

# School Food Standards – a Guide for HAF Providers

## HAF Food Provision

As part of the HAF programme, all food provided at HAF clubs (including snacks) must meet School Food Standards to ensure the food provided to participants attending holiday activities is both nutritious and of high quality. We aim to promote good nutritional health in all participants, promote good eating behaviours and ensure all nutritionally vulnerable children have access to a balanced, nutritious, and hot meal, every day.

It is also a HAF requirement that all food provided as part of the HAF programme:

- Complies with regulations on food preparation (more information can be found on the [food standards agency](#) website)
- Considers allergies and dietary requirements. Providers and caterers need to work closely with parents to support children with allergies or intolerances (see the [allergy guidance for schools](#))
- Makes reasonable adjustments for any religious or cultural requirements for food

You can go to the [School Food Plan](#) for some great examples of how schools have catered for special diets like allergies, vegetarians, and religious and cultural variations.

## The School Food Standards

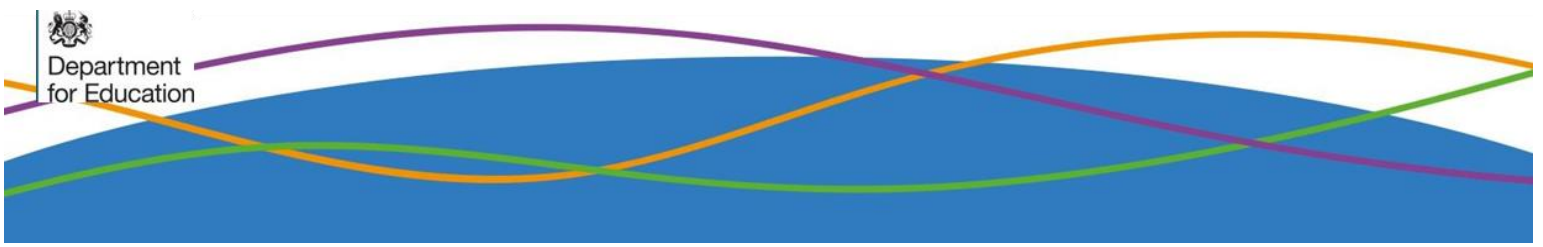
Introduced by the Department for Education, School Food Standards are intended to help children develop healthy eating habits and ensure that they get the energy and nutrition they need across the whole day. It is just as important to cook food that looks good, tastes delicious and to serve it in a pleasant environment where they can eat with their peers.

The standards should apply across the whole day including, breakfast, lunch, and snacks. Guidance on portion sizes and examples of what foods you could include for each group can be found [here](#).

As a general principle, variety is key, and it is important to provide a wide range of foods across the week. This can include different varieties of fruits, vegetables, grains, pulses or types of meat and fish. Children love to use their imagination so be creative with your food and use stories to help them enjoy and learn more about their food.

Where possible, when planning and preparing meals, use fresh, sustainable, and locally sourced ingredients. Go to [the Plan for Public Procurement](#) for more guidance on assurance schemes.

Also remember to use the [Government Sustainable Procurement for Food and Catering Services](#) alongside the school food standards to help reduce salt, saturated fat, and sugar in children's diets.



Applies to lunches:



### Starchy foods

One or more portions of food from this group every day

Three or more different starchy foods each week

One or more wholegrain varieties of starchy food each week

Starchy food cooked in fat or oil no more than two days each week  
*(applies across the whole school day)*

Bread - with no added fat or oil - must be available every day



### Fruit and Vegetables

One or more portions of vegetables or salad as an accompaniment every day

One or more portions of fruit every day

A dessert containing at least 50% fruit two or more times each week

At least three different fruits and three different vegetables each week



### Foods high in fat, sugar and salt

No more than two portions of food that have been deep-fried, batter-coated, or breadcrumb-coated, each week  
*(applies across the whole school day)*

No more than two portions of food which include pastry each week  
*(applies across the whole school day)*

No snacks, except nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruit with no added salt, sugar or fat  
*(applies across the whole school day)*

Savoury crackers or breadsticks can be served at lunch with fruit or vegetables or dairy food

No confectionery, chocolate or chocolate-coated products  
*(applies across the whole school day)*

Desserts, cakes and biscuits are allowed at lunchtime. They must not contain any confectionery

Salt must not be available to add to food after it has been cooked  
*(applies across the whole school day)*

Any condiments must be limited to sachets or portions of no more than 10 grams or one teaspoonful  
*(applies across the whole school day)*



### Milk and dairy

A portion of food from this group every day

Lower fat milk must be available for drinking at least once a day during school hours



### Healthier drinks

*applies across the whole school day*

Free, fresh drinking water at all times

The only drinks permitted are:

- Plain water (still or carbonated)
- Lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk
- Fruit or vegetable juice (max 150mls)
- Plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; plain fermented milk (e.g. yoghurt) drinks
- Combinations of fruit or vegetable juice with plain water (still or carbonated, with no added sugars or honey)
- Combinations of fruit juice and lower fat milk or plain yoghurt, plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; cocoa and lower fat milk; flavoured lower fat milk, all with less than 5% added sugars or honey
- Tea, coffee, hot chocolate

Combination drinks are limited to a portion size of 330mls. They may contain added vitamins or minerals, and no more than 150mls of fruit or vegetable juice. Fruit or vegetable juice combination drinks must be at least 45% fruit or vegetable juice



### Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

A portion of food from this group every day

A portion of meat or poultry on three or more days each week

Oily fish once or more every three weeks

For vegetarians, a portion of non-dairy protein on three or more days each week

A meat or poultry product (manufactured or homemade, and meeting the legal requirements) no more than once each week in primary schools and twice each week in secondary schools  
*(applies across the whole school day)*



## Top Tips on how to Meet School Food Standards

### Starchy Foods



- Use wholegrain varieties of starchy foods - try using a 50:50 mix (white and wholegrain) for pasta and rice.
- Use at least half wholemeal or granary flour when making bread, puddings, cakes, biscuits, batters and sauces.
- Use different types of bread, and look for products with higher fibre.
- Do not add salt to water when cooking pasta, rice and other starchy foods. Instead, add flavour to the main dish by using herbs, spices, garlic and vegetables.

### Fruit and Vegetables



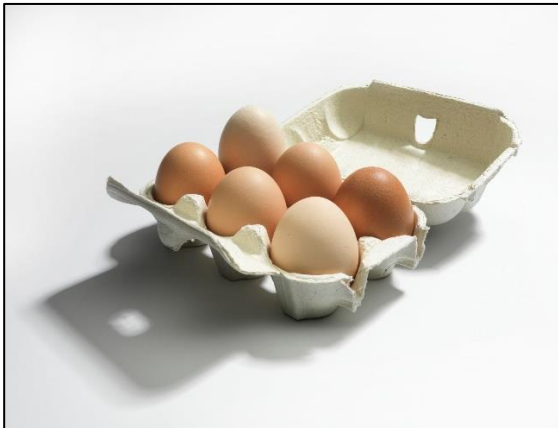
- Provide at least two different coloured vegetables and fruits each day.
- Buy fruit and vegetables that are in season.
- Choose canned products in water or 'natural juice', with no added salt or sugar.
- Don't serve baked beans more than once a week, and choose low-sugar and low-salt varieties.
- Pulses count as vegetables, however, if you are serving pulses as a non-dairy protein for vegetarians, you will need a separate vegetable serving as well.
- Steam vegetables or boil them in a minimal amount of water.
- Make sure that fruit and vegetables are displayed prominently and attractively. Talk to the children to encourage them to try new vegetable and fruit dishes.
- For the benefit of picky eaters, smuggle lots of vegetables into composite dishes such as Bolognese or chilli con carne.

## Milk and Dairy



- Hard cheeses such as cheddar tend to be higher in saturated fat than softer cheese. When using hard cheeses, choose stronger-tasting varieties and use smaller amounts.
- Offer frozen yoghurt as an alternative to ice cream.
- Buy low-sugar varieties of milkshakes and yoghurt drinks. Better still, make them yourself using fruit to sweeten them.

## Meat, fish, eggs, beans, and other non-dairy sources of protein



- Be aware that canned tuna is not an oily fish as the omega-3 fatty acids are destroyed in the canning process.
- Ensure vegetarian meals are as varied as the rest of the menu by using pulses twice a week, soya, tofu, or Quorn™ once or twice each week, and eggs and cheese once or twice each week.
- Encourage all children to have a meat-free day each week, using alternatives such as pulses, soya mince, tofu and Quorn™.
- Go to the Marine Stewardship Council ([www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)) for advice on buying responsibly sourced fish.

## Foods high in fat, sugar, and salt



- Saturated fat is linked to an increased risk of heart disease, so choose mono- and poly-unsaturated fats such as rapeseed,

soya, sunflower and olive oils wherever possible for cooking or salad dressings.

- Avoid products that list partially hydrogenated fat or oil on the label.
- Use higher fibre ingredients, such as wholemeal flour, alongside or instead of white flour.
- Reduce the amount of sugar used in dishes. Use fresh or dried fruit to sweeten dishes.
- Ask suppliers for nutritional information, and read food labels to check the amount of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugars in their products.

- Instead of salt, use herbs, spices, garlic, vegetables and fruits to add flavour to dishes.
- Do not use flavour enhancers such as MSG or E621. These can be very high in sodium.
- Choose biscuits, cakes and pastries that are lower in fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt.
- Where possible, choose products that meet the Responsibility Deal targets.

### Healthier Drinks



- Provide jugs of fresh tap water together with cups or glasses on tables and at the serving counter.
- Consider installing a water cooler which uses tap water.
- Provide drinks that are unsweetened, unfortified and additive-free.
- Avoid drinks containing preservatives, flavourings, colourings and sweeteners.

### Menu Planning

When planning menus, try to make sure that they are tasty, colourful, varied across the week, cost effective, and balanced. Use the [School Food Standards Checklist](#) found in Appendix 1 to help you.

An example of a four week healthy, school food compliant menu can be found in Appendix 2 and also on the HAF website at [Holiday Activities and Food Programme – Example School Food Standards Compliant Menu](#)

You can also explore tasty, nutritious recipes & menus that conform to the new school food standards at [School Food Plan, What Works Well Recipe Hub](#)

Appendix 1

## Checklist for school lunches

NAME OF SCHOOL:		DATE OF MENU:		
Food group	Food-based standards for school lunches	Standard met (Y/N)		
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
<b>STARCHY FOOD</b>	One or more portions of food from this group every day			
	Three or more different starchy foods each week			
	One or more wholegrain varieties of starchy food each week			
	Starchy food cooked in fat or oil no more than two days each week <i>(applies to food served across the whole school day)</i>			
	Bread - with no added fat or oil - must be available every day			
<b>FRUIT AND VEGETABLES</b>	One or more portions of vegetables or salad as an accompaniment every day			
	One or more portions of fruit every day			
	A dessert containing at least 50% fruit two or more times each week			
	At least three different fruits, and three different vegetables each week			
<b>MEAT, FISH, EGGS, BEANS AND OTHER NON-DAIRY SOURCES OF PROTEIN</b>	A portion of food from this group every day			
	A portion of meat or poultry on three or more days each week			
	Oily fish once or more every three weeks			
	For vegetarians, a portion of non-dairy protein three or more days a week			
	A meat or poultry product (manufactured or homemade and meeting the legal requirements) no more than once a week in primary schools and twice each week in secondary schools, <i>(applies across the whole school day)</i>			
<b>MILK AND DAIRY</b>	A portion of food from this group every day			
	Lower fat milk and lactose reduced milk must be available for drinking at least once a day during school hours			
<b>FOODS HIGH IN FAT, SUGAR AND SALT</b>	No more than two portions a week of food that has been deep-fried, batter-coated or breadcrumb-coated <i>(applies across the whole school day)</i>			
	No more than two portions of food which include pastry each week <i>(applies across the whole school day)</i>			
	No snacks, except nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruit with no added salt, sugar or fat <i>(applies across the whole school day)</i>			
	Savoury crackers or breadsticks can be served at lunch with fruit or vegetables or dairy food			
	No confectionery, chocolate and chocolate-coated products, <i>(applies across the whole school day)</i>			
	Desserts, cakes and biscuits are allowed at lunchtime. They must not contain any confectionery			
	Salt must not be available to add to food after it has been cooked			
	Any condiments limited to sachets or portions of no more than 10 grams or one teaspoonful.			
<b>HEALTHIER DRINKS</b> <i>applies across the whole school day</i>	Free, fresh drinking water at all times			
	<p><b>The only drinks permitted are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain water (still or carbonated)</li> <li>• Lower fat milk or lactose reduced milk</li> <li>• Fruit or vegetable juice (max 150mls)</li> <li>• Plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; plain fermented milk (e.g. yoghurt) drinks</li> <li>• Unsweetened combinations of fruit or vegetable juice with plain water (still or carbonated)</li> <li>• Combinations of fruit juice and lower fat milk or plain yoghurt, plain soya, rice or oat drinks enriched with calcium; cocoa and lower fat milk; flavoured lower fat milk</li> <li>• Tea, coffee, hot chocolate</li> </ul> <p>Combination drinks are limited to a portion size of 330mls. They may contain added vitamins or minerals, but no more than 5% added sugars or honey or 150mls fruit juice. Fruit juice combination drinks must be at least 45% fruit juice</p>			

**It is expected that schools will use these checklists in combination with the nutrition criteria of the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services.**



## Appendix 2

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<b>Week One</b>	Sausages with mashed potatoes  Vegetarian sausages with mashed potatoes	Pasta Bolognese  Vegetarian Bolognese	Mild chicken curry with rice  Macaroni cheese	Roast chicken with mashed potatoes  Vegetable and potato hotpot
	Seasonal vegetables	Seasonal vegetables	Seasonal vegetables	Seasonal vegetables
	Fresh fruit salad with dairy ice cream (tinned fruit in juice with fresh fruit added)	Pineapple upside down pudding with custard	Apple crumble and custard	Chocolate beetroot brownie (using cocoa powder) with fresh fruit and milk
<b>Week Two</b>	Mild lentil and vegetable curry with rice  Jacket potato (with cheese, coleslaw, tuna sweetcorn mayo or chicken mayo)	Sausages and mashed potatoes  Vegetarian sausage and mashed potatoes	Roast beef with mashed potatoes  Roast Quorn fillet with mashed potatoes (no Yorkshire pudding)	Salmon and broccoli pasta bake  Tomato and basil pasta bake
	Salad	Seasonal vegetables	Seasonal vegetables	Seasonal vegetables or fresh mixed salad
	Fresh fruit salad with cream (tinned fruit in juice with fresh fruit added)	Bananas in custard	Peach sponge and custard	Fruit in jelly with dairy ice cream
<b>Week Three</b>	Lasagna (high quality beef)  Roasted vegetable lasagna	Roast turkey and mashed potatoes  Roast Quorn fillet and mashed potatoes	Mild chilli con carne (high quality beef) with 50/50 white/brown rice  Jacket potato (with cheese, coleslaw, tuna sweetcorn mayo or chicken mayo)	Breaded fish fillet (minimum 80g fish content) with mashed potatoes  Vegetarian burger in wholemeal bun with baked wedges
	Fresh mixed salad	Seasonal vegetables	Seasonal vegetables or fresh mixed salad	Seasonal vegetables
	Fresh fruit salad with dairy ice cream (tinned fruit in juice with fresh fruit added)	Pineapple upside down pudding with custard	Apple crumble and custard	Chocolate beetroot brownie (using cocoa powder) with fresh fruit and milk
<b>Week Four</b>	Sausages (min 93% meat) with mashed potatoes  Vegetarian sausages with mashed potatoes	Pasta Bolognese (high quality beef)  Vegetarian Bolognese	Mild chicken curry with 50/50 white/brown rice  Macaroni cheese	Roast chicken with mashed potatoes (no Yorkshire pudding)  Vegetable and potato hotpot
	Seasonal vegetables	Seasonal vegetables or fresh mixed salad	Seasonal vegetables	Seasonal vegetables
	Fresh fruit salad with cream (tinned fruit in juice with fresh fruit added)	Bananas in custard	Peach sponge and custard	Fruit in jelly with dairy ice cream