

# Education Leeds Packed lunch policy guidance





# Foreword

We are delighted to write the foreword to this important document which forms a key component of the Leeds school meals strategy to transform school food and improve the life choices of our children and young people. This is a vital element where schools and the local authority can respond to the school food legislation and seize a window of opportunity by developing a supportive policy to address obesity, wellbeing and healthy lifestyle.

It is important that we recognise our role in expanding the opportunities available so that people make the right choices for themselves and their families. We have a responsibility to make sure that people have clear and effective information about food and to ensure that our policies support children and young people in their efforts to maintain healthy lives.

Our schools recognise their role as gatekeepers and guardians and their responsibilities for children's health and wellbeing outcomes which are vital to their long-term success. This packed lunch policy aims to ensure all our children have access to healthier food.

This policy guidance aims to demonstrate a duty of care and in doing so create a dialogue on health ensuring that schools adopt a 'whole-school approach' to help families begin to make small changes towards ensuring that packed lunches alongside school meals are aligned to the new school food standards.

In the long-term it aims to promote parity of school food provision; increase school meal uptake; improve health, attainment and economic outcomes; and establish long-lasting change by connecting and supporting families are positive changes in eating habits by making sure they are reflected in the home.

Discussions with our families and young people have found that they would welcome school policies that brought packed lunches in line with the new standards, to help them provide their child with a balanced healthy diet, to support their health and to improve their concentration to meet their fullest potential in life.

The supporting resource kit includes information gathered from our schools which identifies good practice and has been informed by national resources. It aims to help schools and families to recognise the diversity of our children's needs.

We hope that you find the document useful and supportive in your efforts to improve school food. As always we would welcome your comments, feedback and suggestions for improving this vital area of our work.

*Rosemary K Archer*

**Rosemary Archer**  
Director of children's services

*Chris*

**Chris Edwards**  
Chief executive — Education Leeds





« If we are to achieve things never before accomplished, we must employ methods never before attempted. »

**Francis Bacon, 1618**





# Introduction

Welcome to our packed lunch policy which is part of the Leeds school meals strategy, working to transform school food in partnership. We have written this guidance in response to the introduction of national school food standards that all schools must follow. The aim of the packed lunch policy guidance is to encourage all our schools to achieve the same standards for packed lunch choices for all their children and young people.

Schools and their governing bodies have a key role to play in making sure the whole school has a healthy eating culture, and we hope to inform them through this policy. The guidance identifies key areas for schools to be aware of, and offers a range of guiding principles to think about when developing a policy.

The content is taken from the national School Food Trust Policy packed lunch guidance (Appendix 1). An amended version of this guidance specifically to meet the needs of Leeds can be found in Appendix 2. This should be used by schools to decide and agree their own individual packed lunch policy (Appendix 3).

To help schools, this policy guidance is also supported by a toolkit that has suggestions for implementation, taken from national resources and local pilot projects responding to each guiding principle set out in this document. It offers practical guidance, tips and solutions to help the development and implementation of policy for both the short and long-term, to make sure every school has a sustainable policy which works towards the whole-school healthy ethos.

Many Leeds schools have already put in place successful packed lunch policies. We hope that schools and our stakeholders will find our policy guidance and resources helpful in promoting their healthy ethos.

We know that foods eaten at home are equally as important to help children achieve a healthy balanced diet, as illustrated in the 'eatwell plate' (Appendix 4). A summary of the rationale for a local authority endorsed policy is available in Appendix 5 and a full report and the free resource kit is available to all schools and stakeholders at [www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals)



« Healthy packed lunches are the best,  
Healthy packed lunches beat the rest,  
To eat healthy,  
You don't have to be wealthy,  
Eat a balanced diet!  
TADA! »  
Leeds pupil





# Guiding principles

## Consultation and participation

The whole school community and local partnerships should be involved and engaged with developing a packed lunch policy.

## Monitoring

Each school should be responsible for monitoring packed lunches. Good practice examples in the toolkit can help determine how this is put into place.

## Gradual changes

Schools should introduce changes slowly and in agreement with the local partnership and whole school community, with a final goal of developing a school policy which fits in with national standards.

Alternatively, schools can introduce changes in stages, such as promoting water only, or no confectionery items.

## School clusters

Extended school clusters may wish to agree a policy in partnership so that all schools and pupils within the cluster are treated the same.

## Impact assessment

Schools should assess the impact of their policy during the early planning stages to help them manage risk and identify solutions, such as seating arrangements, a gate policy, or lunchtime staff provision.

## Whole school food policy

Schools should review all of their current school food policies at the same time as developing the new policy. This will avoid confusing messages and encourages a whole-school food ethos.

## Celebration days and events

Food standards restrictions do not apply to food served on celebration days and for special events. Schools should try to include appropriate foods where possible to avoid giving out confusing messages.

## Marketing and communication

Schools can look to promote their packed lunch policy by celebrating the whole-school food policy in school, such as through the prospectus, web portal, parent evenings and transition days. This will help to make sure parents, carers and pupils are aware of the policy. An ideal time to launch new policies is at the start of term, advising families before the end of the previous term so that they are prepared for the change.

## Evaluation

Collecting data and monitoring the impact of your policy will allow you to see and make improvements. This could be done gradually, it also provides evidence of impact assessment and evaluation for your healthy schools assessment criteria.

## Curriculum links

The policy guidance and the toolkit can be used within the curriculum to teach health and wellbeing, and should link to the government's 'eatwell plate' [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk)

## Project planning

Schools should include the project in the School Improvement Plan, and consider appointing someone to lead on the project to make sure their project planning and implementation is successful. The local authority policy rationale paper provides additional background to inform planning and is available at [www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals)

## Cultural diversity

Schools should make sure they include foods that meet the cultural needs of all their children and young people.

## Affordability

Schools should look at providing support for families who choose packed lunches as the affordable option.

## Special diets

The standards do not apply to children with clinically diagnosed special dietary requirements. Parents whose children have clinical conditions should talk to their dietician for advice.

## Food safety and hygiene

Consider food safety, storage and high-risk foods (especially during the warmer months). Cooler bags and boxes should be used if a refrigerator is not available for storage.

## Governors

Governors have a role to play in school food. A nominated governor in each school has legal responsibility to make sure standards are met. The Leeds packed lunch policy is not mandatory, although it will contribute towards your Every Child Matters targets, see [www.leedsinitiative.org](http://www.leedsinitiative.org)

For more information please refer to the national governors' association: food policy in schools document available at [www.nga.org.uk](http://www.nga.org.uk)

## Networking — sharing good practice

Schools are encouraged to share their good practice via the Leeds school meals website, which offers opportunities for pupils to download ICT curriculum activities, see [www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals)

## School Food Standards

The School Food Standards apply to all school food and drinks served from 8am to 6pm, for both primary and secondary schools (excluding early years). Guidance and detailed information on all the school food legislation can be found on the School Food Trust web portal at [www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk](http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk)

## Family support

Families should be supported with a range of helpful, cultural appropriate, affordable practical tips and solutions. This information goes beyond the child's school lunch and can influence other family members.

## School and family contract

Schools may look at setting up an agreement with their parents which details the range of key commitments and reassurances between school and families about how this will be managed.



◀◀ Look after yourself.  
Understand what you are eating.  
Nutrition is important.  
Carbohydrates too.  
Healthy people do better.  
Will it be you? ▶▶

**Leeds pupil**






## Appendix I — School Food Trust at a glance — Pack lunch policy

### For a balanced packed lunch select these healthier foods and drinks:

	<b>Fruit and Vegetables</b>	Include at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables or salad every day.	✓
	<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	Meat, fish or another source of non-dairy protein should be included every day. Non-dairy sources of protein include lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus, peanut butter† and falafel.	✓
	<b>Oily Fish</b>	Including oily fish, such as salmon, at least once every three weeks.	✓
	<b>Starchy Food</b>	A starchy food such as any type of bread or pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes or other cereals, should be included every day.	✓
	<b>Milk and Dairy Food</b>	Include a dairy food such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard every day.	✓
	<b>Drinking Water</b>	Free, fresh drinking water should be available at all times.	✓
	<b>Healthier Drinks</b>	Including only water, still or sparkling, fruit juice, semi-skimmed milk, yoghurt or milk drinks and smoothies.	✓

### Avoid including these foods in packed lunches:

	<b>Snacks</b>	Snacks such as crisps should not be included. Instead, include nuts†, seeds, vegetables and fruit (with no added salt, sugar or fat). Savoury crackers or breadsticks served with fruit, vegetables or dairy food are also a good choice.	✗
	<b>Confectionery</b>	Confectionery such as chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits and sweets should not be included. Cakes and biscuits are allowed but encourage your child to eat these only as part of a balanced meal.	✗
	<b>Meat Products</b>	Meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies, corned meat and sausages/chipolatas should be included only occasionally.	✗


†Be aware of nut allergies. Refer to the school policy on nuts or visit [www.allergyinschools.co.uk](http://www.allergyinschools.co.uk) for more information

## Appendix 2 — Guiding principles for Leeds at a glance — Packed lunch policy

### For a balanced packed lunch select these healthier foods and drinks:

	<b>Fruit and Vegetables</b>	Try to include one a day. Any fruit and vegetables can be included, please see the 5 A DAY resources at <a href="http://www.5aday.nhs.uk">www.5aday.nhs.uk</a>	✓
	<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	SFT recommend limiting corned meat/beef, Leeds consider this option a valuable and affordable source of iron.	✓
	<b>Oily Fish</b>	The canning process of tuna destroys omega 3 and 6 but remains an excellent source of protein.	✓
	<b>Starchy Food</b>	All varieties of bread are acceptable.	✓
	<b>Milk and Dairy Food</b>	Milk and dairy products ideally should be stored in a refrigerator or cooler bags/boxes.	✓
	<b>Drinking Water</b>	All schools should provide free fresh drinking water to meet the new standards.	✓
	<b>Healthier Drinks</b>	Schools may choose to implement a 'water only' policy. All fizzy drinks plus sugar free and diet should not be included.	✓

### Avoid including these foods in packed lunches:

	<b>Snacks</b>	Leeds City Council 'Nut Policy' is for school meals, schools may adhere to this policy or decide locally. See more information on <a href="http://www.allergyschools.co.uk">www.allergyschools.co.uk</a>	
	<b>Confectionery</b>	To help inform local agreement, additional guidance and definitions are available at <a href="http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk">www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk</a>	
	<b>Meat Products</b>	Corned meat/beef should not be limited as it is a rich source of iron.	

†Be aware of nut allergies. Refer to the school policy on nuts or visit [www.allergyinschools.co.uk](http://www.allergyinschools.co.uk) for more information

## Appendix 3 — School at a glance — Packed lunch policy

**Enter school name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**For a balanced packed lunch select these healthier foods and drinks:**

	<b>Fruit and Vegetables</b>	✓
	<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	✓
	<b>Oily Fish</b>	✓
	<b>Starchy Food</b>	✓
	<b>Milk and Dairy Food</b>	✓
	<b>Drinking Water</b>	✓
	<b>Healthier Drinks</b>	✓

**Avoid including these foods in packed lunches:**

	<b>Snacks</b>	
	<b>Confectionery</b>	
	<b>Meat Products</b>	

Appendix 4 — illustrates how national and local packed lunch guidance policy fits into the 'eatwell plate' model and the whole diet

## The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



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**Fruit and vegetables**  
Any fruit and vegetables can be included, try to include at least one portion a day.

**Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta**  
All varieties of starchy foods are acceptable, try to include wholegrain when possible.

**Milk and dairy foods**  
Try to include dairy food every day.

**Meat, fish, eggs, beans**  
Either meat, fish, eggs or another source of non-dairy protein should be included every day.

**Foods high in fat and/or sugar**  
Small amounts of food high in fat and/or sugar can be eaten in a balanced diet, but should not be included in packed lunches. We ask that they are eaten outside school.

**Drinks high in fat and/or sugar**  
Schools may choose to implement a 'water only' policy. To meet standards fresh drinking water should be available at all times and all fizzy drinks including sugar-free and diet should be barred.

## Appendix 5 — Summary of rationale and public consultation

In September 2006, the government introduced mandatory school meal standards to be phased into all local authority schools by 2009 (DFES [now DCSF], 2005). In response, Education Leeds launched its School Meals Strategy (2006) to transform school food and increase school meal uptake. In January 2008, the Department of Health (DH) launched its cross-government strategy 'Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives', setting out how to promote a culture of healthy eating. It stated that all schools, in consultation, are expected to develop healthy packed lunch policies as part of whole school food policy, so that those not yet taking up school lunches are also eating healthily (DH, 2008).

Presently, it is estimated that 110,332 pupils in Leeds have the opportunity to take a school meal, of which 45 per cent choose a packed lunch. Currently, packed lunches provided by parents are not regulated and there are no mechanisms for establishing whether packed lunches meet the nutritional standards required for school meals (HM Treasury, 2008). This omission is important as some families from the lower socio-economic classes who provide a packed lunch, are in effect excluded from a major national legislation and a healthier future, thereby widening the inequalities gap.

Education Leeds recognises our role in expanding the opportunities available, people have to make the right choices for themselves and their families; in making sure that people have clear and effective information about food and ensuring that its policies support people in their efforts to maintain healthy lives. The Leeds school meals strategic partnership advocate a local authority endorsed packed lunch policy guidance that responds to the school food legislation and seizes the 'window of opportunity' to develop a supportive policy for our schools and families.

In response, the Leeds school meals strategic partnership made the decision to conduct a city-wide public consultation to assess the need for a local authority endorsed packed lunch guidance policy, to be implemented at the discretion of individual school governing bodies. The decision was based on the premise that in

the short-term the policy (and supporting resource toolkit) would aim to:

- Promote equality, diversity and cohesion;
- Provide an opportunity to develop relationships with pupils and parents;
- Act as a catalyst for schools to review their whole school food policy;
- Help families make informed, healthier and affordable choices;
- Improve quality of food brought from home; and
- Promote synergy across the spectrum of local stakeholders and their health promotion strategies aimed at supporting the whole family.

In the long-term it aims to promote parity of school food provision; increase school meal uptake; improve health, attainment and economic outcomes; and establish long-lasting change by connecting and supporting with families where a positive change in eating habits will be reflected in the home.

Education Leeds, school meals team conducted an extensive literature review to inform the rationale for the advocated policy. The literature explored and identified the problem and its significance to schools; how it manifests itself and examined factors contributing to its existence. It considered issues such as social acceptability, cost, benefits and resources required to take the policy forward; and assessed the benefits and the cost associated with implementing the policy including the impact on the target community; ethical considerations; economic costs and efficiency of the proposed intervention.

Findings from the public consultation suggested that there is a significant level of support, and a growing acceptance of responsibility from schools, parents and pupils to improve children's diets and ensure parity of provision of food eaten in schools.

Education Leeds ensures its policies support families and values diversity. To this end, a bespoke resource toolkit has been developed in partnership with Leeds health and well-being programme. The toolkit will be made available to all stakeholders free insert and is downloadable from the Leeds school meals website [www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals). The content responds to

issues and concerns identified by the public consultation; utilises national resources; and is informed by three local pilots conducted in our inner city primary and secondary schools. It includes a simple three step implementation guide aligned to the national standards; local guiding principles, offering a range of solutions, tips and guidance including:

- consultation and participation techniques;
- evaluation guides;
- validated surveys;
- games and activities;
- health and safety guidance;
- monitoring tools and techniques;
- affordable menus;
- cultural menus;
- curriculum support (lesson plans); and
- teaching material aligned to the national healthy eating model 'eatwell' plate (FSA, 2007).

The policy aims to inform governing bodies who have a key role to play to ensure a healthy eating culture is fostered throughout their school and forms part of its healthy school ethos.

"The aim of the policy is not to promote expensive foods or demand wholegrain bread compared to white bread. Instead it aims to offer a pragmatic approach to promote healthier packed lunches aligned to the national school meal standards that restrict access to foods high in fat sugar and salt in schools. The packed lunch policy guidance is not mandatory, however, should schools informed by a democratic process decide to implement a policy, and this can be achieved through incremental approach towards achieving parity of quality and provision. This policy supports the Leeds School Meal Strategy that aims to transform school food and drink ensuring equal access to great food, consumed in a happy environment that promotes positive social interaction and delivered through the whole school approach".

– Leeds school meals strategic partnership

For the full report (literature review and consultation findings) go to [www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolmeals)

**Note** – parent defined as those with legal responsibility to the child.

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« You should stay healthy  
In your packed lunch  
No need to be wealthy  
So try our Munch Bunch  
MUNCH BUNCH  
You'll need this for your  
School pack lunch because the  
Healthy lunch policy is coming near you »  
Leeds pupil



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