Villa Real School

together we achieve

Packed Lunch Policy

Responsibility: SMT Date: November 2026

Date to be reviewed: November 2029

INTRODUCTION

To grow and stay healthy pupils/students need to eat a nutritionally well-balanced diet. Schools are an influential setting and can contribute significantly to improving the health and well-being of pupils/students.

Good nutrition in childhood can help to prevent a variety of health problems, both in the short term and later in life. There is increasing concern that many pupils/students are consuming too much fat, sugar and salt and too little fibre, fruit and vegetables.

Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly food intake and therefore need to be balanced and nutritious.

AIM

To ensure that packed lunches (brought in from home) reflect the standards for school meals introduced in September 2014 and show regard for Natasha's Law 2021.

RATIONALE:

- Schools are required to positively promote the health and wellbeing of its pupils/students
- The content of lunchboxes needs to reflect the requirement of schools to meet minimum food and nutrition standards for school meals and the needs of our complex pupils
- The contents of lunchboxes in some schools can be extremely unhealthy, recent audits of lunchboxes have shown that in the main they contain foods with high levels of fat, sugar and salt, and very few fruit and vegetables
- To encourage healthy eating habits from an early age and improve the overall nutrition of pupils/students
- The short term effects of unhealthy packed lunches and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration and behavioural problems which may have an impact on a child's learning
- The longer term effects of a poor diet in childhood can be an increased risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease and diabetes in adulthood

OBJECTIVES

- To improve the nutritional quality of packed lunches in schools and the eating habits of pupils/students at lunchtimes
- To develop an awareness in pupils/students, parents/carers, staff and the wider community that the School takes a pro-active approach to promoting healthy eating
- To encourage healthy eating habits in childhood that can influence health and wellbeing in later life

- To ensure that food brought into school (packed lunches) reflects and meets Food Standards for School Food (2014) and Natasha's Law 2021

IMPLEMENTATION

This packed lunch policy fits within a wider context of promoting a whole school approach to food and healthy eating. The school is a nut free school and pupils with complex sensory needs or dysphasia will be sorted in school by appropriately trained staff, risk assessments and relevant medical input.

Pupils/students packed lunches should be based on the 'Eatwell Guide' model which shows items the 5 main food groups; (Food Standards Agency).

Bread, Rice, Potatoes, Pasta

These starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Packed lunches should include 2 or more portions.

Fruit and Vegetables

These foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Lunches should include at least 1 portion of fruit and 1 portion of vegetables/salad, or more.

Milk and Dairy foods

These foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Include 1 portion at lunch

Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans

These foods provide protein for growth. Packed lunches should include 1 portion of these foods

Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

It is important not to fill up on too many foods that are high in fat and/or sugar at the expense of other more nutritious foods. Limiting high fat and sugar foods will help protect young people from becoming overweight as well as helping prevent tooth decay, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. This is why sweets, chocolate, crisps, cereal bars, fruit bars, toffee/salted popcorn, squash and fizzy drinks are no longer available in schools. Please support your school by not including these items in a packed lunch**.**

Drinks

Any drinks provided in lunch boxes **should only** include either plain water, milk (semi-skimmed), unsweetened fresh fruit juice, diluted fresh fruit juice, fruit or dairy based smoothies.

WASTE AND DISPOSAL

The School will, within reason, send any uneaten packed lunch food items back home. The rationale for this is that parents/carers can also monitor what their child has consumed during the day and then raise any concerns over their child's food intake with the School.

PROMOTION OF HEALTHY PACKED LUNCHES

There will be ongoing promotion of the need to provide healthy packed lunches though:

- Pupil/student, parent/carers newsletters
- School prospectus/brochure
- Whole School/Packed Lunch Policy
- Health weeks/healthy eating activities
- Curriculum content
- Parents/carers evenings / parent consultations
- School involvement in National Healthy Schools Programme

PACKED LUNCH CONTAINERS

It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to provide an appropriate packed lunch container where food items can be stored securely and appropriately until the lunchtime period. Parents/carers are advised to include an ice pack. Food products prepared and stored in ambient temperatures after a period of time can have increased levels of bacteria in them.

STORAGE OF PACKED LUNCHES

The School will provide storage area/facilities for packed lunch bags, in the most convenient and appropriate place possible. However, the School cannot provide cooled storage areas and therefore cannot take legal responsibility for foods prepared at home and then brought into school.

DINING FACILITIES FOR PUPILS/STUDENTS BRINGING PACKED LUNCH

The School will provide an appropriate area where pupils/students who choose to bring packed lunches can eat; this may be within the classroom when the dining hall cannot be used.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The School will carry out monitoring of packed lunch provision - where there may be concerns over a child's food/nutrition intake and/or content of packed lunches, this can be dealt with timely and sensitively. Monitoring and review will also examine those pupils with limited diets due to their medical needs and include the support from school nurses as part of the Healthy Child Pathway.

OfSTED are required to report on how the School promotes the personal development and wellbeing of all pupils/students – this may include food provision including packed lunches brought into school.

The Local Authority will work with the School to review packed lunch provision and will provide advice and support to members of the School community.

National Healthy School Programme (NHSP):
In order to achieve National Healthy Schools Status, schools are required to:

- "Ensure healthier food and drink options are available and promoted in breakfast clubs, at break and at lunchtimes – as outlined by Food in Schools guidance"
- "Monitors pupil/students' menus and food choices to inform policy development and provision"

Schools that have achieved National Healthy School Status (NHSS) may be monitored as part of a national and local quality assurance process.

POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as part of the School's agreed policy review process**.** In addition, any major legislative or Governmental changes regarding school food may lead to this policy being amended.