Whole School Food Policy Template – Secondary Schools

Using this template: This template is designed to help **SECONDARY** schools create a clear, concise and practical whole school food policy. Adapt the wording so it reflects your school context, community, catering arrangements and existing policies. Keep the final policy focused and proportionate; aim for 10 pages or fewer, with detailed guidance, examples and supporting resources moved to appendices or linked documents. Purple text highlights prompts or optional wording that should be completed, adapted or removed before the policy is approved.

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1. Policy Information

Policy Lead	[Insert Name]
Governor Lead	[Insert Name]
Date Approved	[Insert Date]
Review Date	[Insert Date]
Version	[Insert Version]

2. Introduction

At [School Name], we recognise that food is central to students' health, wellbeing, learning and sense of belonging. Through a Whole School Approach to Food, we embed food across all aspects of school life, including leadership, curriculum, dining experiences, food provision, celebrations, staff role modelling and community engagement.

By working in partnership with students, families, staff and catering providers, we foster a positive and inclusive food culture that reflects our school community and supports a balanced relationship with food.

3. Food Policy Champions

This policy was developed collaboratively by: (Insert names/titles of staff, governors, caterers, students, and any partners.) We have a [student council/food champions group] that contributes to ongoing review and planning of food activities across the school.

4. Aims & Objectives

Our school food policy aims to…[insert statement, e.g.]

Ensure that all aspects of food and nutrition promote the health and wellbeing of students, staff, and visitors at our school.

The objectives of our school food policy are to: [Add to/remove as appropriate, e.g.]

- Provide a range of balanced and nutritious food choices throughout the school day that meet the mandatory school food standards.
- Ensure that food provision reflects and accommodates the cultural, religious, medical and dietary needs of students and staff.
- Work with catering providers to maintain high-quality food provision, regularly seeking feedback from the school community to inform continuous improvement.
- Engage students in shaping food provision, ensuring their views are heard and that feedback is reflected, where possible, in the food and dining experience on offer.

5. Policy Commitments and Shared Expectations

[Add to/remove as appropriate, e.g.]

Our school commitments are:

- Provide food and drink that meets school food standards and supports students' health, wellbeing and learning.
- Create a positive, inclusive and welcoming food culture across the school day.
- Ensure food provision reflects the cultural, religious, medical and dietary needs of our school community.
- Support students to develop food confidence through education, positive dining experiences and opportunities to try new foods without pressure.
- Work with students, families, staff and catering providers to continually improve our food offer.

Staff are expected to:

- Model positive and inclusive attitudes towards food and drink.
- Use neutral, respectful language when discussing eating and drinking, avoiding labelling foods as "good", "bad", "junk" or "treats".
- Support students during mealtimes in a calm, respectful and encouraging way.
- Follow school procedures relating to food rewards, celebrations, food brought into school, allergies and safeguarding concerns about a student's wellbeing or access to food.

We ask parents and carers to:

- Support the school's food policy and follow guidance relating to packed lunches, drinks, celebrations and allergies.
- Inform the school of any medical, cultural, religious or dietary requirements relevant to their child.
- Work in partnership with the school to support their child's health, wellbeing and positive relationship with food.

We ask students to:

- Respect others' food choices, cultures, allergies and dietary needs.
- Use kind and respectful language when talking about food and eating.
- Help create a calm, welcoming and inclusive school dining environment.
- Share their views and ideas to help improve food provision within the school.

6. Food Culture, Role Modelling & Positive Relationship with Food

Food culture is shaped by the way adults talk about, model and value food. We recognise the important role that staff play in creating a food environment that supports students to develop lifelong, positive relationships with food.

No Food as a Reward: We do not use food as a reward or incentive. Research shows this can harm students' relationship with food and encourage overeating or emotional eating. At our school, we reward students with: (Insert non-food reward systems here, e.g. praise, certificates). Students are involved in shaping these reward systems through consultation.

Language Around Food: We intentionally use language that supports food confidence and emotional wellbeing:

- All staff are encouraged to use neutral, inclusive terms when discussing food. We avoid labels such as "good," "bad," "junk," "treats," or language rooted in diet culture.
- We speak about food in terms of how it helps us feel and function (e.g., "this gives us energy to learn", or "protein helps our muscles grow").
- We use the term "nourishing" to describe food that provides key nutrients, rather than the subjective term "healthy."

7. Food Provision & Dining Environment

School Food Standards (SFS) Compliance: We ensure our menus comply with the SFS (Appendix 1) across food served across the whole school day, including clubs if applicable. A member of SLT [insert name/title] and a school governor [insert name] are responsible for ensuring ongoing compliance.

○ Breakfast Club

We offer a breakfast club which serves a range of nutritious food (including wholemeal carbohydrates, fruits and protein-based foods) to support students' health, wellbeing, concentration and energy for learning and social interaction throughout the school day.
Insert more information, suggestions below:

- Who is responsible for running your breakfast club? In house or external?
- Is the breakfast club free?
- How do you ensure the food served complies with the school food standards?
- If you have consulted with parents, students, worked with an organisation or used any resources that helped in the initial consultation, you could mention how students/parents, individuals or organisation have contributed/consulted towards menu/club changes.

Breaktime

Breaktime gives students a chance to enjoy a nourishing snack that helps sustain their energy and focus throughout the morning.

Insert more information incl. link to menu, suggestions below:

- Who provides your breaktime food offer? In house or external?
- How regularly does the offering change and how is it developed and monitored?
- Does the food comply with the mandatory school food standards?
- Can FSM students purchase a breaktime snack with their allowance?
- Do you provide daily planet-friendly options [catering for vegans, vegetarians, non-meat, and other non-dairy requirements]?
- Do you ensure there are healthy options available at breaktime that are of an equal value for money as their HFSS (high fat, sugar, and salt) counterparts?
- Do you have a visible menu where breaktime options are shown?
- Have you taken any measures to ensure the students have a nutritious snack and avoid skipping lunch? (e.g. limits on how many HFSS products can be purchased)

Lunchtime Offer

Insert more information incl. link to menu, suggestions below:

- Who are your school meals provided by?
- What types of food are on offer? E.g. Hot and cold meals, sandwiches, grab and go items.
- Do you offer meal deals?
- How regularly does the menu change? Same each week or a 2/3-week rotation?
- Are the year groups on a rota to ensure the same group of students do not always get the last sitting?
- How is the menu monitored?
- Does the food reflect the religious and cultural needs of the school community, and how do you ensure this?
- Do you have a dessert policy [e.g. from the local authority]?

Hydration

We are a water only school. [if not applicable, edit to how you promote water consumption]

Insert more information, suggestions below:

- How is the school promoting water consumption? E.g. water fountains, jugs on tables, easy access to free water throughout the day etc.
- Does this apply to the staff in the school? Are they positive role models encouraging students to drink water?
- If required for a medical condition, how will the school ensure the needs of these students are met? E.g. diabetic students.

Dining Environment

We are committed to creating a calm and positive dining experience. This includes: [Add to/remove as appropriate, e.g.]

- Reducing noise and queue times
- Having staff eat with students when possible
- Offering opportunities for choice and autonomy (e.g., self-serve salad bar)
- Using language that encourages students to listen to their appetite signals.
- Ensuring the dining area is welcoming, clean and promotes social interaction and inclusivity.
- Providing adequate time for students to enjoy their meals without feeling rushed.
- Involving students in aspects of mealtime planning and feedback, helping them feel ownership over their dining experience.
- Please add any other considerations that you feel are important for the dining environment. (e.g., students are encouraged to try vegetables during lunchtime through our lunch ambassadors' group of students. Our menus are designed with fresh, seasonal vegetables, avoiding frozen options)

SEN Support: Our dining environment is inclusive of students with sensory, physical or emotional needs. This may include:

- Earlier lunch time
- Flexible seating options
- Noise-reducing strategies
- Visual menus or food introduction strategies

8. Food Brought In

Food brought in covers many different times within the school food environment and covers anything brought in by students, as well as provided by parents or staff. We strive to ensure that food brought into the school complies with school food standards (Appendix 1).

Packed Lunches

We promote variety and balance in packed lunches, with an emphasis on including fruit, vegetables, wholemeal carbohydrates and protein rich foods, while avoiding items high in salt, sugar or saturated fats. Packed lunches include those brought from home as well as those provided by the school or by families for trips.

Packed lunches brought in from home should be compliant with the school food standards and should not contain the following:

- Confectionary
- Crisps and nuts

- Fizzy drinks
- Energy drinks

If a staff member observes a student with the above, then [they should confiscate the item and inform the student that they can collect the item at the end of the school day. They will also have a conversation with the student about why the item has been confiscated and discuss the importance of nutritious food options].

For further support regarding packed lunches, see Appendix 2.

Snacks

We recognise that some students may bring snacks into school from home or purchase them on their journey to school. The same guidance and restrictions set out in the Packed Lunches section apply to snacks brought into school. We encourage snacks that are nourishing and support energy and concentration during the school day, such as fruit, vegetables, yoghurt or wholegrain-based options. We ask that students do not bring energy drinks and that foods high in fat, salt and sugar are kept to a minimum.

Celebrations & Events

Celebrations in school reflect our food ethos and are inclusive of all students. This applies to the following occasions: [Add to/remove as appropriate, e.g.] Breaktimes, Parents evenings, Sports days/events, School council meetings, Exam or test days/weeks, End of term, School trips and Birthdays.

All students should feel equally celebrated on their birthdays and special occasions. For this reason, we kindly ask that students do not bring in cakes or sweets to share in class. While well-intentioned, this can create inequity, as not all students are able to contribute in the same way and also raises concerns around allergies and dietary restrictions. Instead, we encourage other meaningful and inclusive ways to celebrate, such as:

- Wearing a birthday badge, hat or sash for the day
- A classroom cheer or birthday song
- Having their photo featured on a birthday display board
- Receiving a birthday certificate or card from the class or teacher
- A non-food treat from the school (e.g. sticker, pencil, bookmark)

We also strive to ensure that nutritious food and drink options are available at the following school events and celebrations: [Add to/remove as appropriate, e.g.] Fundraising events, Seasonal celebrations (Christmas, Easter, Eid etc.), Summer and winter fair, international events/Cultural week, Charity weeks: E.g., Macmillan coffee morning.

9. Food Education

Food education plays a vital role in helping students develop confidence, curiosity, and a lifelong positive relationship with food. Cooking and Nutrition is a statutory part of the Design and Technology curriculum for students across Key Stages 1 to 3 (see Appendix 3) and is taught at an age-appropriate level throughout each key stage.

In Years 7 and 8, students are introduced to healthy eating, food safety, and basic cooking skills, promoting an understanding of balanced diets and practical food preparation. Year 9 deepens their knowledge of food science, nutritional needs and the impact of diet on health. In Years 10 and 11, some students will undertake the GCSE Food and Nutrition/Hospitality and Catering, developing advanced practical skills, understanding food science and sustainability and designing nutritious menus, preparing them for responsible food choices and healthy lifestyles.

Food Across the Curriculum: Food education is delivered through the curriculum and practical learning experiences. Through subjects such as Design and Technology, Science and PSHE, students develop knowledge, skills and confidence relating to food, nutrition, cooking, sustainability and where food comes from. We support food learning through activities such as: [Add to/remove as appropriate, e.g.]

- Food growing and gardening projects
- Cookery lessons or clubs
- Food tasting activities
- Farm, market or food producer visits
- Student food ambassador programmes
- Healthy Schools initiatives

Staff Training and Support: Staff are supported through training and professional development to deliver inclusive, age-appropriate food education and to promote positive relationships with food.

10. Equity, Inclusion & Sustainability

We recognise the importance of all students, staff and visitors having equal access to inclusive food-related activities and opportunities. We aim to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome, respected and able to meet their nutritional, cultural, religious and dietary needs.

[Add to/remove as appropriate, e.g.]

- We identify and respond appropriately to concerns about a student's nutrition, wellbeing or access to food.

- We work to reduce barriers to accessing food and support available to pupils and families, ensuring this is provided sensitively and without stigma.
- We ensure our food provision reflects the cultural, religious, medical and dietary needs of our school community.
- We support students and staff who are fasting, helping them to participate fully in school life while respecting their beliefs and practices.
- We ensure that food-related activities, celebrations and events are inclusive and do not create unnecessary cultural, financial or practical barriers to participation.
- We ensure relevant staff understand the signs of disordered eating and know how to respond, safeguard and signpost students and families to appropriate support.

Free School Meals (FSM) Uptake: We encourage eligible families to take up free school meals, as it provides a balanced, nourishing lunch that supports students' health, learning and wellbeing. In England, free school meals are now available to all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit.

- Do you offer any support to parents/students applying for free school meals?
- Some local authorities extend this funding to provide wider eligibility for accessing a free school meal, if this is available to your school mention it here.
- You may also have your own information on subsidies/support for families in certain circumstances or those with no recourse to public funds, it is also worth considering your non-payment policy in this section.

Allergies and Special diets: All food activities and services are inclusive of student with allergies, sensory, medical or learning needs. Please see our separate allergy policy for more information [link to school allergy policy].

Food Waste: We educate students about food waste and implement practices such as:

- Encouraging appropriate portion sizes
- Monitoring and reducing food waste through regular review of leftovers and waste levels
- Supporting food redistribution, composting or food growing initiatives where possible.

Planet Health: We promote environmentally conscious food habits through activities such as:

- Meat-free or plant-based menu days
- Sourcing seasonal, locally produced ingredients where possible
- Linking food, climate and sustainability topics across the curriculum, assemblies and enrichment activities.
- Promoting reusable water bottles, lunch containers and reduced single-use packaging.

11. Monitoring & Evaluation

We will monitor and review this policy regularly to ensure it is implemented consistently and continues to support a positive, inclusive and nourishing food culture across the school. [Add to/remove as appropriate, e.g.]

- The policy lead, governor lead and catering provider will review the school food environment at least termly, including food provision, dining experiences, food brought into school, celebrations, clubs and food education activities.
- Feedback will be gathered continuously through student voice activities, school council or food ambassador meetings, parent/carer surveys, staff feedback, catering meetings and informal comments shared with the school office or relevant staff.
- The school will monitor compliance with the school food standards [termly].
- Participation and accessibility will be reviewed [termly], including school meal uptake, FSM uptake, packed lunch patterns and the support available to families.
- This policy will be reviewed [annually], with input from students, staff, families, governors, catering providers and other relevant stakeholders.

12. Appendix

Appendix 1: The school food standards came into force on 1 January 2015 and are set out here: School food standards practical guide - GOV.UK *(Updated SFS are going into effect in 2026 and will be enforced from September 2027 in primary schools and September 2028 in secondary schools)*

Appendix 2: Tips for a nutritious packed lunch.pdf

Appendix 3: National curriculum in England: design and technology programmes of study - GOV.UK

Appendix 4: Talking about food the Nourish way.pdf