Multi Academy Trust Food and Nutrition Policy for Early Years Settings

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy outlines the MAT's commitment to promoting healthy eating and ensuring food safety across all early years settings. It applies to all staff, children, and families involved in the provision or consumption of food within our academies.

2. Guiding Principles

- All food and drink provided must be healthy, balanced, and nutritious.
- Food practices must support children's development, cultural diversity, and individual dietary needs.
- We aim to educate children and families on healthy eating habits and safe food practices.

3. Food Safety and Hygiene

To ensure the safety of all children:
- All foods brought from home must be checked for potential allergens to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.
- All food served to children must be prepared to prevent choking. Staff must follow the Food Standards Agency's guidance on safe food preparation.
- Communication with parents/carers is essential. We will provide guidance on:
- Packing food suitable for their child's developmental stage.
- Using insulated bags for perishable items and applying the '4-hour rule' if refrigeration is not available.
- Labelling lunch bags with the child's name and contents.
- Choosing foods that are safe at room temperature if refrigeration is unavailable.
- Refrigeration and reheating: Settings are not required to refrigerate or reheat food brought from home.
- Staff will follow the Food Standards Agency's food safety management procedures for small settings and childminders.

4. Guidance for Children Aged 1 to 5 Years

A Healthy Plate

- Encourage a **balanced diet** using the **4 main food groups**.
- Promote **group eating** to support social learning and food exploration.
- Refer to the Eatwell guide for visual guidance on balanced meals (for children aged 2+).

The 4 Food Groups

Children's daily diets should include:

1. **Fruit and vegetables**
2. **Starchy carbohydrates** (e.g. bread, rice, pasta)
3. **Dairy or alternatives**
4. **Proteins** (e.g. beans, fish, eggs, meat)

See the DfE poster on food groups for more.

Food Preparation & Choking Prevention

- Prepare food to **minimise choking risks**.
- Use these **FSA posters** and **Poster 2** for safe preparation tips.

Food & Drink Guidelines

- **Provide**: Include daily (e.g. fruits, whole grains).
- **Limit**: Reduce frequency (e.g. salty or sugary snacks).
- **Avoid**: Do not serve (e.g. fizzy drinks, sweets).

5. Food Brought from Home

- Parents/carers are encouraged to provide nutritious, balanced meals.
- Foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fats should be limited.
- We will provide sample menus and guidance to support families in making healthy choices.

6. Celebrations and Special Events

- To promote healthy habits, we encourage non-food-based celebrations (e.g., bubbles, stickers).
- If food is brought in for celebrations:
  - It must be checked for allergens.
  - Families should be encouraged to bring healthier options such as fruit platters.
  - Staff will communicate the setting's food guidelines clearly to parents/carers.

7. Communication and Partnership with Families

- We will maintain open communication with families about food practices.
- Regular updates, workshops, and resources will be provided to support healthy eating at home and in the setting.

8. Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to updates in government guidance.
- Feedback from staff, parents, and carers will be considered in policy updates.

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10. Coleshill C of E Primary School: local arrangements

This section supplements the BDMAT policy and sets out Coleshill Church of England's arrangements for healthy drinks and morning snacks from Nursery to Year 6. We work with families to promote healthy lifestyles and help children develop habits that support their wellbeing and learning.

10.1 Healthy drinks in school

Children must bring plain water only in their water bottles. Squash and flavoured water, including sugar-free varieties, must not be sent in water bottles. This is Coleshill's local expectation, supporting the School Food Standards' emphasis on water as the default drink.

Although some flavoured drinks are marketed as healthier alternatives to sugary drinks, sugar-free versions still taste sweet. Offering plain water regularly helps children become familiar with less sweet flavours and encourages healthy drinking habits.

Free, fresh drinking water is available to all pupils throughout the school day. Children are encouraged to bring a clearly labelled water bottle and refill it as needed.

If there is a medical reason why children should have a drink other than water available to them throughout the day, parents should let their class teacher know and provide medical evidence.

Milk is provided free for children under five. Parents and carers can purchase a daily carton of milk through Cool Milk: coolmilk.com/parents/.

10.2 Morning snacks

Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2: children are offered a fruit or vegetable snack by the school and do not need to bring a snack from home.

Years 3, 4, 5 and 6: children may bring an optional 'five-a-day' snack for morning break. Only fruit, vegetables, fruit juice or fruit smoothies are permitted. The school's approach is to allow snacks that contribute to children's five-a-day.

Suggested morning snacks

- Fresh fruit.
- Vegetables, prepared appropriately for the child's age.
- Dried fruit with no added sugar, salt or fat.
- Tinned fruit in water or natural juice, in a suitable container.
- A small carton of 100% fruit juice, not squash.
- A fruit smoothie with no added sugar: a small portion of up to 150 ml.

Not permitted as morning snacks

- Breadsticks or popcorn.
- Fruit Winders or similar processed fruit snacks that look like sweets.
- Cereal bars.
- Fruit-flavoured water, squash or Fruit Shoot-type drinks.

If a child brings another type of snack, staff will ask them to put it away and take it home. Expectations will be communicated clearly and respectfully to children and families.

10.3 Individual needs and food safety

These arrangements will be implemented alongside the food safety, choking prevention, medical diet and allergen requirements in this policy. Families should discuss any medical or individual dietary needs with the school so suitable arrangements can be agreed.

10.4 Further information

Department for Education: School Food Standards (GOV.UK).
Milk registration: coolmilk.com/parents/