

## **SCHOOL MEALS SERVICE**

# **ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF MILK, MEALS AND RELATED FACILITIES**

**Under the Provisions of Articles 58 and 59 of the Education & Libraries  
(Northern Ireland) Order 1986, as amended.**

## **EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

**ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**JUNE 2025**

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## **1. INTERPRETATION**

### **1.1 In these arrangements -**

“the Authority” means the Education Authority;

“the Order” means the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, as amended;

“school day” means a day on which a school is open for instruction excluding Saturday and Sunday.

## **2. PROVISION OF MILK**

### **Mandatory Provision**

2.1 The Authority shall provide one-third of a pint (0.18 litre) of milk on every school day to:

- a. every pupil who wishes such provision and who attends a grant-aided nursery or primary school or part of a secondary school which is used for providing primary education, but not those who attend:
  - a preparatory department of a voluntary grammar school; or
  - a grant-maintained integrated nursery or primary school,
    - i. in respect of whom the Authority holds a valid certificate signed by a medical officer of the Health and Social Care Board stating that it is necessary in the interests of the health of that pupil that he/she be provided with milk; or
    - ii. where a dinner is not available for that pupil;
- b. every pupil who attends a special school;
- c. every pupil satisfying the conditions in a.i. who attends:
  - a preparatory department of a voluntary grammar school; or
  - a grant-maintained integrated nursery or primary school,where the school requests the Authority to make such provision.

### **Discretionary Provision**

2.2 The Authority may provide milk to any pupil for whom it is not under a duty to provide milk under paragraph 2.1 and who attends any school, including a voluntary grammar school, a grant-maintained integrated school or an independent school where such schools request the Authority to make such provision.

## **Charges**

2.3 Milk supplied to pupils under the provisions of paragraph 2.1 shall be supplied to them free of charge.

2.4 Where the Authority provides milk under the provisions of paragraph 2.2 it shall not make any financial contribution towards the cost and the charge must therefore cover all purchasing, administrative and distribution expenses.

## **Milk Standards**

2.5 All milk supplied to pupils shall conform with the standards laid down by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

2.6 If liquid milk which satisfies the requirements of paragraph 2.5 is not available, the Authority may, as a temporary measure, provide a suitable substitute.

## **3. NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR ALL SCHOOL FOOD**

The Authority shall comply with the Department's nutritional standards for school lunches and other food and drinks in schools as outlined in the attached Annex.

## **4. PROVISION OF SCHOOL DINNERS TO NURSERY, PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOL PUPILS**

### **Mandatory Provision**

4.1 The Authority shall provide school dinners on every school day for day pupils who wish such provision and who attend a grant-aided nursery, primary or special school, but not those attending:

- a preparatory department of a voluntary grammar school; or
- a grant-maintained integrated nursery or primary school.

Organised parties of pupils, who are on educational visits during term-time, may be regarded as attending a school which is open for instruction.

4.2 A school dinner is defined as a meal which is adequate in quantity and quality so as to be suitable as the main meal of the day for a pupil. The Authority shall comply with the Department's standards as outlined at paragraph 3.

### **Discretionary Provision**

4.3 The Authority may provide dinners to:

- i. pupils described in paragraph 4.1 on days other than school days; or
- ii. boarding pupils attending schools described in paragraph 4.1.

## **Charges**

4.4 The charge for a dinner to a paying pupil shall be sufficient to fully recover the variable costs and make a contribution to fixed costs. The charge is to be determined by the Authority with standardisation of prices across all regions and any relevant targets set by the Department of Education.

## **Funding of Free School Meals**

4.5 Free school meal provision shall, as in previous years, be funded via the Block Grant and/or earmarked funding.

## **5. PROVISION OF MEALS AND REFRESHMENTS TO SECONDARY AGE PUPILS**

### **Mandatory Provision**

5.1 The Authority shall have available on every school day items of food adequate in quantity and quality which constitute a nutritionally balanced meal suitable as the main meal of the day for day pupils who are entitled to a free meal and who attend grant-aided secondary schools, but not voluntary grammar and grant-maintained integrated secondary schools. The Authority shall comply with the Department's standards as outlined at paragraph 3. Organised parties of pupils, who are on educational visits during term-time may be regarded as attending a school which is open for instruction.

5.2 Where the Authority operates a cafeteria system in a secondary school the maximum monetary value of a free meal shall be determined by the Authority.

### **Discretionary Provision**

5.3 The Authority may provide meals or other refreshment to:

- i. pupils described in paragraph 5.1. on days other than school days; or
- ii. day pupils (on every school day or other days) who are not entitled to free meals and who attend grant-aided secondary schools other than voluntary grammar and grant-maintained integrated secondary schools.

## **Charges**

5.4 The charge for any meal or refreshment provided described in paragraph 5.3 shall be determined by the Authority and shall be sufficient to fully recover the variable costs and make a contribution to fixed costs. The charge is to be determined by the Authority with standardisation of prices across all regions and any relevant targets set by the Department of Education.

## **Funding of Free School Meals**

5.5 Funding for free school meal provision shall, as in previous years, be funded via the Block Grant and/or earmarked funding.

## 6. ENTITLEMENT TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS

A pupil shall be entitled to free school meals where:

- i. the pupil or parent is in receipt of Universal Credit and has net earnings not exceeding an amount as determined by the Department; or
- ii. the pupil or parent is in receipt of Income Support or Income based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income related Employment and Support Allowance; or
- iii. the parent receives the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit; or
- iv. the pupil has a statement of special educational needs and is designated to require a special diet; or
- v. the pupil is a boarder at a special school; or
- vi. the pupil is the child of an asylum seeker supported by the Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS)<sup>1</sup>; or
- vii. if none of the above apply and a child presents at school hungry, then the school should, on humanitarian grounds, provide free school meals to the child. This initial decision, taken by the school at the point of need, must be followed immediately with a referral to the Education Authority's Education Welfare Service (EWS). The school should continue to provide free school meals while the EWS is carrying out its assessment. If, following an initial assessment using the UNOCINI Assessment Framework<sup>2</sup>, the EWS is not satisfied that the Level 2 indicators are present (across the Child, the Parent Capacity and the Family and Environmental factors), the provision of free school meals should cease.

A further referral to the EWS for assessment for free school meals should not be made unless the school becomes aware of any change in the child's circumstances. Where the entitlement to free school meals on days when the child has neither food nor the means to pay for a meal is confirmed it will be reassessed by the EWS prior to or at the beginning of each school year.

If the EWS or school finds that the child already has a social worker EWS will request that the social worker completes the assessment for Free School Meals and forwards the outcome of this in writing to the EWS.

In making their assessment, if the EWS determines that a child is a child in need<sup>3</sup> they should, in addition to making a determination about the child's entitlement to

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<sup>1</sup> In the interim period, until such time as the result of the application for NASS support is known, the Authority should arrange to provide free school meals to children of asylum seekers enrolled in schools.

<sup>2</sup> The UNOCINI Thresholds of Need Model can be viewed at <http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/thresholds-need-model>

<sup>3</sup> Under Article 17 of the Children (NI) Order 1995 (the Children Order) a child is in need if *inter alia* he is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of personal social services by a Health and Social Care Trust. Article 18 of the Children Order places a general duty on each Trust to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within its area who are in need and to provide a range and level of personal services appropriate to those children's needs.

free school meals, make a referral to the Gateway Team of the local Health and Social Care Trust. This referral should be made on the basis of a completed UNOCINI which will enable the Gateway Team to establish if there is a need for this service to undertake any further assessment.

Note: Only pupils in full-time places in school are eligible to avail of a free meal.

Schools should inform the Authority as soon as possible of any pupils being provided with free meals under sub-paragraph ix. and should provide the following details: pupil's name, date of birth, home address and period through which free meals are to be provided together with confirmation of the previous school attended if he/she has recently moved school. The names and national insurance numbers of the pupil's parents should also be supplied where available.

## **7. EXCEPTIONS TO MANDATORY DUTY**

The Authority shall not be under a duty as stipulated in paragraphs 4.1. and 5.1. to provide dinners/meals in schools where the average daily number of pupils wishing to avail themselves of this provision is such that the Authority considers the cost of producing or transporting the dinners/meals cannot be justified.

## **8. PROVISION OF FOOD TO ADULTS AND OTHER BODIES**

### **Discretionary Provision**

8.1 The Authority may provide meals or other refreshment to:

- i. persons, other than pupils, having business at grant-aided schools other than voluntary grammar or grant-maintained integrated schools;
- ii. a voluntary grammar or grant-maintained integrated school where the school requests the Authority to make such provision; or
- iii. the meals-on-wheels service or any other bodies/establishments.

### **Charges**

8.2 The charge for meals or refreshment shall be sufficient to fully recover the variable costs and make a contribution to fixed costs. The charge is to be determined by the Authority with standardisation of prices across all regions and any relevant targets set by the Department of Education. Meals for kitchen and supervisory staff are excepted from this and shall be charged in line with their terms and conditions.

## **9. PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR PUPILS BRINGING FOOD TO SCHOOL**

### **Mandatory Provision**

9.1 The Authority shall provide facilities at all grant-aided schools in its area, other than voluntary grammar and grant-maintained integrated schools, for the consumption of any food brought to the school by day pupils.

## **Description of Facilities**

9.2 The facilities should include accommodation, furniture and supervision to enable pupils to eat in reasonable conditions. Provision should also be made for the cleaning of the accommodation to be used. However, the requirement to provide facilities does not extend to providing light equipment, such as knives, forks, plates, beakers, etc nor does it extend to providing facilities for cooking or heating food. The Authority should make optimum use of existing accommodation and furniture to facilitate these pupils. Where there is spare accommodation in the school meals dining area this should be the first choice for the placement of pupils bringing packed lunches. Where there is no such spare capacity, or where it is inadequate to meet the needs of all pupils bringing lunches, then other existing appropriate accommodation, such as an assembly hall or classrooms, should be used. Consideration should also be given to introducing staggered lunch breaks where feasible. The provision of purpose-built accommodation for such purposes should be a last resort and would require prior approval from the Department.

## **Consultation with Trustees and Managers of Grant-Aided Voluntary Schools other than Voluntary Grammar Schools and Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools**

9.3 Having regard to Article 59(5) of the Order, the Authority should obtain the consent of the Trustees and Managers of a grant-aided voluntary school, other than a voluntary grammar or a grant-maintained integrated school, to the use, free of charge, of such buildings and equipment to accommodate pupils bringing meals or other refreshment to the school who cannot be accommodated in the school meals dining area. Where it is necessary for such buildings to be used, the Authority should make adequate arrangements for the supervision of the pupils while they are consuming their food and should also make arrangements with the Managers of the school for the buildings in use to be cleaned.

## **10. PREMISES NOT UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF THE AUTHORITY**

### **Responsibility of the Authority**

10.1 The Authority is required, under the terms of Article 59(4) of the Order, to provide or secure the provision of premises etc in connection with the operation of the school meals service. To comply with this duty in the case of nursery, primary and secondary schools (other than grant-maintained integrated schools) or special schools not under its management the Authority, having regard to Article 59(5) of the Order, should consult the Trustees and Managers of such schools about the use, alteration or addition to the school premises to render them suitable for the purposes of the school meals service. Where agreement is reached to such use, alteration or addition and this deprives the Managers of a school of the use wholly or partly of such premises for essential school purposes the Authority, subject to the approval of the Department, shall make good such deprivation.

### **Expense**

10.2 Where such alterations, erection of buildings or any other work are required solely for the provision of facilities for the school meals service, the expense thereof shall be borne wholly by the Authority.

## **Lease**

10.3 The Authority, before undertaking such alterations, erection of buildings or any other work, shall, subject to the approval of the Department, enter into a contract or agreement either by way of lease or otherwise with the Trustees of the school.

## **11. REFERRAL TO DEPARTMENT**

Any doubt or dispute as to the meaning or the effect of these Arrangements shall be referred to the Department whose decision thereon shall be final.

## ANNEX



# NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LUNCHES

**August 2008**

## NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LUNCHES

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

Food group	Standards
<b>Group 2: Fruit and vegetables.</b>  <b>This group includes fresh, frozen, canned and dried varieties and fruit juices.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not less than <b>two portions</b> of fruit and vegetables should be available per child throughout the lunch service.</li> <li>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).</li> <li>Pies, crumbles and other composite fruit dishes must contain at least <b>one portion of fruit per serving</b>.</li> <li>Pies, casseroles, stews and other composite main course dishes must contain <b>a minimum of half a portion of vegetables per serving</b>, in addition to a separate serving of vegetables or salad.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Baked beans must not be served as a vegetable more than <b>once a week</b> in a primary school. Baked beans must not be the only vegetable option on any day in a post-primary school.</li> <li>If beans or pulses form the protein part of a main course, another vegetable must be available.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Notes</b></li> <li>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.</li> <li>Spaghetti tinned in tomato sauce does not count as a vegetable.</li> <li>Unlike most vegetables, baked beans do not contain vitamin C.</li> <li>Serving a separate, non-pulse vegetable with pulse-based vegetarian options provides variety for vegetarians and ensures that a mixture of nutrients is provided.</li> </ul>	

### 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.

	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
<b>Group 3: Milk and dairy foods.</b>  <b>This group includes milk, cheese, yogurt and milk puddings.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every lunch service must contain a portion or portions of food from this group.</li> <li>In addition drinking milk must be available as an option every day.</li> <li>Cheese must not be served as the only vegetarian option more than <b>twice a week</b>.</li> <li>Cheese may be used as a topping more frequently.</li> </ul>
<b>Notes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Milk and milk products are excellent sources of several nutrients including calcium, which is important for good bone development, protein and vitamins.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Alternatives to cheese provide variety for vegetarians. Recommended alternatives include beans, pulses and lentils.</li> <li>Where a portion of cheese is served as the main protein item, it also counts as a portion of food from Group 4.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	

Food Group	Standards
<b>Group 4: Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein.</b>  <b>This group includes beef, pork, lamb, chicken, fish, eggs, pulses, eg peas, beans, lentils.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every lunch service must contain a portion or portions of food from this group.</li> <li>Meals containing red meat must be served: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a minimum of twice a week and a maximum of three times a week</b> in nursery and primary schools; and</li> <li><b>a minimum of three times a week and a maximum of four times a week</b> in post-primary schools.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Fish should be available <b>at least once a week</b> in primary schools and <b>at least twice a week</b> in post-primary schools.</li> <li>Oily fish should be available <b>at least once every four weeks</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Notes</b>	
<p><b>'Times a week'</b> 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"> <li>Red meat includes beef, pork and lamb and meals made from them.</li> <li>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% <b>lean</b> 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</li> <li>On days when red meat is being served at lunch, there can be more than one choice as pupils will only choose one option.</li> <li>Red meat is a good source of iron.</li> <li>Meat, fish and alternatives such as eggs, beans and pulses are a major source of protein.</li> </ul>	

- 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
<b>Group 5a: Fried and other high fat foods.</b>  <b>This group includes cooking fats and oils, oily salad dressings, mayonnaise, salad cream, crisps, cream, pastry.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 <b>may be served a maximum of twice a week.</b></li> <li>In addition whole muscle or fillet of fish coated in breadcrumbs can be served <b>once a week.</b></li> <li>Meat or chicken products (such as burgers, sausages, chicken nuggets etc) may be served <b>a maximum of once a week</b> in primary schools and a <b>maximum of twice a week</b> in post primary schools.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>There should be <b>at least 2 days each week</b> 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. This is to encourage children to try a greater range of foods in their diets and explore new taste experiences.</li> <li>When a high fat starchy food is served for eg chips or garlic bread an alternative without added fat must be available.</li> <li>Lower fat desserts must be available on days when deep-fried foods and other high fat foods are offered.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>

## Notes

**'Times a week'** refers to a food service opportunity ie a breakfast service, break service or lunch service.

**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.**

- 'Deep-fried or other high fat foods' includes:
  - 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;
  - 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:
  - 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;
  - Not be “economy burgers” as described in the Meat Products Regulations (NI) 2004;
  - 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:
  - fresh, stewed or tinned fruit (in fruit juice) or fruit salad, either on its own or served with low fat yogurt or fromage frais;
  - baked apple with custard;
  - low fat yogurt or fromage frais;
  - milk puddings, eg custard, semolina, rice pudding, tapioca – served with fruit;
  - fruit crumble with custard;
  - fruit sponge made with egg/fatless sponge eg Eves pudding served with custard;
  - fruit crisp (breadcrumb topping) with custard;
  - fruit ‘fool’ made with custard/ fromage frais/ yogurt;
  - jelly and fruit;
  - ice cream and fruit;
  - jelly, ice cream and fruit;
  - instant dessert served with fruit;
  - bread and butter pudding with custard;
  - fruit flan (egg/fatless sponge) with fresh or tinned fruit and fromage frais;
  - wholemeal/flakemeal biscuit, ½ portion of fruit and semi skimmed milk to drink;
  - 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
<b>Group 5b: Confectionery and Other Sweet Foods:</b>  <b>Sugar, Sweet pastry, Chocolate, Sweets, Sweetened Soft Drinks, Puddings, Cakes, Biscuits, Jam, Jelly, Ice-cream.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confectionery, chocolate and chocolate-coated products should not be available throughout the lunchtime.</li> <li>Cakes and biscuits can only be provided at lunchtime and as part of a meal.</li> <li>Cakes, biscuits and puddings made with cocoa powder should only be available a maximum of 2 days per week.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>
<b>Notes</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confectionery includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chocolate and chocolate products, for example: bars of milk, plain or white chocolate; chocolate flakes, buttons, or chocolate-filled eggs.</li> <li>Chocolate-coated bars.</li> <li>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).</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Cereal chewy bars, cereal crunchy bars, cereal cake bars, processed fruit bars.</li> <li>Fresh or dried fruit that has been sugared or covered with a yoghurt or chocolate coating.</li> <li>Choc ices and other chocolate coated ice-cream.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>NB This 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 } these drinks are
  - tea } not suitable for
  - coffee } 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.