New Seaham Academy

Packed Lunch / Healthy Snack Policy 2026

School Food – Policy for Packed Lunches (brought in from home)

Introduction

To grow and stay healthy, children need to eat a nutritionally well-balanced diet. Schools are an influential setting and can contribute significantly to improving the health and wellbeing of pupils.

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

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

Aim

To ensure that packed lunches (brought in from home) reflect the healthy eating curriculum at New Seaham Academy.

Rationale:

- Schools are required to positively promote the health and well being of its pupils. Work around healthy eating is a high priority of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda.

- The content of lunchboxes needs to reflect our healthy lifestyle ethos and meet the requirements of the food based standards for school meals.

- The contents of lunchboxes in some schools can be extremely unhealthy; recent audits of lunchboxes have shown that in the main they contain foods with high levels of fat, sugar and salt, and very few fruit and vegetables.

- To encourage healthy eating habits from an early age and improve the overall nutrition of pupils.

- The short term effects of unhealthy packed lunches and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration and behavioural problems which may have an impact on a child's learning.

- The longer term effects of a poor diet in childhood can be an increased risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease and diabetes in adulthood.

Objectives

- To improve the nutritional quality of packed lunches in schools and the eating habits of children at lunchtimes

- To develop an awareness in pupils, parents, staff and the wider community that the school takes a pro-active approach to promoting healthy eating.

- To encourage healthy eating habits in childhood that can influence health and well being in later life.

- To ensure that food brought into school (packed lunches) reflects and meets the new food standards for School Food (2006).

Implementation

This packed lunch policy fits within a wider context of promoting a whole school approach to food and healthy eating.

Children's packed lunches should be based on the 'Eatwell Plate' model which shows items the 5 main food groups; (Food Standards Agency 2007).

Bread, Rice, Potatoes, Pasta

These starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Packed lunches should include 2 or more portions.

Fruit and Vegetables

These foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Lunches should include at least 1 piece of fruit and 1 portion of vegetables / salad, or more.

Milk and Dairy foods

These foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Lunches should include at least 1 portion of dairy produce e.g. cheese, yoghurt

Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans

These foods provide protein for growth. Packed lunches should include 1 portion of these foods

Foods and drinks high in fat and / or sugar

It is important not to fill up on too many foods that are high in fat and / or sugar at the expense of other more nutritious foods. Limiting high fat and sugar foods will help protect young people from becoming overweight as well as helping prevent tooth decay, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. This is why sweets, chocolate, crisps, some cereal bars, fruit bars, toffee/salted popcorn, squash and fizzy drinks are no longer available in schools. Please support your school by not including these items in a packed lunch or healthy snack.

Drinks

Any drinks provided in lunch boxes should only include either plain water, milk (semi-skimmed), unsweetened fresh fruit juice, diluted fresh fruit juice, fruit or dairy based smoothies.

Waste and Disposal

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

Packed Lunch Containers

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

Storage of Packed Lunches

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

Dining Facilities for Pupils Bringing Packed Lunch

Legally, the school has to provide an appropriate area where pupils who chose to bring packed lunches can eat.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The school will continue to monitor packed lunch and healthy snack provision and report findings to parents and Trustees – where there may be concerns over a child's food/nutrition intake and / or content of packed lunches, this will be dealt with appropriately.

Allergies

We encourage parents not to include nut or sesame products in packed lunches or healthy snacks due to allergies. Nuts – as well as other items – may be prohibited altogether if we are made aware of a serious allergy.

OfSTED are required to report on how the school promotes the personal development and wellbeing of all pupils – this may include food provision including packed lunches brought into school.

The Local Authority will work with the school to review packed lunch provision and will provide advice and support to members of the school community.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the schools agreed policy review process. In addition, any major legislative or governmental changes regarding school food may lead to this policy being amended.

Endorsement

The Board of Trustees and school staff fully endorse this policy for implementation.

Reviewed: September 2026

Next review date: September 2027