



Staplehurst School

Packed lunch and snack guidelines

Policy reviewed and approved by the headteacher

May 2026

Policy to be next reviewed

May 2027

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1. Introduction

What children eat at school is important. School lunches must meet strict national standards to provide approximately one third of a child's daily nutritional requirements. Research by the Food Standards Agency (School Lunchbox Survey, 2004) and later research by the School Food Trust found that many packed lunches were high in fat, sugar and salt.

These guidelines are intended to support parents and carers in providing healthy, safe and balanced food for their children, without being overly prescriptive. They reflect national school food standards and form part of our whole-school approach to health and wellbeing.

As a **nut-free school**, no products containing nuts or nut products may be brought into school, either as part of a packed lunch or as a break-time snack.

2. Aim of the guidelines:

At Staplehurst School, our aim is that all packed lunches:

- Are packed and stored safely
- Are healthy and balanced, in line with national school food standards
- Are eaten within a positive, inclusive dining environment

Specifically, these guidelines aim to:

- Improve the nutritional quality of packed lunches and break-time snacks
- Ensure food brought from home is broadly comparable in nutritional value to school meals
- Encourage healthy eating habits that support lifelong wellbeing

These guidelines apply to all pupils and parents/carers providing packed lunches or food to be consumed in school or on school trips during the school day.

3. School responsibilities

The school will:

- Encourage and support pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 to take up their Universal Infant Free School Meal entitlement
- Provide a safe, clean and calm environment for pupils to eat their lunch
- Store packed lunches in a cool, dry place
- Allow pupils having packed lunches and school dinners to sit together

- Ensure free, fresh drinking water is available at all times
- Support pupils with food allergies or intolerances, with appropriate supervision at lunchtime

All uneaten food and waste will be returned home in the lunchbox so that parents and carers can monitor their child's food consumption.

4. Parent and carer expectations

Parents and carers are expected to ensure that packed lunches and break-time snacks follow the guidance set out below. These expectations are shared in the spirit of partnership and support, rather than enforcement.

5. Break time snack guidelines

Only the following are permitted at break time:

- Fresh fruit (e.g. berries, apple/banana slices, grapes, orange segments, melon)
- Veggie sticks (e.g. carrots, cucumber, bell peppers, celery, snap peas with hummus)
- Snacks should not be crisps, crackers, breadsticks, confectionery, flavoured yoghurts, chocolate-coated products, cakes and biscuits, cereal bars, or fruit bars.

6. Packed lunch guidelines

Packed lunches should be broadly based on the Eatwell Plate model (see Appendix 1) and should include the following each day:

a) Foods to include daily

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables
- Meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, or non-animal protein source including beans, lentils, chickpeas, hummus or falafel
- A starchy food, preferably wholegrain varieties such as bread, pasta, rice, couscous, wraps or chapattis
- A dairy food, such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, custard or calcium-enriched plant-based alternatives
- A drink of water, milk or fruit juice

b) Foods not permitted in packed lunches

To remain in line with national school food standards, packed lunches should not include:

- Nuts or nut-based products (including spreads and snacks)
- Snacks high in salt, such as crisps* – instead include plain popcorn, vegetable sticks, seeds, savoury crackers or breadsticks
- Confectionery, including sweets, chocolate bars, chocolate-coated sweets or chewing gum – instead include fruit or flapjack
- Fizzy or sugary drinks, including diet drinks and energy drinks. These may contain high levels of sugar, caffeine or additives and are not suitable for children

c) Foods to include occasionally

The following foods may be included occasionally (approximately once per week) as part of a balanced lunch:

- Processed or pastry products such as sausage rolls, pies, or sausages, salami etc. due to their higher fat and salt content
- A non-confectionary (no sweets or chocolate) dessert item can be given part of lunch. Any cakes and plain biscuits should be eaten as part of a balanced meal rather than as a substitute for healthier items.
- *Crisps are permitted once a week in lunchboxes in line with the weekly appearance of chips on the school menu on a Friday.

7. Special diets and allergies

The school recognises that some pupils require special diets and that these guidelines may not always be met exactly. In these cases, parents and carers are encouraged to ensure that packed lunches are as healthy and balanced as possible within dietary needs.

For health and safety reasons pupils are not permitted to swap food items

8. Health and Safety

Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Providing an appropriate lunchbox that keeps food secure and hygienic
- Including an ice pack where appropriate

Food prepared at home and stored at ambient temperatures can develop increased levels of bacteria over time. The school:

- Will provide suitable storage areas for packed lunch bags where possible
- Cannot provide refrigerated storage
- Cannot take legal responsibility for food prepared at home and brought into school

For safety reasons glass bottles and tins are not permitted in packed lunches.

9. Useful links for further information

- [Food for Life](#)
- [School Food Standards \(GOV.UK\):](#)
- [NHS Healthier Lunchboxes](#)
- [The Eatwell Guide](#)

Appendix 1: The Eatwell Guide

