



Healthy Packed Lunch Policy

Last reviewed	March 2026
Date to be reviewed	March 2029
Signed FBG	June 2026

Policy Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all packed lunches brought from home and consumed in school or on school trips provide pupils with healthy, balanced, and nutritious food, in line with the School Food Standards to school meals. By promoting healthier eating habits, the policy supports pupils' physical wellbeing, concentration, and overall readiness to learn.

This directly reflects the school's Mission Statement. By encouraging nutritious food choices, the school helps secure an educational experience of the highest quality, as well-nourished pupils are better able to engage, focus, and achieve. It contributes to a strong foundation of skills and sound preparation for life, by fostering lifelong healthy eating habits.

The policy also supports a safe and caring environment, where pupil wellbeing is prioritised, and aligns with providing appropriate resources to support learning and achievement, recognising that nutrition is a key factor in academic success. Furthermore, it demonstrates the role of a committed team of adults working in each pupil's best interests, as staff, governors, parents, and carers work together to promote healthy lifestyles.

Rationale

The aim of our Healthy Packed Lunch Policy is to make a positive contribution to children's health and wellbeing by encouraging nutritious food choices that support their growth, learning and overall development. Through promoting balanced and healthy packed lunches and supporting parents and carers in providing these, we seek to foster happier, calmer children and young people who are better prepared to engage in school life. The policy also aims to ensure consistency between the standards expected for packed lunches and the food provided by the school, reinforcing a shared commitment to healthy eating across our whole school community.

Key Members of Staff

A number of school staff including the SENDCo and Deputy Head, School Council Lead and Community Engagement Lead and PSHE Lead are actively involved in ensuring that healthy packed lunches are consistently promoted across the school. They work collaboratively with staff, pupils, families, and the wider school community to raise awareness of healthy eating, support inclusive practice, and encourage positive food choices in line with our whole-school wellbeing approach.

Through assemblies, a Healthy Pecked Lunch Competition, curriculum opportunities, engagement with the School Council and Healthy Eating Ambassadors, and communication with parents and carers, we promote the importance of providing healthy, balanced packed lunches that support pupils' learning, concentration, and overall wellbeing.

School Setting

St Margaret's CE Primary School is a larger than average primary school. The school is three form entry and there are currently 592 pupils on role (525 R - Y6). The school is located in central Manchester and has a diverse pupil intake. Leaders successfully bring together almost 600 pupils from every continent, speaking 40 different languages, and from many different cultures into one happy community.

Equality of Opportunity

In line with the Equality Act 2010, our Healthy Packed Lunch Policy is implemented in a way that promotes fairness, inclusion and respect for all pupils, families and staff. We are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity by actively considering the protected characteristics identified within the Act and removing any potential barriers to participation. The policy is applied consistently and sensitively, ensuring that no pupil is disadvantaged or excluded.

We recognise that food choices may be influenced by faith, culture or family traditions. Our guidance to parents and carers reflects this understanding and promotes healthy options across a wide range of cultural and religious diets. In doing so, we ensure that expectations around packed lunches are inclusive and respectful of diversity within our school community.

We also provide appropriate support for pupils with disabilities and medical needs. Pupils with allergies, medical conditions such as diabetes, sensory needs or eating difficulties are supported through individual healthcare plans and reasonable adjustments where necessary. Staff are informed and guided to ensure that lunchtime arrangements are safe, inclusive and responsive to individual needs.

In implementing the policy, we are mindful that access to certain foods may be influenced by financial circumstances. Our guidance focuses on affordable and practical healthy options, ensuring that expectations are realistic for families. Where appropriate, families are signposted to further support, and all pupils are treated with dignity and sensitivity.

Expectations are age-appropriate and reflect the developmental needs of different year groups. The policy is supportive rather than punitive, promoting positive habits while recognising pupils' stages of growth and understanding. Healthy eating messages are inclusive and challenge stereotypes, ensuring that all pupils, regardless of gender, background or culture are encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards food, health and wellbeing.

To ensure resources meet the needs of all pupils, we provide clear and accessible communication for parents and carers, including simplified language where appropriate. Visual materials and pupil-friendly resources are used in classrooms and assemblies to reinforce key messages. curriculum links reflect diverse cultures and dietary practices, and school leaders, including SEND and pastoral staff, work collaboratively to monitor the impact of the policy and respond to emerging needs.

Food and drink in packed lunches

We will provide the following facilities:

- Free, fresh drinking water is readily available at all times at dining tables.
- Carefully timetabled year group lunchtimes ensure that all pupils have sufficient time to eat their meal comfortably. This approach also helps to keep queues short and maintain a calm dining environment, as the number of pupils in the hall at any one time is carefully managed.
- Welcoming, positive, and enjoyable, helping to promote a strong sense of community. Sociable dining is encouraged, with lunchtime assistants supporting pupils to sit with their peers and develop positive social interactions.
- Attractive, safe and appropriate dining room arrangements including social dining benches for eating, clean and safe area for dining.
- Parents and carers have information on the school website to support them in providing healthy packed lunch options (for example healthy schools fussy eaters leaflet).
- As fridge space is not available in school, pupils are advised to bring packed lunches in insulated bags with freezer blocks where possible to stop the food going off.

We aim for packed lunches to include:

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables every day.
- Meat, fish or other source of non-dairy protein (e.g. Lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus and falafel) every day
- A starchy food such as any type of bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes or other type of cereals every day.
- Dairy food such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard everyday
- Only water, still or sparkling, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, yoghurt or milk drinks.
- The Healthy Schools leaflet, 'What should be in a healthy lunchbox?' on the school website outlines the food types that should be included in lunchboxes.

Packed lunches should avoid:

- Snacks such as crisps. Instead, we encourage nutritious vegetables and fruit (with no added salt, sugar or fat). Savoury crackers (unsalted) or breadsticks served with fruit, vegetables or dairy food are also a good choice.
- Confectionery such as chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits and sweets. Cakes and biscuits are allowed but in small portions and as part of a balanced meal.
- Meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies, corned meat and sausages or chipolatas should be included only occasionally.

Packed Lunches that do not follow the Healthy Packed Lunch Policy:

If a pupil is identified as having a packed lunch that does not meet the Healthy Packed Lunch Policy, the PSHE Lead or School Council Lead will discreetly discuss this with the class teacher and provide them with a Healthy Schools Healthy Packed Lunch leaflet. The class teacher will then share this leaflet with the parent or carer, explaining what constitutes a healthy packed lunch.

The PSHE Lead and School Council Lead will carry out routine checks throughout the school year to support parents and carers in providing their children with healthy packed lunches and to promote consistency with the school's expectations.

Special diets and allergies

Our school is aware of the seriousness of nut allergies and we are a nut-free school. We have followed the government guidelines regarding allergies from:

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

We also recognise that some pupils may require special diets that do not allow for the standards to be met exactly. In this case parents are supported and encouraged to be responsible in ensuring that packed lunches are as healthy and nutritious as possible. Due to allergies, pupils are also not permitted to swap food items.

Food safety

The school does not have dedicated fridge space available for storing pupils' packed lunches. Therefore, parents, carers, and pupils are encouraged to ensure that packed lunches are stored safely to maintain food quality and prevent the risk of food-related illness.

To support food safety, parents and carers are advised to provide packed lunches in insulated lunch bags or boxes, ideally with an ice pack in hotter weather to keep food cool until lunchtime.

Pupils are provided with packed lunch trolleys to store their lunch upon, which are kept indoors in a cool area. Parents and carers are also reminded to follow good food hygiene practices when preparing packed lunches, including ensuring food is fresh, properly sealed, and consumed within a safe timeframe.

Assessment, evaluation and reviewing

The PSHE Lead and School Council Leads will regularly review packed lunches to ensure they meet the school's healthy eating standards. Where packed lunches do not align with the policy, parents and carers will be supported in making healthier choices through guidance and constructive communication.

Healthy packed lunches will be positively reinforced through verbal praise. Where improvements are needed, parents and carers will be provided with resources such as the *Healthy Schools "Healthy Lunchbox Guide"* leaflet to support them in making balanced and nutritious choices.

The School Council will play an active role in promoting healthy eating by delivering assemblies in a compassionate and sensitive manner. In addition, the school will host coffee mornings to raise awareness and provide practical support for families.

To further encourage engagement, an annual Healthy Lunchbox Competition will be held to celebrate and promote the benefits of healthy, balanced packed lunches.

Involvement of Parents/Carers

At our school, we encourage pupils to take full advantage of the nutritious meals provided by the school. These meals are carefully planned to meet the government's healthy eating standards and support pupils' learning, growth, and overall wellbeing.

For pupils who bring packed lunches, parents and carers are expected to provide meals that align with the school's Healthy Packed Lunch Policy. This ensures that all pupils have access to balanced, nutritious options, whether eating school meals or packed lunches, and helps maintain consistency in promoting healthy choices across the school community. Where healthy lunchboxes are not being provided for pupils, the school will provide Parents and Carers with The Healthy Lunchbox Guide, a Healthy Schools leaflet which provides information about tasty, safe and nutritional lunch boxes.

We actively involve parents and carers in promoting healthy eating through initiatives such as coffee mornings and workshops. These sessions provide guidance on the importance of balanced diets, practical ideas for healthy packed lunches, and strategies to encourage positive food habits at home. By engaging families in this way, we aim to support healthier food choices, leading to improved outcomes for pupils' health and wellbeing.

Parent Health Champions have been trained to promote healthy lunches and lunch boxes. They hold assemblies and workshops to raise awareness among our pupils about the benefits of healthy foods and what to include in a well-balanced diet.

Pupil Voice and Pupil Need

At our school, we value pupil voice and ensure it plays a central role in shaping our Healthy Packed Lunch Policy. The School Council and Healthy Eating Ambassadors actively contribute by providing feedback on the types of foods pupils enjoy and suggesting ways to make packed lunches more appealing. Their input helps ensure that the policy is relevant, practical, and responsive to pupils' preferences and needs.

To meet the diverse needs of our pupils, we provide clear guidance and support around healthy eating that takes into account dietary requirements, allergies, cultural considerations, and age-appropriate expectations. Pupils with additional needs, including those with SEND or medical requirements, receive tailored support to ensure they can participate fully and safely in the school's lunchtime provision.

The School Council also plays a key role in promoting healthy eating among peers. Pupils are encouraged to make positive choices through verbal praise. This peer-to-peer reinforcement helps create a culture of healthy eating across the school, making the initiative both engaging and motivating for pupils.

We also involve parents and carers by offering information sessions and workshops. These sessions provide practical guidance on preparing nutritious packed lunches, tips for encouraging children to make healthier choices, and strategies for supporting their children's wellbeing at home. By combining pupil voice with parental engagement, we ensure that the policy supports the needs of all pupils and promotes healthy eating throughout the school community.

Confidentiality, handling disclosures and safeguarding procedures

If a pupil discloses an issue of a personal or sensitive nature in relation to their packed lunch or any wider concern, staff must follow the school's safeguarding procedures at all times. The member of staff should listen carefully, remain calm, and avoid asking leading questions or making promises of confidentiality. They should reassure the pupil that they have done the right thing by speaking up and explain that the information will need to be shared with the appropriate adult in order to keep them safe.

All concerns must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or, in their absence, the Deputy Head. Staff must record the disclosure accurately and in line with the school's safeguarding and recording procedures.

All staff and external contributors are made aware of this process as part of their induction and briefing prior to working with pupils. They are informed of who the DSL is and understand that this is the first point of contact for any safeguarding concerns or disclosures. External visitors are also expected to follow the school's safeguarding protocols and report any concerns directly to a member of staff, who will then escalate appropriately.

Links to Other School Policies

Our Healthy Packed Lunch Policy is closely linked to several other school policies, ensuring a consistent and holistic approach to pupil wellbeing, inclusion, and healthy living. It complements the Healthy Food and Drink Policy by reinforcing guidance around balanced nutrition and promoting healthy eating across the whole school. The policy also supports the PSHE Policy, as it aligns with teaching about health, wellbeing, and making positive lifestyle choices. Pupils learn to understand the importance of nutrition, which links directly to their personal, social, and emotional development.

Inclusion is a key focus of our approach. This policy works alongside the Accessibility Plan and the Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy by ensuring that guidance around packed lunches is fair, culturally sensitive, and accessible to all pupils, including those with protected characteristics, disabilities, or specific dietary needs.

Furthermore, the policy is integrated with the Safeguarding Policy and SEND Policy, ensuring that pupils' medical, social, and emotional needs are considered, and that support is provided where necessary. By linking to these policies, the Healthy Packed Lunch Policy forms part of a wider framework promoting health, wellbeing, inclusion, and safeguarding across the school.

This Packed Lunch Policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Healthy Food and Drink Policy, which outlines the whole-school approach to promoting

healthy eating. This includes guidance on school meals as well as food consumed in school that is not provided by the school, such as packed lunches.

The Healthy Packed Lunches Policy also links to the Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policies, which state that all staff must be aware of children with food allergies, ensure allergen risks are minimised, and follow the setting's procedures for preventing exposure and responding to allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis.

Dissemination of the policy

The school will write to all new and existing parents/carers to inform them of the policy via the school newsletter. The policy will be available on the school's website and will be incorporated into the school prospectus. The school will use opportunities such as parents' evenings and Healthy Living weeks to promote this policy as part of a whole school approach to healthier eating. All school staff, including teaching and catering staff and the school nurse, will be informed of this policy and will support its implementation. Healthy School leaflets to support parents are included on the school website, including 'Fussy Eating' and 'The Healthy Lunchbox Guide' leaflets and videos regarding 'Let's Talk Portion Sizes'.

Some great ideas for tasty, nutritional lunches are included within the following leaflet from the Food for Life organisation, which includes advice about portion sizes, including a wide variety of nutritional food and includes the healthiest of drinks to hydrate you:

https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/media/vsdfjjzo/packed-lunches-guidance.pdf?v=9wxXsI_kpUU&list=PLVVDe5yDpj6fTaOdmqgeqjiINP--chXSM

Guidance and Training for Staff

At our school, we recognise that effective implementation of the Healthy Packed Lunch Policy depends on staff having a clear understanding of its aims and expectations. All staff are provided with guidance on the policy as part of their induction process and through regular updates, ensuring consistency in approach across the school.

Staff receive training to support their understanding of healthy eating principles, the importance of nutrition in promoting learning and wellbeing, and how to promote positive food choices in a supportive and non-judgemental manner. All staff were trained by Healthy Schools on Healthy Lifestyles CPD, Part 1 & 2 of The Importance of Healthy Eating at School and Beyond in January 2025.

In addition, staff are trained to understand their responsibilities in relation to inclusion and equality, ensuring that the policy is applied fairly and sensitively. This includes awareness of cultural and religious dietary practices, medical needs such as allergies or diabetes, and the need to make reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND.

Lunchtime supervisors and pastoral staff are given specific guidance on how to reinforce the policy appropriately, how to respond to concerns, and when to escalate issues to senior leaders. Safeguarding training also ensures that staff understand how to respond if concerns about a pupil's wellbeing arise in relation to food or nutrition. Staff are aware of making referrals to the School Nurse, where appropriate.