



Whole School Food Policy

1. Rationale

Spa School Bermondsey recognises the vital role food and nutrition plays in the health, behaviour, and learning outcomes of our students. As a special school for autistic pupils we acknowledge the sensory, emotional, and medical factors that affect how our students interact with food.

This policy supports our school's vision and provides clear guidance on all aspects of food education, food provision, and the promotion of healthy lifestyle across the school day.

2. Leadership and responsibilities

Headteacher (Georgina Quigley) has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and compliance with the national food standards.

People with key responsibilities for food in schools

- Lead cook - Tracy Nwabia – responsible for managing the kitchen staff team; ordering, preparation, cooking and serving of school lunches
- Procurement Lead - Alan Burrows – orders food for snack and lessons
- Café Team (Agnese Graudina and Louisa Rambarran) – supports KS5 work experience and food preparation in the School House Café
- Cooking Subject Lead (Jess Doumbos) –plans cooking lessons and ensures curriculum coverage
- SMT –monitor foods brought into the school by students and other adults and upholds school-wide food expectations.

3. Curriculum and Food Education

Food education it is integrated across our curriculum, with adaptations made for students needs. Students access learning through practical and visual strategies that support understanding.

Our curriculum includes:

- PSHE: The Eatwell Guide, balanced diets, food choices and where to buy different foods.
- Science: Nutrition for growth and health.
- Cooking: Skill-based learning using healthy ingredient and safe preparation techniques
- Healthy Living: Meal planning, cost awareness, and food hygiene
- RE/Humanities: Cultural and religious food practices

- KS5 students develop employability through cooking qualification and supervised placements in the School House Café

4. Food and Drink Provision

Spa School Bermondsey is a meat-free school.

This decision was taken in 2019 by Spa Education Trust to promote healthy, sustainable, and inclusive eating habits across all school sites. Our menus are entirely meat-free supporting the cultural, medical, and ethical dietary needs of our diverse school community.

We follow the **School Food Standards (DFE, 2015)** and the **Requirement for school Regulations (2014)**. These standards require that:

- One or more portions of fruit and vegetables are available every day
- Wholegrain starchy foods are served at least one per week
- Protein is provided through non-meat sources (e. g. beans, eggs and dairy)
- A portion of dairy or suitable alternative is available daily
- Fresh drinking water is freely available throughout the day

We encourage regular hydration as low fluid intake can affect focus, emotional regulation, and wellbeing. Water is freely available throughout the school in classrooms and dining areas.

Permitted drinks:

- Plain water (encouraged all day)
- Semi-skimmed or skimmed milk
- Fortified plant-based alternatives (e.g. oat, soy)
- Fruit juice or squash (permitted only at lunchtime with packed lunches)

Prohibited drinks:

- Fizzy or carbonated drinks
- Flavoured waters or high-sugar beverages

- Energy drinks or sports drinks

All menus are symbol-supported so students can make informed choices. Allergen and dietary information is clearly displayed in the kitchen and shared with relevant staff, in line with **Food Information (Allergens) Regulations 2014**. All staff receive annual training under **Natasha's Law** to support the safe delivery of food and drink

5. Dining environment

The dining environment plays an important role in student wellbeing. Spa Bermondsey has two connected dining areas, allowing all students to eat in a setting that suits their SEND needs. Dining is split into two sittings with smaller groupings to reduce noise and sensory input.

- Students are given 30 minutes for lunch, with some requiring and receiving up to an hour.
- Seating is flexible: circular tables promote social eating; smaller tables in the conservatory provide a quieter space.
- Symbol menus are provided on each table.
- Students collect their own meals and clear away after eating.
- Main and dessert courses are served separately to encourage movement and social interaction.
- TAs sit with students and model expected behaviours.
- Teachers are encouraged to eat with their classes.
- Senior leaders are present in the dining area during lunch.

6. Packed Lunches

We recognise that students with autism may have sensory issues which impact on their ability to enjoy a varied diet. Therefore, some families may choose to provide a packed lunch for part or all of the school week.

- Packed lunches may be cold or reheated by the kitchen team.
- Food needing refrigeration must be labelled and stored appropriately.
- Packed lunches should follow healthy eating standards.
- Packed lunch students may still access fruit and bread from the kitchen.
- Packed lunch pupils eat alongside peers having school meals.

Prohibited packed lunch items:

- Fizzy or energy drinks
- Sweets or confectionery
- Crisps or salty/fatty snacks
- High-sugar cakes or pastries
- Any items containing nuts

Support for Families:

- Healthy lunch guidance is shared annually and available on request.
- Families are contacted if unhealthy packed lunches are brought in consistently.

7. Celebrations, Rewards and Events

Food is not used for rewards or incentives. Instead, we rely on praise, stickers, certificates, and celebration. Food is not used for end-of-term gift for students.

As many of our students thoroughly enjoy cooking lessons, additional cooking time may be offered as a motivational reward, when appropriate and meaningful to the student.

For exceptional events such as school discos and cultural celebrations, food guidelines may be relaxed in consultation with the Headteacher. However, healthy options will always be available and encouraged.

On birthdays, students may bring in small food items to share such as a cake to share with their class. Items should be nut-free. For many students, birthday celebrations are an aspirational experience. Participation is optional, and there is no expectation that students bring in food for others

8. The School House Café

Spa School Bermondsey benefits from an onsite working café, open to the public during school hours. The café serves healthy vegetarian and vegan meals, drinks, and snacks, supporting our commitment to promoting inclusive and sustainable food choices.

Key Stage 5 students have the opportunity to complete work experience in the café. This helps them build confidence and develop real-life skills in:

- Food preparation and hygiene
- Health and safety practices
- Customer service and communication

All tasks are supervised by staff to ensure a safe, supportive environment tailored to the needs of our learners.

9. Meeting Dietary and Sensory Needs

Many of our students have dietary, medical, or sensory needs that affect their relationship with food. We adapt our approach to meet individual needs, working closely with families, therapists, and medical professionals.

Support may include:

- Modified diets or texture changes
- Eating in quiet or low-stimulation spaces
- Extra time for eating
- Structured routines around food collection and seating
- Exposure to new foods through cooking and sensory play

Occupational Therapy and Food Groups

Our Occupational Therapy (OT) team runs regular food groups using a play-based approach to help pupils explore different food types and textures. These sessions are designed by the OT team and delivered daily by classroom staff as part of students' routines.

Allergy and Cultural Needs

Spa School Bermondsey is a nut-free school. All known allergies are recorded in students pen portraits and individual medical risk assessment (IMRA) and displayed in the school kitchen, office, all classrooms and specialist room. Pupils with medical needs, including severe allergies, are risk assessed and have individual care plans where needed. Epipens are stored centrally in the school office, and staff receive regular allergy and emergency response training.

Dietary requirements are collected at enrolment through a parent questionnaire and shared with the catering team. Pupils with cultural diets are recognised through labelled photographs near the service area, helping catering staff support and include them appropriately.

Speech and Language Therapists and class teams monitor progress and adjust support as needed.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Compliance

Link to working with partner agencies policy

The Headteacher meets weekly with the school cook to review food provisions and ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

School Menus are evaluated termly and reviewed in light of:

- Students feedback
- Health standards
- Allergens compliance
- Parent communication

Where students consistently bring unhealthy packed lunches or choose only low – nutrient food options, parents are contacted and supported to encourage balanced diet

This policy complies with:

- School Food Standards (DfE, 2015)
- Requirements for School Food Regulations (2014)
- Food Information (Allergens) Regulations (2014)

11. Parents and carers Engagement

Parent and carer feedback on the Food Policy has been gathered through questionnaires, newsletters and consultations during the consultation period. These methods will continue to be used when the policy is reviewed.

Where students regularly bring in unhealthy packed lunches, parents are contacted to discuss alternatives and promote healthier habits.

Parents and carers are encouraged to engage with the school's approach to healthy eating by sampling food from the school lunch menu at Parents' Evenings and during events related to healthy lifestyles during Healthy Eating Week.

12. Links to other policies

- Behaviour policy
- Physical activity policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equal opportunities and inclusion
- Working with partner agencies
- PSHE

This policy has been updated to comply with the School Food Standards (DfE, 2015), The Requirements for School Food (England) Regulations 2014, and the Food Information Regulations 2014.