

HYLTON CASTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

PACKED LUNCH POLICY

Link governors: Caroline Comer and Julie Clark

Policy written by: Emma Olsen

Date ratified by governors: March 2026

Date of next review: March 2028 or sooner if appropriate



Introduction

This policy reflects children's and parents' preferences while aligning with current UK national guidance for primary-aged children.

It takes account of:

- The statutory **School Food Standards** set by the Department for Education
- Guidance from the NHS including the Eatwell Guide and Better Health – Healthier Families campaign
- Recommendations from the School Food Plan
- Expectations within the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework regarding personal development, behaviour and welfare
- Although packed lunches are not required to meet the School Food Standards by law, this school expects packed lunches to reflect the same healthy principles as school meals.

Aims

- To ensure that all packed lunches brought from home and consumed in school (or on school trips) provide healthy, balanced and nutritious food in line with national guidance for primary school children.
- To support children in developing lifelong healthy eating habits.
- To contribute positively to pupils' physical health, mental wellbeing, behaviour and concentration.
- To support the school's commitment to a whole-school approach to healthy living.
- To contribute positively to school self-evaluation and inspection processes.

How and Why the Policy Was Formulated

The Headteacher and Governing Body are committed to ensuring that all pupils receive a healthy and nutritious diet at lunchtime.

In reviewing this policy, we have:

- Considered current national guidance for primary-aged children.
- Reflected on statutory School Food Standards.
- Consulted pupils and parents to ensure the policy is realistic, supportive and inclusive.
- The resulting feedback has been incorporated into this updated policy.

Where and To Whom the Policy Applies

This policy applies:

- To all pupils and parents providing packed lunches for consumption in school or on school trips during normal school hours.
- To all members of staff involved in promoting healthy eating and supervising lunchtime arrangements.

Parental Responsibilities

- Diagnosed medical and dietary needs will be given full and appropriate consideration.
- School meals are the preferred option, as they meet statutory School Food Standards.
- Any parent wishing their child to have a packed lunch MUST arrange an appointment with Miss Clark to discuss their child's needs. Each request will be considered individually.
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Due Consideration Prior to Commencing Packed Lunch

- Parents are encouraged to support their child in selecting suitable options from the school meal menu.
- If a child is not eating school meals, staff may suggest keeping a short food diary (3 weeks) to monitor intake and preferences.
- If this proves unsuccessful, the option of a packed lunch will be discussed.
- Parents must read this policy and sign the Packed Lunch Agreement before starting packed lunches.
- By signing, parents agree to provide a packed lunch that reflects current healthy eating guidance and contributes to a balanced daily diet.

It remains the parent's responsibility to ensure that their child receives a balanced and nutritious lunch.

Staff may encourage pupils to eat their food, but they cannot force children to finish items provided.

Staff Responsibilities

- Promote healthy eating through Science, PSHE and SMSC education.
- Encourage adherence to national and school healthy eating guidance.
- Reward healthy choices positively (e.g. stickers, certificates, recognition).
- Provide sufficient time for children to eat comfortably.
- Contact parents if the packed lunch policy is not being followed.

Staff cannot dictate exact food items but may raise concerns where lunches consistently conflict with national guidance.

The Policy

The school will:

- Provide suitable dining facilities for pupils bringing packed lunches.
- Ensure free, fresh drinking water is always available.
- Promote a calm and pleasant dining environment.
- Work in partnership with parents to ensure packed lunches reflect healthy standards.
- As fridge space is not available, pupils should bring food in insulated containers with ice packs where appropriate.

What Should Be Included in a Packed Lunch

Packed lunches should reflect the balance recommended in the NHS Eatwell Guide and School Food Standards.

Each packed lunch should include:

✓ Fruit and Vegetables

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables every day.

✓ Starchy Food (Wholegrain Preferred)

- Bread, wraps, pitta, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles or potatoes.
- Wholegrain options are encouraged where possible.

✓ Protein

- Meat, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, chickpeas, hummus, falafel or other non-dairy protein.
- Oily fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel) is encouraged at least once every three weeks.

✓ Dairy or Alternative

- Milk, cheese, yoghurt or fortified dairy alternatives.

✓ Drinks

In line with School Food Standards, only the following are permitted:

- Water (still or sparkling)
- Semi-skimmed or skimmed milk
- Unsweetened dairy alternatives
- Fruit juice (maximum 150ml per day)
- Unsweetened yoghurt or milk drinks
- Sugary drinks, energy drinks and fizzy drinks are not permitted.

Foods That Should Not Be Included

In line with national guidance to reduce sugar, salt and saturated fat:

The following should not be included:

- Sweets (including chocolate bars and boiled sweets)
- Fizzy drinks or energy drinks
- Confectionery
- Chewing gum

The following should be limited:

- Crisps and savoury snacks (maximum twice per week, baked or lower salt varieties preferred)
- Cakes and biscuits (maximum twice per week and as part of a balanced meal, not in addition to other high-sugar items)
- Processed meat products such as sausage rolls, pies, corned meat and sausages (occasional basis only)

Parents are encouraged to reduce foods high in free sugars in line with NHS recommendations.

Hot Food

We recommend children bringing a thermal flask with cutlery to consume hot food from home.

Examples of what they could bring are: pasta, rice, soup, noodles and beans and sausages.

Special Diets and Allergies

- Nuts and nut-containing products must not be included due to allergy risks.

- Parents must inform the school immediately of any diagnosed allergy.
- Pupils are not permitted to swap food items.
- Where pupils require special diets (medical, cultural, religious), flexibility will be applied while maintaining healthy principles wherever possible.

What Happens if the Policy Is Not Followed?

- Sweets found at lunchtime will be returned to the lunchbox and a reminder letter sent to parents.
- Sweets found at other times of the school day may be confiscated in line with behaviour policy.
- No child will be made to feel embarrassed or singled out.
- Food will not be removed from a child unless it poses a safety risk.
- Persistent non-compliance will result in communication with parents to agree supportive steps forward.
- Our approach is supportive, not punitive.

APPENDIX I

Parental Agreement – Packed Lunch Policy

Dear Parent/Carer,

Packed Lunches at Hylton Castle Primary School

If your child brings a packed lunch to school, we ask that it follows our healthy packed lunch guidelines. These expectations are designed to promote children's health, wellbeing and positive eating habits.

If the packed lunch guidelines are not followed, the school may contact you to discuss alternative lunchtime arrangements.

Packed lunches must not include:

- Sweets or confectionery of any kind
- Fizzy drinks (including those in bottles or flasks)

The following items should only be included occasionally as part of a balanced diet:

- Crisps or similar savoury snacks
- Chocolate-coated biscuits

Fresh drinking water is available for all pupils at lunchtime.

Lunchtime supervisory staff are asked by the Headteacher to promote healthy eating and to monitor packed lunches in line with school policy. If prohibited items are identified, these will be returned to the lunchbox and a letter will be sent home to inform parents.

Any changes between school dinners and packed lunches must be communicated to the school office in advance of the change.

If a child forgets their packed lunch, parents/carers will be contacted. The school cannot guarantee provision of an alternative meal in these circumstances.

We have one shared dining space. Pupils receiving school meals will be served first to ensure the efficient running of lunchtime service.

During the lunch period, children are supervised by lunchtime staff. Teaching staff are not on duty at this time.

Children are expected to take responsibility for clearing their own leftovers and disposing of packaging in the bins provided.

Thank you for your continued support in promoting healthy choices and positive lunchtime routines.

Yours sincerely,
L Wood
Headteacher

I AGREE TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE PACKED LUNCH POLICY.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT: DATE: