

## School food menu checklist for parents

Use this simple checklist to help you review your child's school menu and talk to the school or caterer about healthy, balanced food options. It's based on the current UK School Food Standards.

### Menu requirements (statutory standards)

#### 1. Fruit, vegetables and salad

- Fruit and/or vegetables are served every day.
- Across the week, a variety of vegetables and fruit is used (not the same items repeated daily).

#### 2. Starchy foods

- A starchy food (e.g potatoes, rice, pasta, bread) is served every day.
- Wholegrain starchy foods are included regularly (at least once or twice a week).

#### 3. Protein foods

- Meat, fish, eggs, beans or other non-dairy protein are served on three or more days a week.
- Processed or high-fat meat/poultry products (e.g., sausages, burgers, nuggets) is served no more than once per week in primary schools (twice per week in secondary).
- Oily fish is served at least once every 3 weeks.

#### 4. Milk and dairy

- A portion of milk, cheese, yogurt or dairy alternative (fortified, unsweetened) is available every day.

## **5. Fried and high-fat foods**

- Foods that are deep-fried, battered or breadcrumb-coated are served no more than 2 portions per week across the whole school day.
- Pastry-based items (e.g., pies, pasties) are limited to no more than 2 portions per week.

## **6. Drinks**

- Only the following drinks are offered:
  - Plain water
  - Lower-fat milk or lactose-reduced milk
  - Fortified, unsweetened milk alternatives
  - Fruit or vegetable juice (150 ml max; can only be served at lunchtime)

## **7. Snacks and confectionery**

- No confectionery (e.g., sweets, chocolate bars) is available at any time.
- Crisps are not offered except as part of an allowed meal component (e.g., savoury crackers with cheese).
- Snacks, if offered, are limited to:
  - fruit
  - vegetables
  - plain bread
  - nuts/seeds (where permitted)

## **Good practice (not mandatory but highly recommended)**

- **Menu quality and variety**

- Menus are changed at two to three times per year to reflect seasonal produce.
- Menus offer a range of dishes throughout the week.
- Wholegrain options (brown rice, wholemeal pasta/bread) appear frequently.

- Healthy desserts (e.g., fruit, yogurt) are offered regularly and the only option on the menu.
- Vegetarian or plant-based main options are available daily (above the legal minimum) and ensure they contain adequate amounts of protein.
- Menus include culturally diverse and inclusive dishes.

- **Environment and inclusion**

- Caterers meet allergy, intolerance and cultural/religious dietary requirements.
- Dining spaces are welcoming, calm and well-supervised.
- Pupil voice is gathered and influences menu decisions.
- Parents can view menus in advance (e.g., on school website).

### **Questions to ask your school**

- Who plans and reviews the school menus, and how often?
- How does the school gather feedback from pupils and parents?
- Are ingredients locally sourced or seasonal where possible?
- Are cooking, nutrition or food education taught as part of the curriculum?