for school food team colleagues available in the [pilot comms folder](#) (Lines to take, Q&A and LA guidance).

See also [GENERAL OVERVIEW](#), [Cookery School/School Cooking Revolution](#), [#Compliance](#), [#Evaluation of the Standards](#), [#Governor Training](#), [#Website Reporting](#), [#MONITORING](#)

High caffeine drinks

Drafting note: seek lines from the Food Standards Agency.

Independently run breakfast and after-school clubs

Added 30/09/22

The School Food Standards define the foods and drinks that must be provided, which foods are restricted, and those, which must not be provided. They apply to all food and drink provided to pupils on and off school premises and during an extended school day (up to 6pm), including school trips, breakfast clubs, tuck shops, mid-morning break, vending and after school clubs. Breakfast and after school clubs provided on school premises or at the request of the local authority/school governing board (at other premises) are required to meet the School Food Standards. Although the School Food Standards do not apply to independent breakfast and after school clubs not connected to a school, those settings may wish to use the standards as a guide. [Departmental advice](#) and [guidance](#) is available on gov.uk.'

Meat, vegetarianism, and veganism

FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefings:

- School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Does the school have to provide food that takes account of different religious, cultural or other dietary needs?'
- School Food Standards > Q&A > 'Will the Department consider removing the requirement to serve meat three times a week from the School Food Standards?'

- FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE Document:
'20221222 Standard Response The School Food Standards and the requirement to serve meat, dairy and fish'

The requirement in the School Food Standards to serve meat and dairy products applies to all schools, and meat or poultry must be provided on three or more days each week. We are aware that for some faith schools, vegetarianism is an important part of that faith. There may therefore be cases where there is no demand for meat and dairy products from any of the school's parents or pupils, and in this scenario, it would of course not be realistic to expect the school to produce meat or dairy based meals that will not be consumed.

The government's School Food Standard's regulates the food and drink provided at both lunchtime and at other times of the school day. Beyond this, we believe that head teachers, school governors and caterers are best placed to make decisions about their school food policies, taking into account local circumstances and the needs of their pupils. In doing so, we expect schools to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with particular requirements, for example to reflect dietary and cultural needs. School food policies work best when schools discuss them with parents and pupils, so that parents have the opportunity to raise pupils' particular dietary needs.

Drafting note: more detailed lines

This government wants pupils to be healthy and well nourished. We encourage a healthy balanced diet and healthy life choices through school funding, legislation and guidance. The standards for school food are set out in the requirements for school food regulations 2014 and are to ensure that schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day. [I note the points you raise about schools that may only be offering vegetarian meals and that this may impact on children's health]. Add if appropriate.

The requirement in the school food standards to serve meat and dairy products applies to all schools. We are aware that for some faith schools, vegetarianism is an important part of that faith. There may therefore be cases where there is no demand for meat and dairy products from any of the school's parents or pupils, and in this scenario it would of course not be realistic to expect the school to produce meat or dairy based meals that will not be consumed. If any pupils and parents requested that a school serve meat or dairy, and if the school refused to comply with the requirement in the standards, it would be open to the parent(s) to take this up initially through the school's complaints policy. If they were not satisfied following that process, they can raise a complaint with the department to ensure the standards are enforced. The department would consider any such complaints on a case-by-case basis.

The department would also expect schools that do not provide meat or dairy as part of a school meal to allow pupils the option of bringing those products to school as part of a packed lunch.

More detailed line: veganism. Drafting note: the following line comes from a petition on the mandatory inclusion of a vegan option in schools from April 2022. The full petition can

be found here: [Require schools provide a vegan meal option every day - Petitions \(parliament.uk\)](#)

The government recognises the importance of plant-based foods from a cultural and environmental point of view. The standards for school food are set out in The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 ('the School Food Standards'), and already allow schools the freedom to provide plant-based meals as needed. Meat must be served on three or more days each week and beyond this, schools may provide a meal with a vegan source of protein every day if they choose to.

Drafting note: Further lines if needed (Updated 21/03/23)

The School Food Standards are in line with current government advice on red meat, encouraging schools to serve it in moderation as a good source of nutrients, including iron, zinc and vitamin B12.

Drafting notes: if needed, seek a contribution from Office of Health Inequalities and Disparities. Updated 30/09/22.

The government recognises the valuable contribution plant-based foods and drinks make to the diet, alongside the contribution that fish and animal-based foods and drinks can make. For example, plant-based foods including beans, pulses and plant-based drinks are included on the Eatwell Guide. These foods are highlighted within the food groups of the guide as these can be considered more environmentally sustainable and promote a diet that is lower in saturated fat and higher in fibre. More information on the Eatwell Guide can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

Drafting note: source DHSC 21/03/23

Draft letter: addressing calls to remove the requirement to serve meat and dairy in schools

Drafting note: these lines were developed in response to a campaign of PQs and POs in autumn 2022:

This government wants pupils to be healthy and well nourished. We encourage a healthy balanced diet and healthy life choices through school funding, legislation and guidance. The standards for school food are set out in the requirements for school food regulations 2014 and are to ensure that schools provide children with healthy food and drink options, and to make sure that children get the energy and nutrition they need across the school day.

The requirement in the school food standards to serve meat and dairy products applies to all schools. We are aware that for some faith schools, vegetarianism is an important part of that faith. There may therefore be cases where there is no demand for meat and dairy products from any of the school's parents or pupils, and in this scenario it would not be

realistic to expect the school to produce meat or dairy based meals that will not be consumed.

The government's School Food Standards regulates the food and drink provided at both lunchtime and at other times of the school day. Beyond this, we believe that head teachers, school governors and caterers are best placed to make decisions about their school food policies, taking into account local circumstances and the needs of their pupils. In doing so, we expect schools to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with particular requirements, for example to reflect dietary and cultural needs. School food policies work best when schools discuss them with parents and pupils, so that parents have the opportunity to raise pupils' particular dietary needs.

We believe that the current standards provide a robust yet flexible framework to ensure that pupils in England continue to receive high-quality and nutritious food, that builds healthy eating habits for life.

In February 2022 the Levelling Up White Paper outlined a number of things the department is doing to strengthen adherence, including piloting work with the Foods Standards Agency, investing up to £200k in a pilot Governor Training Scheme and encouraging schools to develop and publish a school food policy on their websites which sets out their whole school approach to food.

We have committed to support schools to drive up their sustainable practices on food. Schools can voluntarily follow the government buying standards if they so wish, which include lots of good advice around sustainable sourcing. The government also recognises the importance of plant-based foods from a cultural and environmental point of view. The school food regulations already allow schools the freedom to provide plant-based meals as needed. Meat must be served on three or more days each week and beyond this, schools may provide a meal with any other type of protein every day if they choose to.

Draft Letter covering the banning of meat products in schools/packed lunches:

Drafting Note: this draft is based on a Letter from SoS to Tim Bonner, Countryside Alliance CEO, 19/02/22 re. a school banning meat products from all food (including packed lunches). **SEEK POLICY TEAM CLEARANCE BEFORE USE:**

Thank you for your letter dated 16 February regarding the decision taken by Barrowford School, Lancashire, to ban meat products from school lunches, including packed lunches children bring from home.

I completely agree with you on this matter. Our farmers make an extraordinary contribution to the British countryside and the sustainability of their livestock system. It is for families to decide whether meat is part of their child's diet and not schools. Schools should offer children a balanced, healthy range of food options and there is no reason at all why meat products should not be available to pupils for lunch. The vast majority of schools already take this sensible approach and I encourage any outliers to follow their example.

Schools and their caterers are required to follow the School Food Standards to ensure that all children are able to access a healthy, nutritious meal while at school. The requirement in the standards to serve meat and dairy products applies to all schools. We have published guidance for schools to help them deliver a range of tasty and nutritious meals, which is available on gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools>

Decisions around school food provision are devolved locally and are made by the relevant local authority or school based on their local knowledge and priorities. The government expects schools to act reasonably, providing choices that take account of cultural, religious, and special dietary needs, and to work with parents in making appropriate arrangements. Schools should consult with parents when making changes to school food provision and ensure parents have access to information on the food provided.

If parents are not happy with the food provided by the school they can take it up with the school and consider using the school's complaints policy. If after this there are still concerns, the matter can be raised with the Department for Education. The department would also expect schools that do not provide meat or dairy as part of a school meal to allow pupils the option of bringing those products to school as part of a packed lunch. Thank you for writing on this important matter.

Other Relevant Content:

[SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE](#)

[RELIGIOUS/CULTURAL PROVISION / EVENTS](#)

Nurseries/Pre-school

The School Food Standards regulations apply to maintained nurseries and nursery units attached to primary schools with the exceptions that: there is a reduced set of standards for food served at lunchtime (Schedule 5) and whole milk, instead of lower fat milk, may be provided.

Drafting note: for nurseries not attached to a primary school, refer to early years section under childhood obesity plan in this core brief.

Oily Fish

Tuna fish (not canned) is permitted as an oily fish in the School Food Standards. Since the introduction of the standards, the NHS guidance has been updated and tuna is no longer viewed as an oily fish. We will consider this when looking at the regulations in future.

Pastry

The standards state “No more than two portions of food which include pastry each week”. ‘Pastry’ includes short crust, flaky, filo, choux and puff, used in quiches, meat pies, fruit pies, fruit tarts, sausage rolls, pasties, samosas. The School Food Standards limit the number of foods that contain pastry as these can be high in fat (including saturated fat), salt and sugar. Eating too much saturated fat can cause raised levels of cholesterol in the blood and is associated with an increased risk of a heart attack or stroke. Too much fat can also lead to weight gain because foods that are high in fat are also high in energy.

Portion size and food groups

■ FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: [School Food Standards > Lines to take > Portion sizes](#)

The guidance to accompany the School Food Standards includes guidance on portion sizes and food groups and is available on gov.uk at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools>.

Draft Letter – balance/balancing foods and/or portion size

The School Food Standards define the foods and drinks that must be provided, those which are restricted, and those which must not be provided. The standards restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, including high sugar foods and confectionery. Full details of permitted food groups is available in the [school food regulations](#), a [summary](#) of the standards and a [practical guide](#) are available from gov.uk

The standards aim to ensure that children are able to choose a healthy school meal, and are encouraged to try many different foods to help establish a healthy varied diet. The items you mention are permitted when balanced across the week. Government cannot legislate for individual portion sizes for each age group.

It is for schools and caterers to decide what is an appropriate portion and to balance the food served across the school week. The guidance to accompany the School Food Standards, includes guidance on portion sizes and food groups. You can download this document from gov.uk at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools>.

We encourage schools to consider any issue that they feel is stopping children and parents from choosing a healthy school lunch. If you feel portion size and/or the balance of food is an issue at your school, we would recommend you talk to the head teacher. If you are unhappy with the results of this discussion, you could make a formal complaint through the school's own complaints procedure.

Products – meeting the standards (draft letter)

Drafting note – use to answer questions where food suppliers/providers want their products approved as meeting the standards.

The School Food Standards apply to an average school lunch within a one to four week menu cycle, the overall planned provision of food and drink and include school food provided at times other than lunch. Rather than endorsing individual products as meeting the standards, it is for schools, local authorities and catering companies to ensure their school food adheres to the requirements.

Your best route, therefore, would be to check whether your products meet the guidelines set out in the standards, both individually and as part of a school meal where appropriate. [Departmental advice](#) and [guidance](#) is available on gov.uk. Schools can then use this information to help decide whether your products are right for them.

Schools covered by the School Food Standards

- Maintained primary
- Maintained secondary
- Maintained special
- Maintained nursery
- Maintained boarding
- Pupil Referral Units
- Academies and free schools
- Non-Maintained special schools – via paragraph 26 of the Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015/728 ([Guidance for Non-maintained Special Schools](#)).

School food other than lunch

The School Food Standards regulate the food and drink provided at both lunchtime and at other times of the school day, including, for example, breakfast clubs, tuck shops, mid-morning break, vending and after school clubs.

The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 (known as 'The School Food Standards') define the foods and drinks that must be provided, which are restricted, and those which must not be provided. They apply to food and drink provided to pupils on school premises and during an extended school day (up to 6pm), including breakfast clubs, tuck shops, mid-morning break, vending and after school clubs. They also apply to any school lunches taken as part of a school trip, and to other food provided before 6pm on school trips where the trip is for at least 7 days.

The standards restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, including snacks high in fat, sugar and salt. The regulations state fruit and/or vegetables must be available in any place on the school premises where food is provided; full details of permitted snacks is available in the [school food regulations](#), a [summary](#) of the standards and a [practical guide](#) are available from gov.uk

Sugar/sugary foods and sweets

■ FATE Flag: content in this section features in the following FATE briefing: [School Food Standards > Lines to take > High sugar foods](#)

The standards restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, including high sugar foods and confectionery. Full details of permitted food groups is available in the [school food regulations](#), a [summary](#) of the standards and a [practical guide](#) are available from gov.uk

Drafting Notes: These top lines from the NHS website may be useful (check PHE/website before use). Also refer to the Change4Life healthier snacks campaign listed under PHE in this brief. There are also a number of pages from this site on specific issues such as sugar and salt, as well as healthy diets for children - Source: Public Health England: <http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Goodfood/Pages/Goodfoodhome.aspx>

Most adults and children in the UK eat too much sugar. The government recommends we all cut down by eating fewer sugary foods, such as sweets, cakes and biscuits, and drinking fewer sugary drinks. Further information is available on the NHS website at: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/sugars.aspx> and the eatwell guide is available at: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx>.

Background

We have taken additional measures to limit children's sugar intake:

- The amount of fruit juice in combination drinks has been decreased.
- Bread with no added fat or oil (i.e. butter or margarine) will be available as an extra to the meal every day to meet the needs of those pupils who are still hungry after their lunch, and encourage them to fill up on starchy foods rather than foods high in fat or sugar.

Website Reporting

Briefing note: content according to announcements made in the LUWP [Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) Updated 21/03/23

We will promote accountability and transparency of school food arrangements by encouraging schools to develop and publish a school food policy on their websites which sets out their whole school approach to food. The reporting would be voluntary initially, with the intention that this will become mandatory when schools can do this effectively

See also [GENERAL OVERVIEW](#), [Cookery School/School Cooking Revolution](#), [#Food Standards Agency \(FSA\) Pilot](#), [#Compliance#Evaluation of the Standards](#), [#Governor Training](#), [#MONITORING](#)

Standards Q&A

Q1. Do the School Food Standards apply to Scotland and Wales?

The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 only apply to schools in England.

Q2. What will be done to stop caterers providing junk food that provides little nutrition but higher profit?

We know that leaders in schools recognise the importance of healthy school food, in

terms of behaviour, attainment and children's health. We also know that whilst schools understand the tension between commercial interests and pupil welfare, they accept that school food is essential to a child's education, with many schools, including academies, choosing to subsidise their school meal services.

We would therefore expect that those involved in decision-making about food provision to work closely with their caterer, to ensure that the food on offer in schools enables pupils to select a healthy balanced meal.

Q3. Does 'Bread with no added fat or oil' mean 1) Made without fat or oil 2) Served without fat or oil 3) Both of the above

'Bread with no added fat or oil' means served without fat.

SCHOOL FOOD TAKE UP SURVEY

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed-Killick
Updates Requested?	No (20/02/23 Lianna)
Date Cleared	

TOP LINES

The department published the [school lunch take-up survey](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-lunch-take-up-survey-2013-to-2014) for 2013 to 2014, which was carried out by NatCen Social Research. The survey is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-lunch-take-up-survey-2013-to-2014>

The data shows the average take-up figure of both free and paid school meals for primary and special schools during the 2013-14 financial year. The survey reports that average take-up of school lunches was 42.6%. Since this survey the government has introduced free school meals for all infant children which will significantly increase meal take up, particularly in primary schools. The latest census data shows that take-up of school lunches is just under 85%¹ for infant pupils. This broadly shows that take-up has doubled since the introduction of universal infant free school meals.

Key Findings for Primary/Special Schools

- In the 2013/14 academic year, the **average take-up of school lunches was 42.6%**.
- Take-up of *free school meals* was higher than take-up of *paid lunches*. On average, 75.1% of eligible pupils took free school meals, compared with a take-up rate of 35.5% for paid lunches.
- When school and catering characteristics were considered together in a regression analysis, the average take-up of school lunch was predicted by:
 - The average price of school lunch. For every increase in average price by £1, take-up of school meals fell by 18.5 percentage points.
 - A high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM density). Schools with high FSM density had a higher take-up than schools in medium FSM density areas.
 - School size. There was an inverse relationship between size of school and lunch take-up, with smaller schools having higher take-up.

¹ Source – census – valid until June 2017

- Nearly all schools offered hot meals in the 2013/14 academic year (97%). Only one per cent of schools offered only cold lunches, while 2% had no lunch provision at the time.
- In the 2013/14 academic year, the average price charged to parents for a school lunch was £2.04 (ranging from £1 to £3).
- When asked about the financial state of their school meal service, over half of schools (59%) were unable to say whether they broke even, made a profit or operated at a deficit.
- Among those that did know, 46% of schools broke even, 14% made a surplus while 41% reported operating at a deficit.
- Quality of food and menu changes/meal options (including more choice) and promoting school meals to parents and pupils were the main reasons cited by schools who perceived that take-up had increased.

In the 2013/14 academic year, the average take-up of school lunches for **primary/special schools was 42.6% and the average price charged to parents for a meal was £2.04** (the research does not include the cost of producing the meal, therefore this figure is not comparable to the £2.30 figure used in the UIFSM funding formula).

Results are only reported for a combined primary and special school response; findings for secondary schools are not included. While the survey set out to measure take-up for primary, special and secondary schools, poor response rates and high levels of missing data from secondary schools (34% responses missing for the question on take-up) meant that findings were unreliable.

There are significant differences between the method used in this survey and that used in previous School Food Trust (SFT) surveys, specifically in relation to sampling and data collection (including surveying schools rather than local authorities). As a result, the data is not comparable with that from SFT surveys, and the report focuses on findings from the 2013/14 school lunch take-up survey only.

Background

The department made a commitment to monitor school lunch take-up in the School Food Plan.

The National Centre for Social Research were contracted to carry out the survey and fieldwork took place between 25th April 2014 and 11th July 2014. Responses were received from 822 schools (19% of the issued sample). This was lower than expected. Within the overall sample, the response rate was 22% for primary schools, 27% for special schools and 14% for secondary schools. Feedback from schools indicated they were unable to provide data because the information was held in different places (either on different systems within the school or split between the school, the catering company and/or the cashless provider).

Q&A:

What does this data actually show?

This data shows the average take-up figure of both free and paid school meals for primary and special schools during the 2013/14 financial year.

Why is the school meal take-up so low, only 42.6%? Is it because no one wants to eat the food?

Since this survey was carried out, we introduced free school meals for all infant children from September 2014. We expect school meal take-up in primary schools to increase in 2014-15 as a result. The latest census data reported take-up of school lunches at just under 85%² for infant pupils. This shows that take-up has doubled since the introduction of Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM).

What has the government done to increase take-up?

- We introduced Universal Infant Free School Meals in September 2014 for all children in reception, year 1, and year 2 – this has resulted in around 1.4m more infant pupils eating a free nutritious meal every day at school.

Why was the response rate so low?

Feedback from school staff indicated that this was because much of the information required was frequently held in different places, either on different data systems or split between the school and the catering company. Despite carrying out a feasibility study ahead of the survey in which schools said they could and would produce this data, it proved more complex and time-consuming than they expected.

Why doesn't the report cover secondary schools?

The results are only reported for primary and special schools. Although the survey set out to measure take-up data for secondary schools too, poor response rates and high levels of missing data from secondary schools meant that findings were unreliable.

Wasn't this survey a waste of money then? How much did it cost?

The School Food Plan set out a commitment to measure success and we agreed to collect data to monitor the take-up of school meals. As a result of the poor response rates, we are looking at how to measure take-up most effectively in the future.

Are school meals too expensive?

No. School meals are subsidised and the price parents are charged does not represent the cost of producing the meal. £2.04 is the average price parents pay and not the cost of producing the meal.

Why is FSM take-up lower now (75%) than in Jan 2014 SFR data (85%)?

The data is based on different calculations – the information gathered in the schools census is based on one specified school day in January, whereas the figures for this School Lunch Take-up report were gathered across the school year. School lunch take-up, whether free or paid-for, is typically lower in the summer than in the winter.

Why is take-up lower in the South West?

² Source – census – valid until June 2017

There may be a number of factors to account for varying regional take-up. One of these could be that the cost of meals for parents is highest in the South West, at £2.17 per meal.

SCHOOL KITCHENS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Jackie O'Neil
Updates Requested?	No (Date/name) JO 07/02/2023
Date Cleared	

Drafting notes: These lines may be appropriate, check with Liz Kendall for the latest lines on the Healthy Schools Capital Fund and seek a contribution from ESFA as to any existing funding options open to schools, before issuing.

Individual schools are responsible for their own budgets including their school meals service and any equipment they purchase. The [get help buying for schools service](#) is made up of various resources to help you buy goods and services efficiently and compliantly. This is a free advice and guidance service for [state schools](#). There is no cost to access it and could help to save you money on your existing contracts.

Closure of catering company

We are sorry to hear that [caterer/company name] has had to close and understand how difficult it is for schools to handle their school meals service in the interim.

We generally expect all schools to be routinely offering a hot meal option however, there is no legal requirement to do so. It is much harder to comply with the School Food Standards through the provision of cold food alone. We understand in the circumstances where contractors are unable to deliver hot meals that schools will have to make difficult decisions to provide an alternative meals service and that this may result in offering a cold option for a short period of time. We would expect schools to be offering a hot meals service as soon as possible.

Schools who do not offer a paid-for school meal service still have a duty to provide free meals to eligible pupils. What form that meal takes, and how they make that provision is for schools to decide (i.e. meals could be transported from a nearby school or caterer).

Drafting notes: refer to policy team before using these lines.

SCOTLAND, WALES and NORTHERN IRELAND contacts

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Vanessa Mynard
Updates Requested?	Yes/No (Date/name)
Date Cleared	

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Contact Wales

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SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Heather Lonsdale
Updates Requested?	No (HL 06/03/23)
Date Cleared	

Section updated March 2022 to consolidate Climate, Plastics Waste, and SFVS (plastics)

Top Lines

Schools can voluntarily follow the government buying standards if they so wish. The [GBSF](#) includes lots of good advice around sustainable sourcing.

Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy

BACKGROUND:

Updated 27/04/22

'Sustainability & Climate Change: A strategy for the education & children's services systems', was released on the 21st April 2022: [Sustainability and climate change strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) It is managed by the Sustainability and Climate Change Unit: Contact: Robert.KNIGHT-STRONG@education.gov.uk

The Government's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy was published in April 2022 and sets out a range of commitments around ensuring educational settings drive up their sustainable food practices; with more nutritionally balanced, affordable and sustainable food choices made available, alongside encouraging more activities such as food preparation and cooking and discussing food and food sources.

Following the launch of the draft version of this strategy at COP26, we engaged with a variety of key stakeholders through our user groups, to ensure our commitments are aligned with sector ambitions, including those of the sustainable food sector.

Top Lines for School Food Policy Team

We will:

- Work with education settings and partners to share best practice for delivering and improving uptake of nutritionally balanced, affordable, and sustainable meal choices.
- Pilot a food curriculum and whole-school approach to food. This will include a school governor training programme and encouraging all schools to set out their approach to food on their website, including statements on sustainability.
- Support schools to drive up their sustainable practices, particularly in relation to school food contracts, and their food preparation and practice, with consideration of the ingredients they use and their environmental impact (in line with the school food standards).
- Seek opportunities to rationalise deliveries to education settings, through minimum order values or changes to delivery models. We will encourage settings to consider a rounded approach to providing food, including practical guidance on consolidating food deliveries and sourcing food locally where possible.

Plastics (Single Use)

The Department for Education's procurement guidance strongly urges schools to find reusable alternatives to single use plastics in decisions on procurement; however schools are autonomous and have the freedom to make their own decisions based on individual need and circumstances. More information is available at: ['Get help buying for schools' service – helping schools to buy better](#).

Resources and Waste Strategy (Defra lead)

Drafting note: DO NOT use these lines without seeking approval from Defra before doing so – contributions can be commissioned via: ogd.transfers@defra.gov.uk

Last year the Government published the Resources and Waste Strategy, setting out our plans to reduce, reuse and recycle more plastic than we do now. Our target is to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste throughout the life of the 25 Year Environment Plan, but for the most problematic plastics we are going faster - that is why we have committed to work towards all plastic packaging placed on the UK market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025. (Source: Defra 16/07/19)

The Government recently consulted on reforms to the packaging producer responsibility system to ensure that packaging producers fund the full net cost of managing the packaging they place on the market once it becomes waste. This provides a strong financial incentive for packaging producers to make better, more sustainable decisions at the design stage and during manufacture, and to take greater responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products. (Source: Defra 16/07/19)

Furthermore, in April last year, the Waste and Resources Action Programme and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation launched their world leading UK Plastics Pact, with support from the Government, and all the major supermarkets have signed up to it. The Pact brings these organisations together with four key targets for 2025 that aim to reduce the amount of plastic waste generated. This includes action to eliminate problematic or

unnecessary single use plastic packaging items. Our proposed reforms will support supermarkets in achieving those targets. (Source: Defra 16/07/19)

School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (relating to plastics)

Drafting note: this section relates specifically to SFVS's relationship with plastics. Please see SFVS section for full context: [SCHOOL FRUIT AND VEGETABLES SCHEME](#)

The Schools Fruit and Vegetable Scheme aims to provide a portion of fruit and vegetable produce to each pupil in Key Stage 1 on every school day of the year, as well as to encourage the regular consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy lifestyle as children grow up. As part of this aim, it is important that the scheme provides produce which is of a high quality and is good for children to eat. (Source: DHSC 26/06/19)

Historically, produce has been provided to schools in plastic bags in order to protect it in transit. The more produce is handled the more it becomes damaged, and putting the products in bags of ten helps to limit some of the handling that occurs. It also has the benefit of making it easy for schools to distribute to children. (Source: DHSC 26/06/19)

However, the DHSC recognise that schools have been instructed by the Education Secretary to limit their use of single use plastics, for the benefit of the environment. Therefore, DHSC have instructed the supplier of the Schools Fruit and Vegetable Scheme to work with their supply base on future packaging solutions which ensure that produce is delivered to schools in good condition whilst also acknowledging the instruction schools have been given to reduce their use of single use plastics. (Source: DHSC 26/06/19)

The SFVS supplier is looking into alternative packaging options – such as cardboard boxes or reusable plastic trays – to establish what could be used to maintain product quality through the supply chain from source to pupil. The supplier has also undertaken a trial with a school in Dorchester where produce was delivered in trays, to determine what the impact on the management of the SFVS produce within the school would be. This research and trial will inform the new framework the SFVS supplier will use to source and distribute produce to schools. (Source: DHSC 26/06/19)

Wastage (Food)

Drafting note: for single use plastics refer to Plastics – single use section, above.

Drafting note: contributions can be sought from FSA who lead on food wastage (contacts updated Feb 2018)

This government is committed to tackling waste. The Waste Strategy published in December 2018 sets out a new approach to address food waste from farm to fork which includes tackling food waste in schools. Source: Defra July 2019

In December 2018, the Government launched its Resources and Waste Strategy which sets out a new approach to address food waste from farm to fork. Within the food waste

chapter, the Government committed to tackling food waste in schools. Through the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) guidance will be developed and widely promoted. **Source: Defra July 2019**

Food Waste Team

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Draft Letter on Food Wastage

Drafting note: tailor appropriately

I understand xx concerns about food provided by the school being wasted if it is not eaten by pupils, and I believe that schools should do all they can to keep food wastage to a minimum.

There is no rule against schools giving left-over food to those who are less well off in the local community. There are, however, a number of reasons why this might not be possible. For example, schools may not have sufficient staff or equipment to pack up the food and take it elsewhere. Schools would also need to ensure that food safety and hygiene requirements were complied with, and storing, transporting and re-heating left-over food may mean that it can no longer be guaranteed safe to eat.

Schools are responsible for their day-to-day running including their school meals service. This includes buying the food they use and determining portion sizes. We expect schools to work closely with their caterer(s) to make sure that all pupils can choose a healthy and balanced meal, with as little waste as possible.

Key contacts

Agriculture emissions - Defra – contribution address is: ogd.transfers@defra.gov.uk

Climate change – contact BEIS at: BEIS Carbon Budgets team:

carbonbudgets@beis.gov.uk; and ICCCorrespondence@beis.gov.uk

Other Relevant Content

[School Food Standards: Meat, vegetarianism, and veganism](#)

Commented [LH3]: Needs review of content after amalgamating 'climate' content into new subject heading.

[Milk: Plant based drinks](#)
[School Food Plan: School Gardens](#)
[RELIGIOUS/CULTURAL PROVISION / EVENTS](#)

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT – TEACHERS, SCHOOL COOKS, HEADTEACHERS, AND GOVERNORS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed-Killick
Updates Requested?	No (16/02/23 Lianna Reed-Killick)
Date Cleared	30/09/22

Headteacher training

Updated 30/09/22

Headteachers have a vital role in setting the strategy for all aspects of their school. School food is one such area where they need to know what good looks like and to ensure their school is striving for that. We encourage schools to have a whole school approach to their school food policies and provide a number of resources for schools on gov.uk including our headteacher checklist: [School food standards: resources for schools](#) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Teacher Training

The School Food Plan has brought together a number of organisations to produce a new resource to help all school staff to understand the value of a whole-school food culture. The resource is available at the following link:
<http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/actions/teacher-training/>

Commented [LH4]: Keep under review pending updates to the SFP. 25/07/22

Catering workforce

LACA, in consultation with a range of public and private sector organisations, has developed a set of voluntary professional workforce standards for a number of key school catering roles. The professional standards are available at <https://laca.co.uk/school-workforce-development>.

Governor Training

School Governors have a responsibility to ensure compliance and should appropriately challenge the headteacher and the senior leadership team to ensure the school is meeting its obligations. To support this, we are investing up to £200,000 to pilot new training for school governors on a whole school approach to food.

BRIEFING NOTE: content correct as of 16 February 2022, according to announcements made in the LUWP ([Levelling Up the United Kingdom - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/levelling-up)).

See also [GENERAL OVERVIEW](#), [Cookery School/School Cooking Revolution](#), [#Food Standards Agency \(FSA\) Pilot](#), [#Compliance#Evaluation of the Standards](#), [#Website Reporting](#), [#MONITORING](#)

UNHEALTHY FOODS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed-Killick
Updates Requested?	Yes (16/02/2022- form sent to Heather)
Date Cleared	21/03/23

DRAFT LETTER

Updated 21/03/23

It is important that children eat nutritious, tasty food at school to help their growth and development, so that they develop healthy eating habits and as fuel for learning.

Since 2007 the majority of schools in England including all maintained schools have been required to meet compulsory School Food Standards. These standards aim to ensure that the food served in schools provides a significant proportion of the energy and nutrients needed by children during the school day.

The School Food Standards permit, but restrict, the serving of foods such as chips, processed meats and the other such foods. For example the standards stipulate that [Drafting note: add appropriate note to reflect correspondent's complaint e.g. no more than two portions of food that has been deep-fried, batter-coated, or breadcrumb-coated can be provided each week and that meat or poultry products (manufactured or homemade, and meeting the legal requirements) can be provided no more than once each week in primary schools and twice each week in secondary schools and that desserts, cakes and biscuits are allowed only at lunchtime and must not contain any confectionery.] They also ensure the right foods are available for children every day, for example one or more portions of vegetables or salad as an accompaniment and one or more portions of fruit must be provided every day and at least three different fruits and three different vegetables each week.

Parents have an important role to play in monitoring the quality of their children's school meals. It is important that all parental complaints follow the school's formal complaint procedure. I would therefore suggest that you put your concerns formally in writing to the headteacher or Chair of Governors if the complaint is about the headteacher.

VENDING MACHINES/SNACKS

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Lianna Reed-Killick
Updates Requested?	No (16/02/2023 Lianna)
Date Cleared	

TOP LINES

The government encourages all schools to promote healthy eating and provide healthy, tasty and nutritious food and drink. Compliance with the [School Food Standards](#) is mandatory for all maintained schools including academies and free schools.

The School Food Standards for England set the number of portions of fruit and vegetables that must be served, and the frequency oily fish, meat products, starchy food cooked in oil or fat and deep-fried foods can be served, both at lunchtime and other times of the school day. They ban crisps, confectionery and high-sugar drinks.

Food and drink provided in vending machines must meet the statutory School Food Standards. It is down to individual schools to decide whether or not to use vending machines, which can be used to sell healthy food and can be useful to schools during busy lunch periods and for events which take place after the end of the school day.

Drafting note: it may help to refer to the Change4Life healthier snacks campaign, listed under PHE in this brief.

Background

Vending machines have never been banned from schools. Where appropriate, school governing boards are responsible for meeting the School Food Standards and need to consider whether the content of their vending machines complies with the standards. Over recent years, a number of food and drink manufacturers have developed products which comply with the standards and which can be provided in vending machines

For some schools, the use of vending machines can help them cope with busy lunchtimes, by providing an alternative food outlet for pupils to use instead of queuing in the school dining hall. Many schools are used by the community after school hours, with vending intended for use after school only, where these machines contain confectionery and crisps: schools should ensure the machine is not in operation during school hours.

WEBSITE

Accountable	Vanessa Mynard
Responsible (for co-ordinating lines)	Heather Lonsdale
Updates Requested?	No: HL 06/03/23
Date Cleared	

The school food plan website, which can be found at: www.schoolfoodplan.com, draws together best practice and organisations that can support schools and the sector. The section of the website that brings together examples of what works well from schools, individuals and organisations (<http://whatworkswell.schoolfoodplan.com/>) may be of use to you.

Links

www.schoolfoodplan.com

What works well: <http://whatworkswell.schoolfoodplan.com/>

School food plan: [Department for Education](#)

CORE BRIEF EDIT LOG

Periodically the Core Brief will be reviewed and updated if necessary. Before making any updates, the current version should first be archived. The last version's edit log can then be cleared out, and any new edits recorded below.

Date enacted	Edited by	Approved by	Section	Sub Section	Change (add /remove/amend)
24/01/2023	JO	VM	SFS	Oily Fish	Added in relation to tuna fish not being seen as an oily fish by NHS.
09/02/2023	JO	VM	Allergies	All FSA lines	Hypersensitivity team, FSA provided up to date lines and resources links (just about the whole section has been redrafted).
20/03/23	HL	VM	Biometric Recognition		Change wording on complaints to make more consistent with rest of brief
20/03/23	HL	VM	Childhood Obesity Plan	Top Lines	Added note on HFSS advertising restrictions delay
20/03/23	HL	VM	Childhood Obesity Plan	Facts and Figures	Updated to reflect latest findings from 21/22
20/03/23	HL	VM	Food Pricing	Top Lines	Added an 'if pushed' line on cost of living
21/03/23	HL	VM	Monitoring	Background	Entirely replace section with new content from Accountability and Inspections Team
21/03/23	HL	VM	Public Health England		Update section title to 'Office for Health Inequalities and Disparities', and update contact details.
21/03/23	HL	VM	School Food Standards	School Food Other than Lunch	Updates to definition of school trips.

21/03/23	HL	VM	School Food Standards	Update (sugar/fibre) of the standards	Softening of the lines to reflect current position.
21/03/23	HL	VM	School Food Standards	Meat vegetarianism and Veganism > Drafting note: Further lines if needed	Minor updates after routine review by DHSC
21/03/23	HL	VM	School Food standards	Website Reporting	Update sentence to replace 'statement' with 'policy'
21/03/23	HL	VM	General Overview		Updated reference to website reporting.
21/03/23	HL	VM	Small Schools		REMOVE ENTIRE SECTION
21/03/23	HL	VM	Unhealthy Foods	Draft Letter	Update to make lines consistent the complaint section