



Whitefield
Academy Trust

**Policy
Document**

Healthy Eating Policy

Category: Leadership

Key Elements

The policy reflects the Academy Trust's commitment to developing a positive healthy eating culture for the Trust community.

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Agreed by:
Directors

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Healthy Eating Policy

This policy is linked to the Healthy Schools Award London and takes a whole Trust approach to making sure the Trust's Food Standards are met within Whitefield Academy Trust. The policy reflects the Academy Trust's commitment to developing a positive healthy eating culture for the Trust community. Carrying out a whole Trust approach to healthy food is challenging in an environment where children and young people face a range of physical and/or complex learning difficulties and where a significant number require specialist diets or non-oral feeding. Nevertheless, we are committed to preparing our children and young people for as independent and healthy a lifestyle as possible. In order to achieve this, we teach children and young people to make informed food choices that will contribute to their health and well being.

We believe that, wherever possible, children and young peoples' experience of food and drink should be enjoyable and a central part of their experience of school. We are as responsive to the dietary needs of our children and young people as we are to all other educational and social needs; therefore the food available reflects the religious, cultural and dietary requirements of all elements of the Trust community. For example, we provide vegetarian, nut free and Halal meals, foods for coeliac disorders and foods with modified textures, colour and wetness. We also train staff (with the support of our school nurses) to manage artificial feeding.

We aim to support our whole Trust community in developing or experiencing a healthy lifestyle by:

- providing a curriculum where children and young people learn about healthy lifestyles, experience healthy choices at their own level and in a motivating and functional context
- enabling children and young people to enjoy healthy food and drinks and make informed choices on a healthy, balanced diet
- accessing healthy food and drinks throughout the school day and encouraging healthy foods and drinks to be brought into school
- teaching children and young people about food and nutrition and its relation to health
- ensuring information relating to food and nutrition in the curriculum is consistent and up-to-date
- developing appropriate facilities where furniture and the environment are conducive to positive, calm mealtimes.
- ensuring that school meals are adapted to the dietary needs of our children and young people
- establishing a regular, active dialogue and partnership between Trust, parents and the multidisciplinary team of speech and language therapists, medical team, dietician and the caterers, associated with Trust.



1. Food Provision – School Meals

School meals are provided by Waltham Forest Catering who have the 'Food for Life' Silver Award and fully meet the Government's National Standards for School Lunches. This includes adherence to the governmental initiative providing free school meals for all students up to Year 1. We consult with the catering staff to ensure they are aware of our children and young peoples' and parents' specific requirements. Healthy food and drinks are promoted, and children are encouraged to eat balanced meals and to try all foods on offer.

There are children and young people across Whitefield Academy Trust who have medical conditions that require specific foods, modified diets and specialist input with eating and drinking to ensure appropriate nutritional intake. Some of our children and young people have different health needs, including those who are underweight and therefore need food, sometimes high fat foods, which will help them put on weight. We have children and young people with motor disorders, neurological conditions, physical impairment; they often have dysphagia (difficulty in eating) and may need pureed foods that are easy to swallow. We also have children and young people who require non-oral feeds.

The following outlines our management of these needs:

Support for children and young people with dysphagia and other conditions is provided by a multidisciplinary health team, including Speech and Language therapists, Dietician, Paediatrician and Nurses employed by the NHS. As a number of individuals, both inside and outside of the Trust (parents, dietician, speech and language therapist, medical team, catering) are involved, we are aware that communication is essential and everyone must be kept informed of requirements or changes in need. Classroom staff are appropriately trained by nursing staff and written guidance is provided from relevant specialists.

A number of children and young people have non-oral feeds prescribed and monitored by a Dietician and administered by classroom staff and nurses according to specific recommendations. Some children and young people will be on feeds throughout the day. Some of them may also be offered oral tastes and require access to their preferred tastes during the day.

Other children and young people may be selective eaters and have restricted diets. These children and young people require choice about foods they will or will not eat and need to be supported to ensure sufficient intake; they need information about the foods available and an individual programme and approach to enable them to make choices. These needs are supported, monitored and reviewed via classroom teams and professionals as necessary.

In order to meet the range of needs, school meals are modified. Where necessary, food is presented on different plates, or at least not touching other ingredients.

Providing a special diet is an extremely complex process and requires partnership working to ensure that the provision for each child or young person is delivered to a safe high standard.

Children and young people eat their lunch in our dining area or in classrooms. Both facilities allow children and young people to enjoy their lunch whilst socialising with friends and staff. For many of our pupils lunch time is used as a motivating, functional opportunity to teach communication, interaction and make choices. Children and young people on non-oral foods remain with their classmates over the lunch period so that they can share in the social atmosphere.



There are some children and young people for whom the dining hall is too extreme as a sensory experience, so provision is made to accommodate them in the classroom where the environment may be less stimulating. Teaching and support staff endeavour to create an environment where communication is encouraged, children and young people can choose and feel safe.

It is not the Trust's role to advise staff on what to eat at lunchtime or break time, but we expect all adults eating or drinking alongside children and young people (eg. on educational visits) to be mindful that they are seen as role models.

Supervision by trained midday staff is provided at lunch and break times both in the dining hall and within the classroom, to ensure safe, healthy procedures are adhered to. Where necessary supervision and support is on an individual basis.

We recognise that many children and young people need to make choices about what, how and where they eat. In consultation with catering and midday supervisors we frequently review meals, approaches, accommodation and environment, in order to make meal times enjoyable. In line with this, the details of what food is to be provided is updated daily and displayed for children and young people to see on screens around the school and as posters in and around the eating environments. This supports many children and young people's needs to prepare for choices in the dinner hall as well as helping them to increase ownership and awareness of their own diet. The daily menus are available in written and picture format. Our 3 week rotating menu is also sent out for children and young people and parents to review at the beginning of each term.

As part of our commitment to being a healthy school, we encourage parents to provide children with healthy food and drinks. We work with parents to encourage the provision of healthy packed lunches, by offering workshops led by a speech and language therapist or dietician. Our Family Support Team also regularly holds cooking lessons for parents to attend with their children (or independently) to promote and support a healthy approach to eating at home as well as at school.

We recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances for particular children and young people regarding food and parents with children who have eating/feeding difficulties are encouraged to discuss these issues with Family Support Teachers and the Speech and Language Therapists. Some children leave home very early or do not like to eat first thing in the morning and so miss an important meal at the start of the school day. Where necessary we provide a breakfast when the child or young person arrives at school.

2. Snacks and drinks

Whitefield Academy Trust is part of the National School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme, which entitles all children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 classes to have a free piece of fruit or vegetable each day. Children and young people in other classes are encouraged to eat a piece of fruit at break time as a mid morning snack.

Mid-morning or afternoon snacks are offered within class groups. As well as providing welcome refreshment, snack time plays an important role in the development of communication and personal and social skills. A choice of snacks is offered to encourage having to make a choice and communicate that choice, and the setting may give opportunities for turn taking, sharing and socially appropriate behaviour.

Snacks offered are in line with national guidelines and include fruit, dried fruit or vegetables.



We encourage children and young people to drink water regularly throughout the day to ensure they are well hydrated. Drinking water is provided at snack times and in jugs during lunch time. While jugs or containers of water may not be 'on show', water is available and accessible throughout the day. Children and young people are encouraged to stay hydrated and are prompted to drink water at transition times (break time, lunch time, before going home) and/or more regularly during hot weather. Non-oral feeders will be provided with extra liquid through tubes throughout the day.

Ice cubes are popular with many students and where appropriate may be offered in addition to water in hot weather.

Where children and young people need photos, referents or symbols to ask for a drink, these are available at all times. Where children and young people need to make direct choices they are given the opportunity to do so.

3. Promotion of food in school

Children and young people are encouraged to develop positive attitudes to healthy eating and trying new foods. In consultation with catering staff, when necessary, we provide tasters from the meals to give children and young people the opportunity to try foods before being presented with unfamiliar meals or to allow them to accept a wider range of foods than a selective eater will typically try. Healthy foods are promoted in the Trust through the curriculum, posters/displays, and positive re-enforcement by Trust staff.

All children and young people have access to cooking lessons (at least weekly). These lessons are used to promote an understanding of healthy eating and preparation of balanced meals and snacks. These lessons are differentiated to the individual levels and needs of each child or young person via varied outcomes surrounding healthy eating. These range from exposure to/exploration of smells and tastes, through to planning and preparation of full meals within our Entry Level Food Studies programme.

Giving children and young people 'a voice' is an essential element that runs throughout this policy and all Trust activities. Ensuring children and young people have a meaningful say in what happens and a real opportunity to take part can be challenging; however, it can also provide a motivating context for seeking opinion. As a Trust we encourage children and young people voice and involvement.

Children and young people with sight impairment are supported to know what food is on their plate and its location. They are supported to feed themselves through the use of adapted cutlery, plate guards and anti-slip mats. Water-level indicators are available. Contrasting colours are used for plates, trays and tables.

4. Food safety and hygiene

We recognise that food safety and hygiene is of paramount importance for the health of the whole Trust community.

Children and young people and members of staff are encouraged to follow appropriate hygiene procedures. In particular, washing their hands properly after using the toilet and before handling food (e.g. at snack breaks and before lunch). Appropriate notices/signs are displayed in the toilet facilities reminding children and young people to wash their hands after using the toilet.



Particular care is essential in relation to the hygiene around pumps and tubes for children and young people who take non-oral food. This is part of staff training.

Lunchboxes are stored in a safe and hygienic manner, in particular away from sources of heat, e.g. pipes, radiators and direct sunlight and in a cool, well-ventilated place. Parents are encouraged to use insulated boxes or 'ice' packs in their child's lunchbox and follow any 'safety lunchbox' tips.

5. Food and nutrition in the curriculum

A key aim is to teach children and young people to communicate and make choices from healthy options, so they need to be offered real choices which will motivate them to express preferences. Learning about foods and timetabled cookery lessons provide motivating and functional contexts in which to acquire important life skills. A variety of approaches, including practical work and group discussion, are used to enable children and young people to experience and acquire the skills needed and understand the benefits of eating healthily and making informed food choices where possible. Children and young people are encouraged to participate in a range of extra-curricular activities, to broaden both their knowledge and experience; for example gardening, exploring the sensory garden and the school allotment, growing fruit and vegetables and cooking their own snacks and meals.

As a Trust, we recognise the importance of learning to cook from simple recipes (these may be written or picture based as appropriate). Cooking is a skill for life and we aim to equip children and young people with basic skills for preparing simple and nutritious meals. When planning cookery lessons, staff identify recipes which allow and encourage all children and young people to be actively involved and which result in a functional, motivating lesson as well as providing healthy food. We also develop the children and young people's understanding of where foods come from and how to follow the process of cooking from beginning (ingredients) to end (finished meal/snack).

As part of our Allotment, there is a plot of land cultivated by children and young people. Here, they can participate in growing their own vegetables, learning valuable lessons about where our food comes from. Many children and young people also experience growing vegetables in and around the classrooms. They may later eat the vegetables at snack time, use them in cooking or sell them as part of a mini-enterprise.

Staff seek to offer activities that are intrinsically stimulating and motivating. Where rewards are used as part of a planned behaviour modification programme, interests of the children and young people other than edible treats will be considered. Normally food will only be used as a reward or motivator when natural to the activity e.g. snack time. However, in very special circumstances when other motivators have been tried, there should be a discussion with speech and language therapists and a senior member of staff, in order to agree the short term use of edible treats. Food served at lunchtime must not be used or withheld as a motivator.

As part of the curriculum, children and young people learn to use the different shops and cafes within our community. Shops and cafes are also good places to learn to use money and to make choices and communicate them. Children and young people who make regular visits to a shop or café are encouraged to choose healthy foods and are discouraged from choosing fizzy drinks, sweets or high fat cakes.

Visits to garden centres and farms provide opportunities to see food being grown in different ways (e.g. organically). These opportunities are regularly sought by staff to support and progress in class learning within Food Studies as well as other curriculum areas.



6. Special occasions

We consider it important to celebrate children and young people's birthdays at school, as do parents, since for many their social network outside school is very limited. Birthday cakes sent in by parents, and other special treats, are accepted as part of a birthday meal celebration.

Other celebrations that may include food regarded as a treat may occur at Christmas, Diwali, Chinese New Year or other themed whole Trust events. On these occasions food will be used as a motivating experience to help children and young people understand and enjoy the different festivals.

On occasions where staff and/or parents provide food for children and young people to enjoy in line with special occasions, care is taken to adhere to dietary requirements of the students within the class (vegetarianism, nut/other allergies, Halal/Kosher foods etc.).

7. Training

A multidisciplinary team, including speech and language therapists, school nurses, and dieticians, are available to provide training where necessary. These sessions are open to school teaching and support staff, parents and the catering staff. The school supports staff and children and young people as appropriate, in attending training opportunities with respect to healthy eating. In addition, training led by nurses and speech and language therapists is given as part of our whole Trust Induction programme.

In order to enable children and young people to remain in class alongside their peers, staff are trained by the nursing service to manage artificial feeds. Speech and Language therapists also provide basic and advanced level training to staff on dysphagia. Only staff with advanced dysphagia training are allowed to feed those children and young people identified by the Speech and Language Therapists as high risk.

8. Pupil Involvement

We provide opportunities for children and young people to play an active role and contribute to decisions on food within the Trust. The Trust Council provides a mechanism for children and young people's consultation and input. The school also promotes children and young people's involvement and ownership through cross-curricular activities and assemblies.

9. Parents / Carers Involvement

We encourage parents to participate in decisions concerning school food; for example, through the use of questionnaire and in response to articles in newsletters. We discuss children and young people's specialised dietary needs with parents.



As outlined previously, Parents/Carers are also encouraged to attend cookery classes held by the Family Support Team.

Menus are available for parents and children and young people to see. These are sent out to parents at the beginning of each new term.

In order to enable parents/carers to be involved in decision making about healthy eating priorities and be informed about food within the school:

- Parents are involved in any development and review of this Food Policy
- The full Food Policy is available to parents/carers on request and on the School's website at www.whitefield.org.uk
- Parents receive information on food issues/healthy eating as necessary
- Parents are kept informed about what and how much food their child has eaten
- The Trust is developing links between 'parent and child together sessions' and healthy eating/ cooking





Available procedures to facilitate children and young people and parents' involvement in policy implementation

- Signs and symbols to support children and young people's voice and ascertain their views;
- Suggestion boxes, surveys, use of 'Talking mats';
- Photographs of meals and dining areas to inform children and young people and later to gain opinions on the food and environment;
- Velcro board in the classroom to display pictures of the day's menu, so children and young people have the chance to think about what they will be eating;
- A daily menu in the hall & digital menus on screens are displayed, using pictures, symbols and language that everyone will understand;
- If a child or young person is having particular difficulty at lunch time or with meals, consult with catering staff to enable 'tasters' of the meal to be provided;
- Ensure children and young people are provided with the appropriate seating and adapted cutlery;
- Use cues to enable children and young people to request 'more' or indicate 'finished'. Where appropriate, as part of the 'meal time' programme encourage children and young people to eat at an appropriate speed and in an appropriate manner;
- Allow children and young people to indicate that they do not want certain foods (they should be encouraged to try these foods without taking away favoured foods);
- When preparing cookery sessions, traditional cake and biscuit recipes are often chosen for class lessons as they give so many opportunities for children and young people to share in mixing, stirring and weighing ingredients. In addition, provide the opportunity to prepare other recipes; e.g. fruit salads, baked potatoes, smoothies;
- Children and young people are encouraged to choose using signs and symbols (if appropriate);
- We support a range of charities by cooking and selling cakes and biscuits;
- Food cooked by children and young people is either sent home or eaten in place of a scheduled snack or meal;
- Signs are created to encourage recycling; e.g. foods suitable for the compost in the garden;
- Liaison with parents and the multi disciplinary team to support children and young people with dysphagia or other issues with eating and drinking;
- Cookery classes are available to Parents/Carers through Family Support Team.



**This policy is shared
via the school website:
www.whitefield.org.uk**