

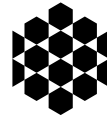


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an Fowk Siccar**

FOOD IN SCHOOLS POLICY

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

September 2009

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Department of Education and Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

September 2009

Introduction

1. It is widely known that a healthy, balanced diet is vital for children's growth and development and for their long-term health and well-being. Therefore, the Department of Education (DE) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) have been working with schools, key partner organisations and agencies over the last few years to improve the nutritional standard of the food that is provided in schools and to encourage, promote and support children and young people to make discerning food choices.
2. DE began the process of improving food in schools by implementing a pilot project in around 100 schools during 2004. The aims of the pilot were to evaluate how the nutritional standards of school meals could be improved and how best to implement this change. As a result, DE announced the roll-out of new nutritional standards for school meals, with an additional investment of £3 million per year.
3. This document sets out the overall aims and objectives of Executive policy in relation to food in schools and describes the range of strategies and plans that are being put in place to deliver improved nutrition for our school children.

Aims and Objectives of Food in Schools Policy

4. The principal aim of the Food in Schools Policy, in line with the recommendations of the Fit Futures taskforce on tackling obesity in children and young people, is to ensure that *"Food in schools is representative of the balance of good health and makes a significant contribution to childhood nutrition and that schools contribute to the development of the knowledge and skills necessary to be able to make healthy food choices."*
5. Education and Health policy both recognise the importance of early years in relation to physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. This policy will, therefore, also seek to ensure that "Early years settings provide adequate opportunities for good nutrition and embed good habits in terms of healthy eating."

6. In line with overall Executive objectives to target social need, the policy will support children from low income families, children with a disability and children living in disadvantaged communities.
7. The importance of improving nutrition and supporting healthy eating within schools is underlined by the recognition of its role in delivering the following, long-term Executive strategies and plans:
 - The Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People
 - Lifetime Opportunities Strategy
 - Extended Schools Policy
 - Investing for Health Strategy
 - Fit Futures Implementation Plan
 - Proposed Healthy Schools Policy
 - Oral Health Strategy.
8. In particular, the development and implementation of this policy, and the intended establishment of an active schools programme, will have a role in the delivery of the cross-departmental Public Service Agreement target, *"By 2011, halt the rise in obesity"*.

Taking a Whole School Approach

9. Research has shown that school based approaches to supporting child health and well being can be effective, but only if they adopt a whole school approach. A whole school approach to food and nutrition involves addressing the full range of issues that impact on childhood nutrition and on the food choices that children make in school, including:
 - School meals. (Encompassing nutritional standards, choice, access, availability and cost.)
 - Other food provided in schools, e.g. through vending machines, tuck shops, break time snacks and drinks and breakfast clubs
 - Food brought into school (packed lunches, snacks)

- Access to food on route to school and at lunch time
 - Quality of the dining environment
 - Education on nutrition and healthy eating
 - Development of food preparation and cooking skills
 - Training and development of staff working in schools
 - Parental attitudes and involvement
 - Linkage with Healthy Schools Policy and School Development Planning
 - Advertising and promotion of food in schools.
10. Some of these issues are rightly the subject of Executive policy and investment and are directly addressed in this policy. However, in relation to policy on issues such as how best to engage parents, restrictions on food that children can bring into school, length of school lunchtime and rules on children leaving school premises, it will be a matter for schools, in consultation with parents and with the support of Education and Health partners, to determine how best to support healthy eating in their school, in a manner appropriate to the age group of the pupils.
11. DE and DHSSPS commissioned the Health Promotion Agency (now the Public Health Agency) to produce good practice guidance to assist schools to adopt an effective whole school approach to food in schools. In addition, as detailed in later sections of the policy, schools will be able to avail of direct support and guidance from the Nutritional Standards Co ordinators appointed in each Education and Library Board and from local dietetic and health promotion professionals.

School Meals

12. It has become evident in recent years that many children are eating a diet which is too high in fat, salt and sugar and too low in fruit, vegetables and fibre. Research has shown that the school meals chosen by children follow a similar pattern to the food that they eat outside school. Therefore it was decided that standards should be introduced to ensure that school meals reflect Executive guidance on childhood nutrition. These standards were initially set out in the "*Catering for Healthier Lifestyles*" booklet issued by DE in December 2001.

13. However, it was recognised that introducing nutritional standards for food in schools was likely to be challenging, not least because it would result in choice being restricted to more healthy options. In 2004, a pilot project, directed by representatives from DE, DHSSPS, Education Boards, Health Boards, the Health Promotion Agency and the Food Standards Agency, was established in over 100 schools to examine how best to improve the nutritional standards of school meals. Evaluation of the pilot project, which is available at www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/5-schools_meals/5-nutritional_standards_background.htm, resulted in a number of recommendations on how best to implement nutritional standards in schools. Key recommendations included:
- adopting a whole school approach, by applying nutritional standards to other food provided in school and through effective education about nutrition;
 - involving school principals, parents and children in implementing plans to improve food in school; and
 - providing training, guidance and support for catering staff.
14. The evaluation also identified that there were likely to be significant cost implications arising from the introduction of the new standards as more nutritious meals cost more to produce. In 2005, DE provided additional funding so that the minimum expenditure on the food content of meals would not be less than 50p in Nursery, Primary and Special Schools and 60p in Post primary Schools.
15. During April 2006, in recognition of the need for robust action over the long-term to improve the nutritional standards of school meals and to contribute to the Fit Futures programme for tackling childhood obesity, DE issued a consultation document proposing both food based and nutrient based standards for school meals. Following consideration of responses to the consultation, the food based standards came into effect in all schools from September 2007 and are attached at Annex 1 for information. The position regarding the introduction of nutrient based standards will be kept under review.
16. The Food Standards Agency has been working closely with food manufacturers and suppliers to ensure that processed foods supplied to schools meet their new nutrient specifications and have published voluntary standards for such foods at www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2006/may/nutrientspecs.

17. Some religions and ethnic groups can have different dietary requirements because of specific food rules and observances. School authorities should ensure that school meals and other food in schools can accommodate those beliefs.

Food other than School Lunches

Food sold in schools

18. The evaluation of the pilot project to improve the nutritional standards of school meals in the North of Ireland identified concerns about the likely effectiveness of improving the nutritional standards of school meals if restrictions were not placed on the availability of other less healthy options, for example from vending machines and tuck shops. These concerns were also highlighted during the work of the Fit Futures taskforce which identified the need for *Real Choice*, i.e., the foods available should reflect, and be in proportion to, the advice on what constitutes a healthy, balanced diet.
19. In the consultation document that issued in April 2006 DE proposed a set of standards for food sold in schools through vending machines, tuck shops and at break times, breakfast clubs and after school. Following consideration of responses to the consultation document these standards have now been finalised and are included at Annex 1.
20. Schools have been implementing these standards from September 2007. As part of the school inspection process (see paragraphs 56 and 57) Nutritional Associates will be monitoring schools' healthy eating policies and practices.
21. It is worth noting that some manufacturers and suppliers of food to schools have already introduced policies to comply with the new standards and are no longer supplying products which fail to comply with the standards.

Packed lunches and breaks

22. Many children and young people do not buy their food in school but instead bring packed lunches or snacks with them to school. Many primary schools and nurseries, with the support of Healthy Breaks programmes established by Health and Social Services Boards and Investing for Health Partnerships, have introduced policies which encourage children and young people to only bring healthy options with them to school.

23. These policies can make an important contribution to good nutrition and improvements in oral health. In particular, they take account of the importance of peer influences in determining children's food choices and so make it more likely that children will choose a healthy option. It is critical, however, that there is effective consultation with parents in relation to why and how the policies are being introduced, before instituting such policies.
24. Healthy Breaks programmes have been in place for a number of years but without agreed standards on what constitutes a healthy break. The Fit Futures Implementation plan makes it clear that in future Health and Social Services Boards should ensure that programmes which they commission are in line with the new nutritional standards outlined in this document. Programmes must also be developed with the involvement of relevant staff in the Education and Library Boards and should form part of agreed food in schools plans.
25. The Food Standards Agency has developed guidance for parents on how to create a healthy, nutritious and appealing packed lunch and this can be accessed at www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/children/lunchboxsect/ and www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/teens/packedlunches/.

Water in Schools

26. A key component of the new nutritional standards is that drinking water should be freely available every day. Health and Social Services Boards and Investing for Health Partnerships have been working with a number of schools to encourage and support them to make water readily available to children during the school day. Encouraging children to drink water, by, for example, providing children with water bottles and encouraging their use, or by providing access to chilled water, can not only contribute to improved nutrition but can also help to tackle tooth decay and assist in improving concentration levels.
27. Encouraging and supporting children to drink water when in school should continue to be a feature of healthy breaks initiatives supported by Health and Social Services Boards. Such initiatives should form part of Food in Schools plans agreed with Education and Health partners and should be aimed at schools with high levels of social need and/or poor oral health.
28. DE ensures that fresh water dispensers are located appropriately within schools. Drinking water is no longer permitted in school toilets and where this is the case the water fountains are removed. The Department's standards (Annex 1) state that pupils should have easy access at all times to free, fresh drinking water. The

Water is Cool in School website (www.wateriscoolinschools.org.uk) provides a useful resource for schools.

Breakfast Clubs

29. Eating a healthy breakfast can make a contribution to a healthy balanced diet, preparing children to learn, and to wider school objectives on issues such as attendance. In recognition of this contribution Health and Education agencies have funded and supported a number of Breakfast Clubs at schools. The new Extended Schools Policy has contributed to the development of Breakfast Clubs.
30. Breakfast Clubs can make an important contribution to both education and health policies when effectively implemented and guidance on Breakfast Clubs has been included in guidance on food in schools developed by the Health Promotion Agency. All Breakfast Clubs should ensure that they adopt the standards set out at Annex 1.

Nutrition in Early Years

31. The standards for school meals and for other food that is provided in schools also apply to statutory nursery provision and the standards should be implemented in full in line with the previously mentioned timescales.
32. These standards do not apply to voluntary early years provision as there is no statutory basis to do so. However, the standards are recommended to voluntary providers and should be applied if these are in receipt of funding from the Department. The Health Promotion Agency has published guidance for early years providers and childminders on the provision of food for children under 5 years old. The guidance in "Nutrition Matters" (www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/Resources/nutrition/numatters05.htm) has been supported through training for childcare professionals.
33. DE, in conjunction with DHSSPS, is presently drawing up recommended standards for childcare which will take account of the need for food that is provided to be in line with the standards set out in Nutrition Matters.

Promotion and Advertising of Food to Children and Young People

34. The Office of Communications has introduced new standards regulating the advertising and promotion of food on television to children www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/foodads_new/statement/. Schools are

encouraged to give careful consideration to how foods which are high in fat, salt or sugar are promoted within their school and to introduce policies which reflect the need to restrict the promotion of less healthy options to children. Areas for consideration might include branding on vending machines, sponsorship of events/materials and distribution of promotional items.

Developing Knowledge and Skills

35. The research and consultation undertaken as part of the work of the Fit Futures taskforce clearly indicated the importance of providing a consistent message between learning in the classroom and eating in the dining room. The revised curriculum should ensure that children and young people are afforded adequate opportunities to obtain knowledge and understanding of nutrition and healthy eating and to develop skills in preparing and cooking food.
36. The revised curriculum makes provision for education in relation to nutrition and healthy eating as part of Personal Development from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 4. CCEA is providing teachers with guidance materials to support the introduction of Personal Development. In delivering the curriculum, schools may also wish to avail of the support that is available from health and education partners and from voluntary organisations, which have developed a range of educational programmes on nutrition, often as part of wider health programmes. Schools can seek advice from CCEA or the Education Boards to ensure that any materials they may wish to use meet the requirements of the curriculum.
37. In addition, for the first time, the curriculum includes a requirement for all children to undertake Home Economics at Key Stage 3 as a strand of the Learning for Life and Work area. The statutory minimum content for Home Economics includes requirements for schools to provide young people with opportunities to explore ways to develop a healthy diet and to develop practical skills in the safe, hygienic, healthy and creative use of food to plan, prepare, cook and serve a range of meals.
38. As a result of the new standards for food in schools there will be increasing opportunities to make connections between food policies within schools and the revised curriculum. Schools should also ensure that effective links are made between teaching on nutrition and health and teaching in relation to physical education, and with other opportunities they provide for young people to take part in sports and physical activity.
39. The Education Minister launched the Curriculum Sports Programme in November 2007, which now has a total of 60 coaches from both the IFA and GAA working

alongside class teachers in some 550 primary schools. The feedback is very positive about the benefits to our youngest primary pupils in developing their physical literacy skills in an enjoyable way and providing links to other curricular areas.

40. Other initiatives which schools can access include the Cook it! programme and Growing Clubs. Cook it! is a programme which teaches about healthy eating and allows participants to enhance their cooking skills. The course, which was produced by the Health Promotion Agency, covers basic principles of healthy eating, food hygiene at home and practical cooking. It is suitable for use with a wide variety of groups. Growing clubs give pupils the opportunity to plan, sow, tend and harvest a range of fruits and vegetables at school and can provide a useful teaching and learning experience for pupils.
41. The Food Standards Agency consulted on a Food Competency Framework for young people aged between 7 and 16 in autumn 2007. This framework is intended to help schools and community-based organisations provide children and young people with the foundation to make healthy food choices now and into adulthood.

Within the themes of diet and health, consumer awareness, cooking (food preparation and handling) and food safety the framework applies to young people aged between 5 and 16+, and also encompasses wider food issues.

<http://www.food.gov.uk/healthiereating/nutritionschools/competencies/>

Targeting Social Need

42. It is of particular importance that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are encouraged and enabled to eat healthy, nutritious food in school as research shows that these children tend to eat more of foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar and less fruit and vegetables than children from more affluent families. It is, therefore, vital that both the school catering service and schools as part of their food in schools policy, develop plans to ensure that children who are entitled to free school meals avail of this entitlement. Work carried out in other parts of the UK has shown that action to reduce stigma associated with free school meal entitlement, for example through the use of smart cards, can help to sustain uptake rates.
43. Efforts to target social need will be monitored by DE. Education and Library Boards will continue to be required to report on an annual basis to DE on the rate of uptake of school meals by those with free school meal entitlement.

44. The Fit Futures Implementation Plan makes it clear that Health and Social Services Boards and Investing for Health Partnerships should ensure that programmes which they develop to improve nutrition should target children and families suffering disadvantage. In particular, Boards and Partnerships will be expected to demonstrate that initiatives which support schools to improve childhood nutrition, for example through support for healthy breaks, target schools with high numbers of pupils who have been identified as being in objective need.
45. The Extended Schools Policy, which is supporting a number of nutrition and health programmes, including breakfast clubs and cooking clubs, specifically targets schools which draw their pupils from disadvantaged communities.

Implementation of Food in Schools Policy

Regional Implementation

46. The Food in Schools Policy is just one part of an overarching healthy schools policy being developed jointly by DE and DHSSPS. However, such is the concern about poor nutrition and rising levels of obesity in children, that the food in schools policy has had to be developed in advance of the healthy schools policy. Nevertheless it is inconceivable that food and nutrition will not feature as a key priority within this policy.
47. DE is directly investing £3 million per year in the implementation of this policy and has made a commitment to sustaining this investment during the period of the next spending round. This funding will ensure additional investment in high quality ingredients. It will also support implementation of the Food in Schools Policy by:
 - creating new posts to provide practical assistance to schools and catering staff in the implementation of the policy;
 - investing in new equipment needed to prepare healthier options;
 - developing and implementing a training programme for catering staff; and
 - supporting a communication and marketing plan to promote healthy, nutritious food in schools.
48. Funding is also being provided to support nutrition and health projects through Extended Schools and through nutrition and oral health programmes developed by Health and Social Services authorities. A significant proportion of the

additional £800,000 per year being allocated to the Fit Futures Implementation Plan is also being directed at supporting good nutrition in schools and early years.

49. The work will also be supported by the appointment of a schools' dietitian, jointly funded by DE and DHSSPS, who will also be responsible for developing guidance on food in schools and for providing specialist support to Education and Health Boards on implementation of the Food in Schools Policy.

Local Implementation

50. At a local level, DE has funded the creation of nutritional standards co ordinators in each of the Education and Library Boards. The role of the co ordinators is to train and provide practical support to both catering staff and schools in implementing the Food in Schools Policy. All catering supervisors have received accredited nutrition training as part of the delivery of the nutritional standards programme.
51. The Nutritional Standards Co ordinators are expected to work closely with colleagues in Health and Social Services who also provide support to schools on food and nutrition issues. DE and DHSSPS do not propose to insist on a specific model for local implementation of this policy. However, it is expected that Education and Health Boards and Authorities, whether through frameworks such as Investing for Health Partnerships or via healthy schools structures, should establish a means of agreeing annual plans for supporting schools on food and nutrition issues which make best use of the range of expertise that is available locally.
52. At the school level, School Development Regulations require schools to assess the arrangements for promoting the health and well being of staff and pupils as part of the school development planning process. Guidance for schools on school development specifically highlights the issue of food in schools as one of the areas that should be considered by schools in carrying out such an assessment. Schools should, therefore, consider carefully their role in contributing to the effective implementation of the Food in Schools Policy as part of their school development planning process. A model template for a school based Food in Schools Policy which could be adapted for use by individual schools is attached at Annex 2.
53. If the Food in Schools Policy is to be effective there is a need for parents to be effectively informed and engaged. Indeed parents have already received a leaflet

explaining plans to improve nutritional standards of school meals. However, it is vital that parental involvement should also feature in local and school based food in schools plans.

Private Finance

54. During the Fit Futures consultation exercise some concerns were raised about whether schools which are developed using private finance will be in a position to comply with the new food standards. DE has exempted the provision of meals from the contracts for such schools and it is not therefore expected that the source of funding for a school's construction should impact on the ability of a school to implement the nutritional standards.

Monitoring and Evaluation

55. DE and DHSSPS will be responsible for monitoring the overall implementation of this policy and will establish systems to ensure that it receives standardised information on a regular basis on key indicators of performance such as school meal uptake, including uptake by children who are entitled to free school meals. A survey was initiated during 2008 to determine the progress of implementation and to obtain feedback on what is working well and any difficulties that remain. A report is expected in the Autumn 2009.
56. The Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) will have a critical role in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of this policy. The Inspectorate has appointed two Nutritional Associates (NAs) to join a series of inspection teams in the special, primary and post primary phases to monitor and promote improvement in the implementation of the recommendations of Catering for Healthier Lifestyles and general approaches to promoting healthy eating.
57. Since January 2007 the NAs have obtained evidence from inspections relating to the nature, range and quality of healthy eating policies and practices in schools. The findings of the NAs are included in the inspection report of a school. ETI reports are available from www.etini.gov.uk.

****For Information Only** - these standards were subject to a separate consultation and are currently in place.**

NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LUNCHES

August 2008

NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LUNCHES

Food Group	Standards
<p>Group 1: Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods eg noodles and cereals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every lunch service must contain a portion or portions of food from this group. • Rice and pasta must be offered at least once a week. In a single choice menu, rice or pasta must be served at least once a week. • Bread should be available on a daily basis in all schools. • Also see additional requirements on fried foods – see Group 5a.
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starchy foods are usually inexpensive and provide energy, fibre, vitamins and minerals. • Offering rice and pasta provides variety and encourages children to try foods they might not get the chance to try at home. • Bread is a healthy source of carbohydrates. • Nearly all types of bread are acceptable: white, brown, wholemeal, wheaten, granary, high-fibre white bread and rolls, homemade bread, bagels, pitta bread, chapattis made without fat. • Bread should be provided without spread, which should be freely available. • Bread is additional to, and not a replacement for, the main meal accompaniment and it should be positioned at the end of the servery. 	

Food Group	Standards
<p>Group 2: Fruit and vegetables.</p> <p>This group includes fresh, frozen, canned and dried varieties and fruit juices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not less than two portions of fruit and vegetables should be available per child throughout the lunch service. • Of this, at least one portion should be vegetables or salad and at least one portion should be fruit (fresh, tinned in juice, fruit salad, fruit juice or dried fruit). • Pies, crumbles and other composite fruit dishes must contain at least one portion of fruit per serving. • Pies, casseroles, stews and other composite main course dishes must contain a minimum of half a portion of vegetables per serving, in addition to a separate serving of vegetables or salad. • In nursery and primary schools a fruit based dessert such as, fruit tinned in natural juice, fruit salads, fruit crumble, fruit fool or fruit pie must be offered at least three times a week. • Baked beans must not be served as a vegetable more than once a week in a primary school. Baked beans must not be the only vegetable option on any day in a post primary school. • If beans or pulses form the protein part of a main course, another vegetable must be available.
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit and vegetables provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. It is recommended that we eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Information about portion sizes is included in the following table. • Spaghetti tinned in tomato sauce does not count as a vegetable. • Unlike most vegetables, baked beans do not contain vitamin C. • Serving a separate, non pulse vegetable with pulse based vegetarian options provides variety for vegetarians and ensures that a mixture of nutrients is provided. 	

What is a portion?

For adults, a portion of fruit or vegetables is 80g, but there are no recommendations for children. Practically we suggest a good guide would be to serve at least half an adult portion, (ie 40g) to nursery pupils, moving towards an adult portion (ie 80g) for primary/post primary pupils. The table below gives examples of how these portions translate into kitchen servings.

Food Group	Nursery	Primary/Post-Primary
	One Portion	One Portion
Cooked vegetables	1-2 tablespoons (tbsp)	2-3 tablespoons (tbsp)
Salad vegetables	½ dessert bowl	1 dessert bowl
Fresh fruit	½ -1 fruit	1 fruit
Fruit salad, fruit tinned in juice	1-2 tablespoons (tbsp)	2-3 tablespoons (tbsp)
Fruit juice	150ml	150ml
Dried fruit	½ -1 tablespoon (tbsp)	1 tablespoon (tbsp)

Food Group	Standards
<p>Group 3: Milk and dairy foods.</p> <p>This group includes milk, cheese, yogurt and milk puddings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every lunch service must contain a portion or portions of food from this group. • In addition drinking milk must be available as an option every day. • Cheese must not be served as the only vegetarian option more than twice a week. • Cheese may be used as a topping more frequently.
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk and milk products are excellent sources of several nutrients including calcium, which is important for good bone development, protein and vitamins. • Milk, plain or flavoured, is a good drink option. Semi skimmed milk has the same amount of calcium as whole milk and is the preferred choice in primary and post primary schools. Skimmed milk is not appropriate for children under five years. • Alternatives to cheese provide variety for vegetarians. Recommended alternatives include beans, pulses and lentils. • Where a portion of cheese is served as the main protein item, it also counts as a portion of food from Group 4. • Eggs, butter and ice cream are not included within this group. Eggs are included within Group 4, butter is classed as a fat and ice cream is included under Group 5b. 	

Food Group	Standards
<p>Group 4:</p> <p>Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non dairy sources of protein.</p> <p>This group includes beef, pork, lamb, chicken, fish, eggs, pulses, eg peas, beans, lentils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every lunch service must contain a portion or portions of food from this group. • Meals containing red meat must be served: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o a minimum of twice a week and a maximum of three times a week in nursery and primary schools; and o a minimum of three times a week and a maximum of four times a week in post primary schools. • Fish should be available at least once a week in primary schools and at least twice a week in post primary schools. • Oily fish should be available at least once every four weeks.
<p>Notes</p> <p>'Times a week' refers to a service opportunity ie a breakfast service, break service or lunch service. For example if a post primary school provides a breakfast, break and lunch service then over the school week this provides 15 service opportunities which red meat will be allowed a maximum of four times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red meat includes beef, pork and lamb and meals made from them. • Sausages are not classed as red meat but as a meat product. Burgers are classed as a meat product unless they contain at least 95% lean mince meat and then will be classed as red meat. Composite dishes made from mince which contain less than 95% lean meat are classed as a meat product. See Group 5a for further information on meat products • On days when red meat is being served at lunch, there can be more than one choice as pupils will only choose one option. • Red meat is a good source of iron. • Meat, fish and alternatives such as eggs, beans and pulses are a major source of protein. • Offering fish provides variety and offers foods that children might not otherwise get a chance to try. This would include sandwich and baguette fillings such as tuna and salmon. • An Oily fish is one containing omega 3 fatty acids which help maintain a healthy heart. This includes fresh, canned or frozen salmon, sardines, pilchards, mackerel, herring and fresh or frozen tuna. • Tuna only counts as an oily fish when it is fresh or frozen because the omega 3 fatty acids are removed during the canning process. However, canned tuna can be counted as one of the non oily portions of fish. • On the weeks when oily fish is provided this meets the standard for fish for that week in primary schools and will count towards the post primary standard. 	

Food Group	Standards
<p>Group 5a:</p> <p>Fried and other high fat foods.</p> <p>This group includes cooking fats and oils, oily salad dressings, mayonnaise, salad cream, crisps, cream, pastry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep-fried foods or other high fat products, such as chips, roast potatoes, other fried potatoes, garlic bread, or meal choices containing pastry, eg quiche, apple pie, vol au vent may be served a maximum of twice a week. • In addition whole muscle or fillet of fish coated in breadcrumbs can be served once a week. • Meat or chicken products (such as burgers, sausages, chicken nuggets etc) may be served a maximum of once a week in primary schools and a maximum of twice a week in post primary schools. • To allow choice for pupils on the days when meat or chicken products are available, schools should aim for 50% healthy meal options and they should be presented and marketed in a competitive way to other meal options. This standard does not apply to single choice menus. • There should be at least 2 days each week without any meat or chicken products, fried foods, foods cooked in batter, breadcrumbs or foods containing pastry, for example fish in breadcrumbs, chips, sausages, vol au vents, quiche, apple pie etc. <p>This is to encourage children to try a greater range of foods in their diets and explore new taste experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a high fat starchy food is served for eg chips or garlic bread an alternative without added fat must be available. • Lower fat desserts must be available on days when deep- fried foods and other high fat foods are offered. • The only savoury snacks available should be nuts and seeds with no added salt or sugar. Savoury crackers or breadsticks may be offered provided they are served with fruit or vegetables or a dairy food.
<p>Notes</p> <p>'Times a week' refers to a food service opportunity ie a breakfast service, break service or lunch service.</p> <p>For example if a post primary school provides a break and lunch service then over the school week this provides 10 food service opportunities. This means that deep fried or high fat foods can only be served twice and meat or chicken products are also limited to two times over the 10 service opportunities.</p>	

- 'Deep fried or other high fat foods' includes:
 - o any food that is deep fried, either in the kitchen or in the manufacturing process, even flash fried foods or foods brushed or sprayed with oil, eg roast potatoes, chips, oven chips, potato waffles, potato shapes;
 - o pre prepared coated, battered and breaded products, eg chicken nuggets, fried fish, fish fingers, battered onion rings and doughnuts.
- Meat and chicken products are bought in manufactured products that have been processed in some way and are generally ready for cooking/reheating.
- On days when meat or chicken products are being served at lunch, there can be more than one choice as pupils will only choose one option.
- Whole muscle meat or chicken, which is dipped in egg, coated in home made crumb without the addition of any fat or oil and dry baked will not count as a meat or chicken product.
- Limiting fried and other high fat options helps to limit the overall fat content of lunches.
- Offering non fried options when fried or high fat options are on the menu helps to ensure that a variety of other starchy foods are provided.
- Limit the fat content of lunches by not offering too many foods from this group which have added fat, eg pastry toppings on pies or battered coating on fish.
- Meat products must:
 - o Meet the legal minimum meat content levels set out in the Meat Products Regulations (NI) 2004 as amended or updated from time to time. Products not specifically covered by these legal minimal requirements must meet the same minimum meat content levels prescribed for burgers;
 - o Not be "economy burgers" as described in the Meat Products Regulations (NI) 2004;
 - o Contain none of the prohibited list of offal.
- Offering lower fat desserts on days that deep-fried or high fat foods are on offer limits the fat content of lunches. Lower fat desserts should have 10% or less fat in the complete dish. Examples of lower fat desserts include:
 - o fresh, stewed or tinned fruit (in fruit juice) or fruit salad, either on its own or served with low fat yogurt or fromage frais;
 - o baked apple with custard;
 - o low fat yogurt or fromage frais;
 - o milk puddings, eg custard, semolina, rice pudding, tapioca – served with fruit;
 - o fruit crumble with custard;
 - o fruit sponge made with egg/fatless sponge eg Eves pudding served with custard;

- o fruit crisp (breadcrumb topping) with custard;
- o fruit 'fool' made with custard/ fromage frais/ yogurt;
- o jelly and fruit;
- o ice cream and fruit;
- o jelly, ice cream and fruit;
- o instant dessert served with fruit;
- o bread and butter pudding with custard;
- o fruit flan (egg/fatless sponge) with fresh or tinned fruit and fromage frais;
- o wholemeal/flakemeal biscuit, ½ portion of fruit and semi skimmed milk to drink;
- o muffin and orange juice (except choc-chip muffins).

NB It is essential that the dessert combinations are as shown here for them to be considered as lower fat options, as it is the OVERALL fat content of the menu item that was used to determine their suitability.

- Be aware of nut allergies. It will be for individual schools to decide on whether or not to provide nuts.
- Remember fresh cream or imitation cream is classed as a high fat food and should not be used in lower fat desserts or as toppings.

Food Group	Standards
<p>Group 5b: Confectionery and Other Sweet Foods: Sugar, Sweet pastry, Chocolate, Sweets, Sweetened Soft Drinks, Puddings, Cakes, Biscuits, Jam, Jelly, Ice cream.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confectionery, chocolate and chocolate-coated products should not be available throughout the lunchtime. • Cakes and biscuits can only be provided at lunchtime and as part of a meal. • Cakes, biscuits and puddings made with cocoa powder should only be available a maximum of 2 days per week. • High fat and or high sugar toppings used for decoration for example cream, butter cream, icing sugar should be kept to a minimum and only used if essential eg to set fruit on top of a sponge. If used, an undecorated or healthier dessert should also be available.
<p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confectionery includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Chocolate and chocolate products, for example: bars of milk, plain or white chocolate; chocolate flakes, buttons, or chocolate-filled eggs. o Chocolate coated bars. o Biscuits containing or coated in chocolate (including those with a chocolate drizzle, partly and fully coated biscuits such as chocolate digestives, chocolate covered caramel wafers, chocolate fingers, choc chip cookies). o Sweets, for example: boiled, chewy, gum, liquorice, mint and other sweets, also sherbet, fudge, marshmallows, toffee and chewing gum; this includes sugar-free sweets and chewing gum. o Cereal chewy bars, cereal crunchy bars, cereal cake bars, processed fruit bars. o Fresh or dried fruit that has been sugared or covered with a yoghurt or chocolate coating. o Choc ices and other chocolate coated ice cream. <p>NBThis does not include cocoa powder used in cakes, puddings, biscuits or low calorie drinking chocolate or combination drinks made with yoghurt or dairy equivalents.</p>	

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Drinks

The only drinks available should be:

- plain water (still or sparkling)
 - milk
 - unsweetened fruit or vegetable juices
 - yoghurt or milk drinks (with less than 5% added sugar)
 - drinks made from combinations of the above (eg smoothies)
 - low calorie hot chocolate
 - tea
 - coffee
- these drinks are not suitable
for the nursery sector*

Combination drinks must contain at least 50% of the milk, yoghurt or fruit juice as appropriate.

Artificial sweeteners are only permitted in combination drinks.

Low calorie hot chocolate is defined as 20Kcals/100mls.

Drinking water, ie tap water, must be provided free every day.

Salt and Condiments

Table salt should not be available within nursery or primary schools. It should not be on view in the post primary school dining room but may be made available on request from the service counter.

Condiments (tomato ketchup, brown sauce, salad cream, relishes etc) should only be provided from the service counter and should be controlled by the kitchen staff.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Meals provided for pupils in special schools should follow the standards listed for primary schools. However, portion sizes should reflect the pupil's age.

It should also be noted that pupils in special schools often require special diets, and that some, e.g. those suffering from autism, often have particular food aversions, or will only eat particular foods. Appropriate adjustments should therefore be made to the meals service. A diet sheet, prepared by a Registered Dietitian, or specific guidance in agreement with the child's doctor, parent and principal should be available for the children concerned.

NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR OTHER FOOD AND DRINKS IN SCHOOLS

The following standards apply to food sold or served in schools through vending machines, tuck shops, breakfast clubs, after school clubs and at break times and should be read in combination with the food based lunch standards:

- (i) no confectionery should be sold in schools;
- (ii) no savoury snacks other than nuts* and seeds (without added salt or sugar) should be sold in schools;
- (iii) a variety of fruit and vegetables should be available in all school food outlets. This could include fresh, dried**, frozen, tinned and juiced products;
- (iv) children and young people must have easy access at all times to free, fresh, preferably chilled, water in schools so that children do not have to depend on going to the lavatory to get water;
- (v) the only other drinks available should be bottled water (still or sparkling), milk, unsweetened fruit or vegetable juices, yoghurt and milk drinks (with less than 5% added sugar) or drinks made from combinations of these, eg smoothies, low calorie hot chocolate, tea and coffee. Artificial sweeteners are only permitted in combination drinks. Combination drinks must contain at least 50% of the milk, yoghurt or fruit juice as appropriate.

Low calorie hot chocolate is defined as 20 calories per 100 millilitres.

* Be aware of nut allergies. It will be for individual schools to decide on whether or not to provide nuts.

**Dried fruit has a higher concentration of sugars. Therefore, in terms of dental health, it is not regarded as a suitable snack between meals. It is best taken as part of a meal.

For additional information on these standards please refer to the Nutritional Standards for other food served in schools.

NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR OTHER FOOD AND DRINKS IN SCHOOLS

The following standards apply to all food and drinks sold or served in schools including breakfast clubs, vending machines, tuck shops, after school clubs and at break times and should be read in combination with the nutritional standards for school lunches.

Standard 1

No confectionery should be sold in schools

Confectionery includes:

- Chocolate and chocolate products for example bars of milk, plain or white chocolate, chocolate flakes, buttons or chocolate filled eggs.
- Fresh or dried fruit that has been sugared or coated in yogurt or chocolate.
- Chocolate coated bars.
- Ice cream (except at lunchtime as part of a meal)
- Chocolate ices and other chocolate coated ice cream.
- Chocolate coated or flavoured biscuits.
- Sweets, for example, boiled, chewy, gum, liquorice and mint. Also sherbet, fudge, marshmallows, toffee and chewing gum. This includes sugar free sweets and chewing gum.
- Cereal chewy bars, cereal crunchy bars, cereal cake bars and processed fruit bars.

Standard 2

No cakes and biscuits

Cakes and biscuits must not be provided (except at lunchtime and as part of a meal).

Cakes include:

- Manufactured, bought in products and home made tray bakes, cakes, biscuits and buns made in the school kitchen.
- Sponge cakes, maderia cake, swiss roll, fruit cake, banana loaf, apple cake, carrot cake, gateaux and American muffins.
- Pastries for example, croissants, Danish, jam tarts and mince pies.

Biscuits include:

- All types of sweet varieties eg Rich tea, digestive, ginger nuts, flapjacks, shortbread and wafers.

Savoury crackers and breadsticks can be provided but must be served with fruit or vegetables or a dairy food for example cheese.

Standard 3

No savoury snacks other than nuts* and seeds (without added salt or sugar) should be sold.

*** be aware of nut allergies. It will be for individual schools to decide on whether or not to provide nuts.**

Savoury snacks include:

- Crisps or 'crisp like' products eg potato, corn and cereal snacks.
- Nuts, seed, fruit or vegetables with added salt, sugar or fat eg salted nuts, honey roasted nuts and fruit coated in sugar, chocolate or yogurt.

Standard 4

A variety of fruit and vegetables should be available in all school food outlets. This could include fresh, frozen, tinned, dried* and juiced products.

Fruit and vegetables can include:

- All varieties of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Fresh fruit salad.
- Fruit tinned in natural juice.
- Unsweetened fruit juice (100% fruit juice)
- Baked beans.
- Salad vegetables.
- Vegetable sticks.

* Remember dried fruit has a higher concentration of sugars. Therefore in terms of dental health, it is not suitable as a snack between meals. It is best taken as part of a meal, for example breakfast.

Standard 5

Children and young people must have easy access at all times to free, fresh, preferably chilled water and should not depend on going to the lavatory to get water.

Standard 6

The only drinks available should be:

- plain water (still or sparkling)
 - milk
 - unsweetened fruit or vegetable juices
 - yoghurt or milk drinks (with less than 5% added sugar)
 - drinks made from combinations of the above (eg smoothies)
 - low calorie hot chocolate
 - tea
 - coffee
- these drinks are not suitable
for the nursery sector*

Combination drinks must contain at least 50% of the milk, yoghurt or fruit juice as appropriate.

Artificial sweeteners are only permitted in combination drinks.

Low calorie hot chocolate is defined as 20Kcals/100mls.

Standard 7

This Standard must be applied in three parts.

- Foods high in fat or deep fried foods are restricted across the whole school day and should not be offered in total more than twice a week.
- Meat or chicken products are restricted across the whole school day and should only be offered a maximum of once a week in primary schools and a maximum of twice a week in post primary schools.
- There should be at least 2 days each week without any fried foods, foods high in fat and meat or chicken products.

Foods high in fat or deep fried include:

- Any food that is deep fried either in the kitchen or in the manufacturing process even flash fried foods or foods brushed or sprayed with oil.
- Chips, roast potatoes, other fried potatoes, oven chips, potato waffles and potato shapes.
- Garlic bread.
- Pastry dishes eg quiche, meat pies, fruit pies and vol-au-vents.
- Fried fish products.

Meat and chicken products include:

- Burgers.
- Sausages, sausage meat and sausage products.
- Any shaped or coated meat product eg chicken nuggets, escalopes and goujons.

It is expected that foods covered by this standard will mainly be served at lunch time. However if they are to be served at other times eg breakfast or break time the standard must be applied across the entire school week.

For further guidance please see Group 5a Nutritional Standards for School Lunches.

Standard 8

Food choices or meals containing red meat must be served a minimum of twice a week and a maximum of three times a week in nursery and primary schools and a minimum of three times a week and a maximum of four times a week in post primary schools. This standard applies across the whole school week.

- Red meat includes beef, pork and lamb and meals made from them.
- Red meat in sandwiches or paninis is not restricted by this standard. Bacon is classed as a red meat and should only be served as part of a main meal, for example breakfast or lunch. Bacon will be required to comply with the standard for red meat. This is because of its high fat and salt content.

MODEL FOOD IN SCHOOLS POLICY FOR INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS

When drawing up its own food in schools policy a school may wish to include some or all of the following aspects, as appropriate:

- Background/rationale/need
- Ethos/values
- Aims/Objectives
- Roles/responsibilities of relevant parties
- Organisation (co ordination and delivery/teaching methods for education on nutrition and healthy eating – linking theory to practice)
- Links with outside agencies (sometimes includes a statement that the school accepts no sponsorship or links with companies that may undermine the healthy eating ethos of the school)
- Communication with parents
- Water
- Food before and after school
 - o Breakfast Club
 - o Break time
 - o School dinners
 - o Packed lunches
 - o Tuck shops/vending machines – where present
 - o Rewards
 - o School trips
 - o After-school clubs (Cookery/Gardening Club)
 - o Schemes/Events
- Communication and dissemination of the policy
- Monitoring and evaluation

It is recommended that schools consult with all interested parties – pupils, teachers, parents etc – when drafting their policy as this will assist with its acceptance.

Draft for Consultation

FOOD IN SCHOOLS POLICY