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Establishing a Whole School Food Policy

Bringing together messages about food throughout the school day



Contents

Why have a Whole School Food Policy? What is a Whole School Food Policy?	2
Health and Wellbeing	3
How to develop and implement a Whole School Food Policy	4
Food in Schools Audit Tool	8
Sample Policy	11
Sources of Further Information Acknowledgements	12

Welcome

This guide has been written to help your school develop, write and implement a Whole School Food Policy. It is designed to be easy-to-follow and based firmly in the context of real school life. Food has a significant role to play in determining health and wellbeing, establishing social roles and reflecting and shaping the school's ethos and individuals' values. A Whole School Food Policy can benefit pupils, staff, parents, caterers and others associated with your school.

Why develop a Whole School Food Policy?

A Whole School Food Policy enables your school to have a shared philosophy on all aspects of food. A policy:

- sets out a co-ordinated approach to food;
- ensures equality of access for all;
- reinforces appropriate messages relating to food and nutrition, e.g. ensuring consistency between the formal curriculum and food provision, emphasising healthy eating messages;
- gives parents information on all aspects of food in school;
- shows that your school is caring to all stakeholders, and the wider community, by making a public statement of the values to which the school is committed;
- communicates a school's shared vision, ethos and values;
- establishes effective working partnerships, working towards a common goal;
- forms part of the school's development plan, providing a strategic vision, which everyone understands;
- makes provision for staff training and resources to meet its aims;
- aims to improve health and wellbeing for all.

What is a Whole School Food Policy?

A Whole School Food Policy is a shared, evolving document for all stakeholders that interact with your school. It expresses a common vision of the ethos, status, and role of all aspects of food within your school.

It encourages all aspects of food to be brought together, clearly, coherently and consistently. Food in schools includes:

- the formal curriculum, e.g. subjects (design and technology, science, personal, social and health education, citizenship), equipment and resources, ingredient provision and continuing professional development for staff;
- extra curricular activities, e.g. cookery club, school gardens;
- participation in national events and initiatives, e.g. National School Fruit Scheme, National Healthy School Standard, Growing Schools, Focus on Food and Sainsbury's Taste of Success;
- provision of food at school, e.g. breakfast clubs, tuck shop, school lunch, vending, fluid consumption and use of food as a reward;
- consumption of food at school, e.g. eating environment, service style, time, litter, pupils bringing food to schools, packed lunches (including information to parents) and commercial food vans;
- events and lettings at school, e.g. school fete;
- pastoral care and welfare issues, e.g. behaviour, free school lunches.

The process of developing a whole school policy facilitates staff discussion, provides a clear audit of the role and profile of food in any school and engages all staff towards its successful establishment. Arguably, the process is more important than the final document.

Health and Wellbeing

Research into the health and wellbeing of schoolchildren has shown that co-ordinated approaches need to be taken.

- The government report, the *National Diet and Nutrition Survey: Young People aged 4-18 years (2000)*, provides comprehensive information on the dietary patterns, nutrient intakes, nutritional status and physical activity patterns of young people in Britain today. With the exception of very young children (4-6 years old), between 40-69% of children in Britain are largely inactive. There is concern over the increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity in children. British children are typically eating less than half the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. One in five 4-18 year olds eats no fruit at all during an average week.
- The *Sodexo School Meals and Lifestyle Survey (2002)* reported on the eating patterns of pupils, healthy eating concerns, parental views and views on catering. The survey suggests that schools need to discuss the issues relating to healthy eating more, particularly through groups or forums; pupils would eat more healthily if food was more appetising; parents want more information from schools about food provision and want to know that their children are taught about diet, nutrition and practical food skills.
- There is a concern that an estimated 20% of pupils who are entitled to free school meals do not take them. A DfES report (2001), produced by the Child Poverty Action Group, made a series of recommendations to ensure that these pupils and families take up their entitlement.
- Research has shown that eating breakfast improves children's problem solving abilities, their memory, concentration levels, visual perception and creative thinking. An evaluation of breakfast clubs by the New Policy Institute (2001) stated that all schools involved believed that attendance at the breakfast club provided a good start to the day, leaving the children more settled, attentive and motivated to learn. Breakfast club co-ordinators have also reported improved punctuality and school attendance.
- OFSTED (2001) reported that the impact of the National Healthy School Standard was good or better; schools generally made better progress since their last inspection; and schools were making improvements at a faster rate than schools nationally in behaviour, standard of work, quality of the PSHE programme and management and support of the pupils.
- A recent British Nutrition Foundation conference (2002), addressing the area of beverages and health, reported that there is no firm evidence on the effects of dehydration in schoolchildren. However, it has been suggested that lack of water intake during the day may cause some adverse health effects and impairment of cognitive function. Therefore provision should be made for water and milk to be included with school lunches and for drinks to be available during physical activity. The School Nutrition Action Group Newsletter (winter 2002) also supports the need for drinks to be available in school for the sake of children's health to improve the health of the school community.

There is a range of initiatives designed to contribute towards empowering children with knowledge and opportunities to make informed choices for their future health. Some of these school initiatives are listed below and need careful implementation to ensure a co-ordinated approach. These include: The Healthy Schools Programme; Growing Schools; Nutritional standards for school lunches and delegated budgets; DH/DfES Food in Schools programme; Wired for Health web-site; and the National School Fruit Scheme.

How to develop and implement a Whole School Food Policy

Introduction

The following is an eight-step guide to developing and implementing a Whole School Food Policy. Although not exhaustive, it sets out a series of helpful questions and actions that need to be considered and put in place.

1. Establish that there is sufficient enthusiasm

- Do the Headteacher, senior management team and board of governors believe in a Whole School Food Policy? Do you have a vision? Do they share the vision?
- What are the perceived priorities in your school? Food may not be high on your agenda. However, as an area of study, and as a basic requirement for life, it can have a positive influence on school attainment, punctuality and pupil/staff wellbeing.
- Do teaching and non-teaching staff generally feel that this is something they can share? Do they understand that everyone is involved and will have responsibilities for implementing and monitoring the policy?
- A working group could be assembled to oversee the policy writing and consultation. School Nutrition Action Groups (SNAGs) or a food forum (like a school council) are successful models that many schools use throughout the country. The initial stages of development could be undertaken by a small representative core group, e.g. teachers, pupils, Governors and catering staff. All other stakeholders need to be involved at a later stage during consultation.

Considerations

- Why have a policy?
- Who will lead this policy development?
- What are your perceived needs?
- What are the benefits to the school, pupils, staff and parents?
- Can the school support its implementation and subsistence?
- Who will form the initial working group?

To Do

- Discuss the concept of a Whole School Food Policy with Governors, Senior Management Team and staff.
- Identify the perceived benefits for the school.
- Establish a rationale for the policy.
- Establish the remit for the policy.
- Create a Working Group to start the initial development.

2. Conduct an audit of food in school

- Assess the extent of food related issues in your school. Conduct an audit of food provision throughout your school. This task may be sub-divided between members of the Working Group, looking at food provision, the formal curriculum, extra curricular activities and consumption of food at school. It will act as a baseline, from which progress can be monitored.
- Review the results of the audit. Tease out good areas and those in need of improvement. Share this information with the school. Keep all stakeholders informed of progress, e.g. staff, catering service, LEA, parents and pupils.
- Decide priorities for your school. Consider points for action. How do these relate to your original perceived needs?

Considerations

- Who would under take the audit?
- Why conduct an audit?
- Who will you talk to?

To Do

- Conduct the audit.
- Review and publish the results.
- Decide on the needs and priorities of your school.
- Start to formulate aims and objective for your policy, based on these priorities.
- Establish targets/success criteria.

3. Draft policy document

- In consultation with the Working Group, draft a policy that reflects the needs of the pupils and school, identified through the audit, and the values in which the Senior Management Team/Governors believe.
- Try to keep the policy document tight, set realistic goals and set out who is responsible for implementing and monitoring each aspect, i.e. what it means in practice, where, how, when and by whom it will be done.
- The policy document might have the following headings:
 - Introduction (date agreed, review date, accessibility rights, where it can be found)
 - Aim, (i.e. why are you writing the food policy?).
 - Objectives, i.e. what do you want to achieve?
 - Guidelines, i.e. how will the objectives be met?
 - Monitoring and evaluation, i.e. how will you know whether your objectives are being met?

Considerations

- Is the formal school curriculum and approach to teaching aspects of food and nutrition consistent, up-to-date and unbiased?
- How often do children cook?
- What type of food service do you have? Find out about the variety of food, eating environment, time and theme weeks. Are there healthy options?
- Do you have a breakfast club or (fruit) tuck shop?
- Is there adequate provision of drinking water?
- Does your school participate in national schemes or special events, e.g. health weeks?
- Do you have a school viewpoint on vending machines, e.g. including healthy options.
- As a school, do you have a commitment to staff training to ensure that the policy achieves its aims?
- How will you determine the role of all stakeholders to ensure the policy works?

To Do

- Nominate a group member to write a preliminary draft, in line with the audit results and school vision.
- Allow group members, as well as the Headteacher and Governors, to provide constructive feedback on this draft.
- Modify draft and print copies ready for consultation.
- Produce and print a consultation response form.

4. Consult on the draft policy document

- The draft policy document should be made available to all stakeholders. A set length of time for consultation should be established, with all comments being returned to a named individual, e.g. the school secretary.
- Although general feedback may be welcome, consideration should also be given to the creation of a brief questionnaire for completion and return. This will help to focus the respondent's mind and provide data which may be analysed to help determine school priorities and needs.
- The document could be made available to all school staff through a briefing, as part of a school newsletter for pupils and parents and to the wider community through the school's website (considering different community languages).

Considerations

- Are you clear about the aims and objectives?
- Have you thought through all the consequences?
- Have you consulted widely?
- Is the policy realistic? (time/resources/staff)
- Is the policy clear, explicit and straightforward?

To Do

- Produce the draft policy document, or reproduce its aims in a format that will be understood by different stakeholders.
- Set a deadline for the consultation process.
- Advertise the consultation process.
- Send out policy to stakeholders, with response form.
- At end of consultation period, compile responses to the draft policy.
- Review and consolidate comments received.

5. Modify draft policy document in light of feedback

- Analyse the feedback, this will help to inform any modifications to the policy.
- Give consideration to each aspect of feedback, e.g. what is perceived as useful or appropriate?
- The policy document should include an acknowledgement of who was consulted in its production, and be dated.

Considerations

- Does the school have sufficient resources to make the policy work?
- Does the curriculum content, management and food provision reflect and endorse healthy eating messages?
- Do staff require training in aspects of food and nutrition?
- How can the school ensure pupils entitled to free school meals take them up?
- Are extra-curricular activities desired? If so, is there sufficient funding and enthusiasm?
- How are references to feedback responded to?

To Do

- Modify draft policy document in light of consultation.
- Ratify the modified policy document at group meeting.
- Get Governor and Senior Management Team sign-off.
- Produce policy document.

6. Disseminate revised policy document

- The policy document should be disseminated widely in different formats, e.g. a flyer of the key issues for parents, inclusion in prospectus.
- A series of displays could be produced around the school, highlighting different aspects of the policy, e.g. healthy eating, fruit and vegetables.
- Those with responsibilities for implementation and monitoring need to understand what they have to do. (ensuring that they have the time/ability to implement and monitor).
- Let all stakeholders know that the policy is a group effort – empowering the school to make a difference to the health of all.
- In primary and secondary schools, the policy document could be shared with local cluster school groups or feeder schools – establishing a partnership of understanding.

Considerations

- Is the policy easy to read and understand?
- Does it need to be translated?
- How will you disseminate the policy?
- Have you produced an effective dissemination plan?

To Do

- Provide copies of the policy to all school staff, not only teaching staff.
- Set up displays representing food topics, e.g. healthy eating, importance of drinking.
- Let all stakeholders know about the policy, in a format that will be most easily understood, e.g. assemblies, staff meetings, SNAG/School Council meetings, a letter for parents, on the school web-site, in the school newsletter or prospectus and to local newspapers (letting the local community know about how the school cares about health and wellbeing).

7. Implement policy document statements

- Put the policy into action.
- Let people know what is required from them in the policy and ensure they can do it.
- Ensure that training and resources identified in the policy are met.
- Convene a School Council or SNAG to discuss matters relating to food in school.
- Show the school how the policy is being implemented – celebrate your successes.

Considerations

- What is the best way of implementing the objectives in your policy?
- How will you let different people know what their responsibilities are?
- Who will take part in your School Council or SNAG?

To Do

- Delegate responsibility for the success of each objective to a group member. Allow them to implement the policy in their specialist area, e.g. allow head of food technology to ensure food and nutrition content is up-to-date.
- Convene a School council or SNAG.
- Work with all stakeholders to ensure objectives are being met.

8. Monitor, evaluate and refresh the policy

- At regular intervals, e.g. annually, the policy document should be reappraised in light of developments and changes in school. New targets may need to be set or effort moved to new priorities and challenges.
- Judge/assess the worth of the policy.

Considerations

- Are the objectives in the policy being met? How can you tell?
- Have there been difficulties? Why have these arisen?
- What have been the successes? What made these possible?
- What do parents and pupils think about the policy? Is it having an effect on food choice, educational attainment, attendance or behaviour?
- Has the School Council or SNAG been successful? What has it reported on?
- Are there national initiatives in which the school should join?

To Do

- Introduce the policy as an agenda item for Governors and staff.
- Document actions, e.g. use a digital camera to record what is being done.
- Set up an open meeting for all stakeholders to share their viewpoints.
- Compile areas of strength and weakness.
- Modify policy and share with all stakeholders for the next year.

Sample Guide

Food in Schools Audit Tool

School name:	Date of audit:	
Headteacher name:		
Number of pupils on role:	% Female	% Male
% of pupils receiving free school meals:		

1. The formal curriculum

What is the pupil entitlement to the following subjects?

- *Design and Technology*

Is food technology taught as part of design & technology?	
What is the % of D&T time that is food based?	
What is the % of time that is devoted to practical work?	
Is there a Scheme of Work for food technology and if so, does it include aspects of practical work, healthy eating, food safety and hygiene?	
Primary – Do all staff teach food technology or is there a specialist?	
Secondary – Are all food technology teachers food specialists?	

- *Science*

Is there a Scheme of Work for Science, and does it include food?	
How much work involves handling food?	
Does nutrition and healthy eating form part of science?	

- *Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE)/ Citizenship*

Is PSHE/Citizenship taught as a discrete subject? How is it taught?	
Is there a Scheme of Work for PSHE/Citizenship?	
Are aspects of food, nutrition and health taught?	
Do all staff teach PSHE/Citizenship, including food aspects?	

- *General*

How is food and nutrition information in different subject areas co-ordinated and consistent messages ensured?	
How are different aspects of food education financed, e.g. equipment, tools and ingredients?	
Do staff attend CPD to up-date their skills, knowledge and understanding in food related issues? What about any staff teaching aspects of food with no formal training; what support do they receive?	

2. Extra curricular activities, e.g. cookery clubs

Does your school offer extra curricular activities? Does your school help fund these activities?

If yes, list. Are they well attended? Are they effective? Do they support healthy eating messages?

If no, why not? What are the barriers? Would staff, pupils and parents welcome the opportunity?

3. Participation in national events and initiatives

List the national events and initiatives in which your school is involved which have a food basis, e.g. National School Fruit Scheme, National Healthy School Standard, Growing Schools, D&T Week, Focus on Food or Sainsbury's Taste of Success. Comment on the success and merit of each. Do these events contribute towards your school vision?

4. Provision of food at school**School lunch**

Do you work with the caterer, perhaps in the form of a School Council or SNAG, to review school meal uptake, menu and cost?

Does the food on offer meet/exceed the minimum standards for school lunches? How do you know?

Are pupils entitled to free school meals integrated, or do they have to queue separately for tokens?
Do you use a cash or cashless system?

Does your school promote school lunch, e.g. theme days, competitive pricing or healthy eating?
If so, how? Is it successful?

Is training available for catering staff?

Drinking

Does your school provide access to drinking water (or other beverages) throughout the day? Is it hygienic? Is special provision made during hot weather or after physical activity?

In primary schools, are you and/or parents aware of pupil eligibility to subsidised milk or support (for some families) through the Welfare Food Scheme?

Other food provision at school

Does your school offer:	No	Yes
A breakfast club	[]	[]
A tuck shop	[]	[]
Vending machines	[]	[]

If yes, is it successful? What does it sell? Does it provide choice? Do pupils/staff use it? Do pupils/staff want to see any changes made to current provision? Does the food available reflect healthy eating messages and what is taught in the formal curriculum?

If no, why not? What are the barriers? Is there a need? For example, in partnership with the caterer, survey the number of pupils who have breakfast as a means of determining whether breakfast clubs could be introduced.

5. Consumption of food at school

Comment on the current status of the following:

- School lunch eating environment
- Do staff eat with pupils? If so, why? If not, why not?
- School lunch rota and timing
- Provision made for pupils who eat packed lunches / Storage of lunch boxes
- Pupils eating food, brought from home, at break or lunch times
- Commercial shops and vans outside the school premises
- Use of food as part of school reward system

6. Events and lettings at school, e.g. school fete;

When the school premises are booked by external organisations, are they made aware of the school's food policy? How can you ensure that it will be followed?

7. Pastoral care and welfare issues

Are all staff, parents and visitors to the school aware of aspects dealing with pupil health and wellbeing?

Is information, or training, provided to enable staff and parents to have an informed understanding of food issues?

Sample Policy

School Name: XXXXXXXXX

Date of policy implementation: XX/XX/XX

Date of next review: XX/XX/XX

This document is freely available to the entire school community. It has also been made available in the school newsletter, web-site and prospectus.

Aim

To ensure that all aspects of food and nutrition in school promote the health and wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors to our school.

Objectives: What do we want to achieve?

- A) Review formal curriculum to ensure information relating to food and nutrition in different lesson areas is consistent and up-to-date.
- B) Work with the school caterer to trial a healthy breakfast club, serving a limited range of items.
- C) Establish a food week in school.
- D) Ensure that the vending machine has a variety of drinks available, e.g. water and fruit juice.
- E) Pilot an after school cookery club.
- F) Ensure that teacher with responsibility for food has Basic Food Hygiene training.

Guidelines: How are we going to meet our objectives?

- A) Formal curriculum: Set up cross-curricular working group to audit food based topics at each key stage.
- B) Breakfast: Work with caterer on a menu of breakfast options at a reasonable cost. Publicise club in form time and school newsletter, plus through poster advertising in the corridors.
- C) Food week: Run the Sainsbury's Taste of Success Food Awards in school during D+T week in June.
- D) Vending: Inform supplier that a range of drink choices must be made available, or terminate contract.
- E) Extra-curricular: Establish an after school cookery club.
- F) CPD: Send teacher in charge of food on 1-day Basic Food Hygiene course.

Monitoring and Evaluation: How do we know our objectives are being met?

- A) Formal curriculum: Head of Year to receive summary and observe a sample of lessons.
- B) Breakfast: School caterer to report on number of pupils using service. Ask pupils, parents and teachers their thoughts about the club and the range of food provided.
- C) Food week: Headteacher to present certificates in school assembly. Display of photographs for parents' evening.
- D) Vending: School secretary to review vending content once per month to ensure supplier is meeting with school wishes.
- E) Extra-curricular: Club recipe book to be produced and reports (photographs) posted on school web-site.
- F) CPD: Teacher in charge of food disseminates materials from training day to other teachers.

Notes

- School awarded Healthy School Standard.
- This policy document was produced in consultation with the entire school community, including pupils, parents, school staff, Governors, LEA representatives, community dietitian and local Healthy School Standards representative.
- This school actively supports healthy eating throughout the school day.

Sources of further information

Breakfast Clubs	www.breakfast-club.co.uk
British Meat Education Service	www.bmesonline.org.uk
British Nutrition Foundation	www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyschools.htm
Department for Education and Skills	www.nutrition.org.uk
School lunches	www.dfes.gov.uk
Design and Technology Association	www.dfes.gov.uk/schoollunches
Enuresis Resource and Information Centre	www.data.org.uk
Focus on Food Campaign	www.eric.org.uk/watercool.html
Food and Drink Federation	www.waitrose.com/focusonfood
Food Forum	www.foodlink.org.uk
Food Standards Agency	www.foodforum.org.uk
Fruit Tuck Shops	www.food.gov.uk
Health Development Agency	www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/fruittuckwales
Health Education Trust (SNAGs)	www.had-online.gov.uk
Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition	www.healthedtrust.com
Seafish Education	www.sacn.gov.uk
Sodexho School Meals and Lifestyle Survey 2002	www.seafish-education.org.uk
Sainsbury's Taste of Success	www.sodexho.co.uk/segments/smsurvey2002.pdf
Sustain Grab 5!	www.j-sainsbury.co.uk/tasteofsuccess
The Dairy Council	www.sustainweb.org/grab5_index.asp
The Growing Schools Garden	www.milk.co.uk
The National School Fruit Scheme	www.schoolsgarden.org.uk
Wired for Health	www.doh.gov.uk/schoolfruitscheme
Improving Up Take of Free School Meals	www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR270.PDF	

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British Nutrition Foundation
 High Holborn House
 52-54 High Holborn
 London WC1V 6RQ
 Tel: 020 7404 6504
 Fax: 020 7404 6747
 Email: postbox@nutrition.org.uk
 Web: www.nutrition.org.uk



Design and Technology Association
 16 Wellesbourne House
 Walton Road
 Wellesbourne
 Warwickshire CV35 9JB
 Tel: 01789 470007
 Fax: 01789 841955
 Email: data@data.org.uk
 Web: www.data.org.uk

