Thomas Telford

Multi Academy Trust

Early Years Food Policy

As part of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS, providers should have regard to the EYFS nutrition guidance. Providers must take this guidance into account and should follow it unless there is good reason not to. This policy has been updated to take account of these new requirements.

September 2026

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Statement of intent

At Redhill Primary Academy (RPA) and Thomas Telford Primary Free School (TTPFS), we understand that the early years are a crucial time in a child's development and are aware that what children eat and drink and the habits they develop during this phase can impact their future health.

We value the importance of the EYFS in providing children with a nutritious, balanced diet that will encourage them to make healthy, informed choices. We work collaboratively with parents to promote healthy eating, identify health issues and highlight the risks of unhealthy eating practices.

We believe that food can be used in a variety of educational ways. Children are encouraged to celebrate holidays, religious festivals, special events and the various foods associated with these events and are encouraged to experiment with unfamiliar foods.

RPA and TTPFS meets all statutory food safety and nutrition requirements for educational settings in England' and aims to maintain these standards across all meals provided.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Public Health England (2024) 'Example menus for early years settings in England'
- DfE (2023) 'School food in England'
- DfE (2013) 'The school food plan'
- DfE (2024) 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'
- Food Safety Act 1990
- The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014
- The Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (also known as Natasha's Law)
- DfE (2025) 'Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Healthy Eating and Drinking Policy
- Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy
- Whole-school Food Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy

- Early Years Policy
- Early Years Lunch Box Policy

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring that this policy does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture or religion.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy, as outlined in the setting's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Ensuring the setting uses reliable suppliers for the food purchased.
- Informing parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting.

The EYFS lead, in conjunction with the headteacher, is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy.
- Reviewing menus and mealtimes to ensure children's needs are being met.
- Ensuring equipment is suitable for its use and providing separate facilities for handwashing and for washing up in the kitchen area.
- Ensuring all staff members are trained in basic food safety and hygiene.
- Ensuring parents are given adequate notice of any changes to meals, food choices or any other aspect of food provision.

The subject leaders of PSHE, PE and DT are jointly responsible for what is taught about healthy eating and practical food education in the curriculum. This is evident through our curriculum and enrichment planning.

Caterers and kitchen staff are responsible for providing high-quality food that complies with the national nutritional standards for school food and contributing to a welcoming and positive eating environment.

Early years staff are responsible for:

- Monitoring the children while they eat, where required, and being advocates of healthy eating.

- Discouraging children from sharing or swapping their food in order to protect those with food allergies.
- Treating all children equally, taking account of the eating practices in their cultures.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing the setting with information on their child's dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies.
- Providing specialist food for their child, where they may have an allergy, intolerance or medical need.
- Giving consent for the setting to give pre-made up milk to their child.

Food and drink served

All meals and snacks will include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Starchy carbohydrates
- Dairy and plain, fortified plant-based alternatives
- Proteins

Foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar will be limited in line with the setting's current Healthy Eating and Drinking Policy for the age group of the children concerned.

Portion sizes will be based upon the recommended intake for the age group of the children concerned.

Menus will reflect the diversity of the community, with a variety of flavours and textures.

Fridges and store cupboards will be cleaned regularly to ensure they are clean. Food stored in the fridge will be kept at 5°C or lower and, where necessary, reheated until piping hot throughout. Food will be stored in sealed plastic containers, and tin cans will never be stored in the fridge.

Menus will rotate on a three-week cycle and meal suggestions from parents are welcomed during the planning of these menus through the parent questionnaire.

Fresh drinking water as well as their own water bottles will be available and accessible at all times and children will be encouraged to drink regularly.

Milk will be on offer for both the morning and afternoon snack.

Milk or water will be the only drinks offered to children by the RPA and TTPFS.

Staff will not consume carbonated drinks in the presence of children.

Nutrition

We understand that the early years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities and set the foundations for a lifetime of good health. Staff will ensure that food items prepared and consumed on the premises comply with statutory guidelines and are healthy, balanced and nutritious.

Children aged 1 to 5 years

Staff will encourage children to eat a balanced diet which contains a wide variety of foods, planning meals and snacks that include a variety of food and drinks from the four main food groups every day.

We will increase knowledge and awareness of a healthy diet through workshops and our PSHE and UW curriculum.

We will follow the DfE's advice regarding:

- The food and drink that should be provided, limited or avoided.
- Portion sizes

Eating environment

The eating environment will be comfortable and relaxed. Children will be given plenty of time to feed themselves.

Children will be provided with utensils that are appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Staff will be present with children while they eat and encourage interaction at each table. Children will be observed to ensure they are drinking and eating enough, and staff will be aware of the behaviour that may suggest a child is thirsty or hungry.

Children will be encouraged to develop good eating skills and table manners.

Mealtimes will be used to help children develop independence, through making food choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves.

Celebrations and special occasions

Whilst we are happy to acknowledge and celebrate a child's birthday, we do not permit food to be brought into the setting.

Any food shared or made in the setting for educational activities will be checked for potential allergens and parents will be informed through the curriculum plans, fortnightly updates or a discussion.

The setting will, instead, celebrate with activities such as the following:

- Craft activities
- Singing
- Dressing up

- Playing special games
- Encouraging children to find out about a wide range of events from a variety of cultures

School organised events

The school recognises the following exemptions to the policy:

- Food, drink and treats at parties or celebrations to mark religious or cultural occasions as organised by school.
- Provisions at fund-raising events.
- Provisions used when teaching food preparation and cookery skills, including where the food is served to pupils as part of a school lunch.
- Food and drinks provided on an occasional basis by parents or pupils.

Allergies and special requirements

The school understands that food allergies can be life threatening conditions for some children and will ensure they are taken very seriously. The school has a designated governor and senior leader who are responsible for overseeing allergy safety and ensuring that appropriate policies, procedures, and training are in place to support pupils with allergies.

As part of the setting's ongoing CPD for early years practitioners, staff will be trained to understand:

- The common allergens in food.
- The symptoms of an allergic reaction and the steps to take should anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock occur.

The school will have a supply of spare adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs) for emergency use only; records of expiry dates will be kept and replaced when needed.

Parents will be expected to make the setting aware of any allergies or intolerances their child has and the actions that need to be taken if a reaction occurs by completing the relevant forms. This will then be added to the child's personal account on Arbor.

All allergies will be added to the child's personal account on Arbor, individual healthcare plan and an allergy action plan. It will also be added to the tracker in the kitchen to be referred to at all times. Staff will receive an email from the school office informing them of these. This ensures everyone is aware of a child's allergies and symptoms.

Where it is suspected that a child has an allergy, the setting will encourage the child's parents to seek advice and diagnosis from their doctor.

We will ensure children with allergies are not exposed to foods that trigger allergies. Appropriate alternatives will be identified to ensure the child still eats a balanced diet.

All staff will be instructed, where necessary, to ensure they understand how to identify which allergens are present in every meal and snack provided.

All food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS) will have the name of the food and the full ingredients list, with allergens emphasised, e.g. in bold, italics or a different colour, clearly displayed.

All preparation of food containing common allergens will be kept separate from other food preparation. We are a nut free school.

Food items containing bread and wheat will be stored separately and clearly labelled.

Learning activities which involve the use of food will be planned in accordance with children's individual healthcare plans, taking into account any known allergies of the children involved.

Children will be discouraged from sharing or swapping their food with other children.

Food provided for children with allergies will be managed in accordance with the Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy.

Appropriate provision will be made for parental preferences, including cultural and religious food sensitivities, e.g. providing halal and kosher food as appropriate.

Food brought in from home

Food that is brought into the setting from home will be expected to comply with this policy and the Early Years Lunch Box Policy which can be found on the school's website.

Food and drink will be appropriately labelled with the child's details, safely stored until needed.

Any food that is not consumed during the day will be sent home with the child.

Eating habits

All children will be supported to manage their own personal needs as far as possible, including understanding the importance of healthy food choices. This will be taught as part of our curriculum as well as daily discussions.

Children will be regularly exposed to new foods in order to increase their liking for, and consumption of, a variety of new foods (providing these foods meet their specific dietary requirements).

Favourite foods will not be used as a reward to encourage children to eat foods they do not like.

We are aware that some children will have allergies or different dietary requirements; this will be taken into account when encouraging children to try new foods.

Before a child is admitted, the setting will obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies – this information will be recorded and acted upon as appropriate.

Children will never be forced to finish everything on their plate and small servings will be given.

Food safety and hygiene

Food will be stored, prepared and presented in a safe and hygienic environment which is adequately equipped to provide healthy meals, snacks and drinks for children.

Children will be taught basic hygiene, such as not eating food that has fallen on the floor and washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet. All children will be sent to wash their hands before snack and at lunch time.

All staff will receive training in food hygiene before preparing or handling food.

All staff involved in preparing food for young children, or helping them eat, will be aware of the requirements of the Food Safety Act 1990.

Communication

Staff will work alongside parents to ensure that children are provided with healthy, balanced and nutritious food in the setting and at home.

Parents will be informed about the setting's approach to food provision and children's food intake across the day through the school's website.

Parents will be signposted to the policy on the website and encouraged to read it. When updated, parents will be made aware via email.

Parents will be given feedback if their child has not eaten or drank much throughout the day via discussion at the end of the day or a note in their book bag.

Menus will be on display for all parents to see on the school website and on the school noticeboard. Menus are on display for the children in their classroom.

The setting will consult with parents on the food that is provided and will ask them for feedback as we develop the menu through the parent questionnaire.

We will agree with parents on the methods used to manage fussy eating, ensuring they are consistent with those used at home.

Meeting the needs of all children

Wherever possible, the setting will endeavour to cater for the cultural and dietary needs of all children in its care.

We are aware that children with special dietary requirements may need specific foods excluded or included; however, it will not exclude foods from a child's diet without a valid reason as this may lead to unnecessary restrictions in their diet. In meeting the needs of all children, we will take into account the following dietary requirements:

- Food allergies
- Food intolerances

- Vegetarianism
- Veganism or eating a plant-based diet
- Pescatarianism
- Religious preferences, for example:
  - Only eating halal foods
  - Avoiding pork or beef
  - Keeping kosher
  - Eating specific foods only on certain days

We will create a safe and inclusive environment for all children to eat, and children with special dietary requirements will be included in mealtimes with other children as far as possible.

A child will only need to eat their meal separately to other children where a risk assessment concludes that a significant risk remains despite adequate training and supervision of meals and snacks times.

Staff will have ongoing discussions with parents about their child's dietary needs and encourage parents to assist the setting by sharing guidance from healthcare professionals.

We will seek professional advice for menu planning when needed.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the headteacher and EYFS lead.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated, by the headteacher and EYFS lead, to all staff members. Parents of children who attend the early years setting will receive a letter detailing any changes to the policy. Any changes made will be updated on the school's website.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is **September 2027**.