

Packed Lunch Guidance

October 2006



Healthy Schools
CITY OF DERBY

Packed Lunch Guidance

This guidance has been written by the Healthy Schools Programme for all Derby City Primary Schools to use if they choose. Schools may wish to add or amend accordingly to meet their individual schools needs/requirements. It is advised that this guidance is shared with the whole school – a letter to parents/carers summarising the guidance is appended to this guidance.

Rationale for this guidance:

- It has been highlighted that lunchboxes in some schools can be extremely unhealthy and that this issue needs addressing. A recent audit in seven schools has shown that there are too many foods containing fat and sugar within lunchboxes, and very few fruit and vegetables.
- New nutritional standards for school meals will be introduced in September 2006. Therefore the nutritional content of lunchboxes needs addressing in line with these changes.
- Work around healthy eating in schools is a high priority with the Every Child Matters agenda.
- The short-term effects of unhealthy packed lunches could include poor growth and development, behavioural problems, tooth decay, obesity and anaemia (Putland 1993).
- The major effects of unhealthy eating during childhood are likely to be felt later in adulthood including heart disease, stroke, cancers, diabetes, arthritis, gallstones and osteoporosis (Wynne 1999).
- The prevalence of obesity in children is increasing
- Children who are overweight or obese are more likely to become obese adults.

Statement on Healthy Lunchboxes:

Healthy eating habits, begun in childhood, influence children's chances of a healthier life. Therefore to encourage healthy eating habits from an early age and to improve the overall nutrition of our pupils it is important to promote and implement this 'Packed Lunch Guidance' in schools.

This guidance will help schools achieve the healthy eating theme of new Healthy School Status and should support other activities to promote healthy eating. It is suggested that a leaflet on healthier lunchboxes is given to parents/carers*

* The British Nutrition Foundation have produced a leaflet and poster on healthier lunchboxes which can be ordered free of charge (postage and packaging costs) by calling 020 7404 6504. See www.nutrition.org.uk/lunches to view resources.

Aim of Guidance:

This guidance aims to improve the quality of packed lunches in schools by encouraging a wide variety of healthy foods based on the balance of good health, which is recommended by Government for a healthy diet.

Objectives:

- To develop awareness in pupils and parents that eating habits, formed in childhood, can influence their health and well being throughout their lives.
- To facilitate improved concentration and learning in class.
- To improve the current eating habits of children at lunchtimes.

Implementation:

- This policy fits within a wider context of healthy eating activities in schools, such as healthy eating themed weeks, extra curricular clubs, whole school food policy, healthy eating reward schemes etc – and therefore supports the ‘whole school approach’ to healthy eating.
- Stickers will be given to children who bring in a healthy lunchbox as a reward*
- Workshops on healthy lunchboxes have or will be held for parents.
- A leaflet is provided for all parents on healthy lunchboxes so they are aware of the balance of good health and what foods are acceptable for lunchboxes in schools within this local authority.
- Children are educated in school about healthy foods to provide them with a basic knowledge of what a healthy diet consists of – based on the balance of good health model.
- Children's packed lunches should be based on the ‘balance of good health’, which includes the four main food groups of bread other cereals and potatoes, fruit and vegetables, milk and dairy and meat, fish and alternatives. The balance of good health model suggests that foods containing fat and sugar should be eaten in small amounts. These groups are illustrated over leaf in figure 1.

* Healthy eating stickers designed by primary aged children in Derby City schools are available to purchase through the Healthy Schools Programme. Contact Kathryn Cordwell on 01332 224000 ext 6412.

Figure 1 - The Balance of Good Health - food from the five different food groups. The main message is to eat more from the bigger sections and less from the smaller ones.



We need to eat a balance of different foods to stay healthy.

The following are some examples of 'acceptable foods' for children's lunchboxes:

Bread, other cereals and potatoes food group:

There should be a good portion of starchy food in lunchboxes, such as thick slices of wholemeal bread, chapatti, bagels, tortilla wrap, pitta pocket, crispbreads, pasta, couscous, rice or potato salad.

Fruit and vegetable food group:

There should be plenty of fruit and vegetables such as a handful of cherry tomatoes or carrot sticks, mini tub of fruit chunks in natural juice, bunch of seedless grapes, satsuma or pear, sliced red apple or nectarine, box of raisins, dried apricots, salad, fruit in sandwiches (such as cheese and pineapple), vegetables as a main ingredient in a pasta salad or as a topping on a pizza.

Milk and dairy food group:

A portion of milk or dairy food, such as cheese as a sandwich filling, individual cheese portions, low fat cheese spread, cheese dips or pate with vegetable sticks, drinking yogurts[♦], yogurt smoothies, or a pot of low fat yogurt or fromage frais.

Meat, fish and alternatives food group:

A portion of lean meat or fish, such ham, chicken, beef or tuna. Alternatives could include egg, vegetable pate or hummous as a sandwich filler or mixed bean/lentil salad.

Foods containing fat and sugar food group:

This should be the smallest part of the lunchbox. Sweet foods which contain fibre are recommended, such as a plain or fruit scone, slice(s) of malt loaf, a cereal bar, mini pancakes or a flapjack. A small chocolate bar, biscuit or lower fat variety of crisps can be included on

ONE DAY ONLY during the week, not everyday

(It is at the school's discretion as to whether this is introduced and whether a set day is chosen for treats, for example Fridays only)

Drinks **must** be provided in lunchboxes and should only include either water, milk or low fat milkshake, sugar free juice drink, sugar free flavoured water or 100% fruit juice.

The following foods are not encouraged for lunch:

- ❑ Sugared/toffee popcorn
- ❑ Chewing gum
- ❑ Fizzy drinks in cartons, bottles or cans
- ❑ Crisps as a filling for sandwiches
- ❑ Chocolate spread as a filling for sandwiches
- ❑ Sweets

Schools can add to or amend this list

Monitoring and evaluation

There are differing views on monitoring lunchboxes however it is advised that schools complete a random survey of lunchboxes twice a year either for one day or over the period of a week. This is regarded as good practice by the Derby City Healthy Schools Programme and

[♦] Some yoghurts branded for lunchboxes have a high sugar content. Per 100 grams 10 grams of sugar is a lot and 2grams is a little)

can be used as evidence of healthy school status. Your schools Healthy School Supporter will be available to support this monitoring process if needed. It is suggested that the results of the survey are analysed and shared with parents, for example, through school media.