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Healthy Eating and Drinking Policy

#CU5

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**Statement of intent**

At Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) and throughout our schools, we will support pupils to eat healthily and keep hydrated while in school. We also aim to teach pupils to make healthy food and drink choices using the curriculum and to reflect these principles in the school’s food menu and cooking provisions.

We acknowledge the important connection between a healthy diet and a pupil’s ability to learn, concentrate, and achieve high standards in school. We are, therefore, committed to promoting a lasting healthy lifestyle for everyone.

As part of our healthy eating and living campaign, our catering will uphold the highest standards of quality, nutrition, and cleanliness, adhering, without exception, to food standards and legal obligations. As such, this policy has been implemented to help staff and parents deliver consistent messages to pupils, enabling them to develop a positive and independent approach to a healthy lifestyle.

For some TCAT schools who academised before June 2014, the healthy eating regulations are voluntary, for our other schools who academised after this date, TCAT has an obligation to follow the regulations. To this end, all TCAT schools will follow the regulations.

# Legal framework

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

* The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014
* The Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (Natasha’s Law)
* Food Safety Act 1990
* School Standards and Framework Act 1998

This policy operates in conjunction with the following non-statutory guidance:

* DfE (2023) ‘School food in England’
* DfE (2023) ‘School food standards practical guide’
* The School Plan (2023) ‘School Food Standards: A practical guide for schools, their cooks, and caterers’

This policy operates in conjunction with the following TCAT and school policies:

* Health and Safety Policy
* Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
* Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
* Whole-school Food Policy
* Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy
* Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
* Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy

# Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board will be responsible for:

* Ensuring TCAT schools promote healthy eating and drinking habits to pupils
* Ensuring each school meets the requirements of the School Food Standards, including those not obligated to do so
* Ensuring each school makes reasonable adjustments where necessary for pupils with particular requirements, e.g. to reflect medical, dietary or cultural needs

The Executive Headteacher/CEO in collaboration with the Chief Finance Officer will be responsible for:

* The overall implementation of this policy
* Managing, or appointing a member of staff to manage, TCAT’s approach to healthy eating and drinking
* Putting measures in place to ensure TCAT meets the requirements of the School Food Standards and other related legislation, such as Natasha’s Law

# Our aims

TCAT will adopt the following aims:

* Integrate a trust-wide ethos towards healthy eating; therefore, helping both staff and pupils to perform well, concentrate better and improve general wellbeing
* Ensure all pupils are well nourished and hydrated, and to ensure they have access to nutritious food and safe drinking water during the school day
* Encourage pupils to make informed food and drink choices in school and at home, contributing to life-long healthy eating habits
* Use the curriculum to teach pupils safe, hygienic methods of preparing, handling, and storing food, and to inform them about the benefits of choosing healthy options
* Ensure there are consistent messages about healthy eating throughout each TCAT school
* Keep food, health, and nutrition aspects of the curriculum up to date
* Ensure each school reflects the ethical, medical, and religious dietary requirements of staff and pupils, and that suitable provisions are available
* Celebrate diversity with cuisines from different cultures and other individual choices, e.g. vegetarianism, encouraging pupils to learn about and try new foods
* Encourage fluid intake and help pupils keep hydrated, maintain concentration, reduce lethargy, and learn effectively
* Inform staff and parents which provisions are permitted in school and to ensure they can effectively monitor what pupils are eating
* Encourage staff to participate in our healthy eating ethos and act as role models to pupils

# Healthy eating statement

With our catering partners, TCAT will use healthier cooking methods to contribute to healthy eating, such as the following:

* Using less fat in cooking
* Baking foods rather than frying them
* Where fats are used, increasing the use of healthier varieties
* Reducing the use of sugar in recipes
* Avoiding using additional salt in cooking processes
* Increasing the use of food items containing high amounts of fibre

All menus will be developed by Black Pepper School Lunches and AIP in accordance with the standards set out in the School Food Regulations 2014 and guidance from The School Food Plan in ‘School Food Standards: A practical guide for schools, their cooks, and caterers’, which are outlined in the Whole-school Food Policy.

Each school will also recognise and adhere to the School Food Regulations 2014 requirements for food and drink other than lunch that are:

* Provided to pupils on school premises up to 6pm, including:
  + Breakfast clubs
  + Tuck shops
  + Mid-morning break
  + Vending and after school clubs
* Provided before 6pm on school trips where the trip is for at least seven days

Each TCAT school will encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles, both through a nutritional diet and regular exercise, and during assemblies, PE lessons and PSHE.

Each TCAT school will adopt a healthy eating strategy and embed its principles throughout the curriculum.

# Drinks

Each TCAT school will teach pupils the importance of drinking plenty of fluids and how hydration helps contribute to effective learning, good health and improved physical performance.

Each TCAT school will provide safe drinking water throughout the school day. This will be available at specific locations designated within each school.

Staff will have access to drinking water within staff areas of each school.

Each school will encourage pupils to consume extra fluids on hot days and during and after physical activity, e.g. PE and sports days.

Pupils will be encouraged to bring bottled water with them to school. Pupils will permitted to refill water bottles at appropriate times during the school day.

Drinks with added sugar will not be available with school meals or from vending machines. TCAT will not permit fizzy drinks in bottles or cans on the premises at any time, other than carbonated flavoured water supplied in line with the regulations through our catering partners.

TCAT understands the importance of healthy development for pupils under the age of five in an early years setting. In line with the Nursery Milk Scheme set by the Department of Health and Social Care, one third of a pint of milk will be offered free of charge, once per day, for all pupils.

# Breaktime snacks

Each TCAT school will encourage pupils to eat a snack at breaktime. As part of our healthy eating ethos, this will be a piece of fruit or vegetable without added sugar, fat or salt for our primary pupils and food supplied in line with regulations for secondary pupils.

In line with the government’s ‘School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme’, a piece of fresh fruit or vegetable is available to pupils aged four to six at morning breaktime.

# School lunches

All school meals will meet the national guidelines for nutritional standards and food safety regulations. Our meals are supplied and prepared by Black Pepper School Lunches/AIP.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to school lunches where necessary for pupils with particular requirements, e.g. to reflect medical, dietary or cultural needs.

School meals will include two portions of fruit, vegetables or salad per meal.

Portion sizes will be in line with the School Food Standards to help provide pupils with a nutritionally balanced meal and prevent excessive calorie intake. Portion sizes and food groups will be outlined in the Whole-school Food Policy.

School meals will include foods that are naturally rich in vitamins and minerals to support pupils’ health and physical development.

Each TCAT school will provide pupils with drinking water, semi-skimmed milk, or sugar-free fruit or vegetable juice with their meal. Additional water will be available.

Primary dining staff will monitor pupils’ food intake during lunchtime by allowing them only to leave their table once they are finished eating. If a member of staff has any concerns, the school will notify their parents.

Themed meals and meals served to celebrate festivals, holidays, or religious observances will follow the same standards applied to regular school meals.

School meals will not include drinks with added sugar, crisps, chocolates or sweets.

School meals will not include more than two portions of deep fried, battered or breaded food a week.

Pupils will not be permitted to share or swap any food, including that provided from home in a packed lunch or snacks.

# Packed lunches

TCAT will apply its healthy eating principles to packed lunches and will be committed to improving the quality of packed lunches that pupils consume. The standards of packed lunches will comply with the nutrition standards of school lunches.

Parents will be provided with clear guidance on providing a healthy packed lunch and will be expected to provide their child with healthy packed lunches containing recommended food groups.

In line with the School Food Standards, packed lunches will contain the following:

* One portion of fruit, vegetable, or salad
* Meat, fish, or another source of non-dairy protein
* Carbohydrates, such as bread, pasta, rice, or potatoes
* Dairy, such as cheese, yoghurt, or custard
* Oily fish, e.g., smoked salmon, at least once every three weeks
* Only water, fruit juice, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, yoghurt drinks or smoothies

Snacks in packed lunches will comply with this policy. The following food and drink are not permitted:

* Confectionary items such as sweets
* Carbonated drinks or those containing high levels of caffeine

Staff will monitor regularly the contents of pupils’ packed lunches to ensure they are healthy and balanced and comply with this policy. Food that is not compliant will be confiscated and returned to the parent at the end of the day. Alternative food items will be provided. If a pupil brings a lunch that is completely inappropriate, the school will provide a replacement meal for which parents will be charged. Concerns about the contents of a pupil’s packed lunch will be dealt with appropriately and proportionately. The pupil’s parent will be contacted to remind them of the need to follow policy. If a pupil’s packed lunch continues to not be appropriate, the Head of School/Headteacher will contact the parents to arrange a meeting to discuss the matter further.

# Exemptions

TCAT recognises the following exemptions to the Healthy Eating and Drinking Policy:

* Food, drink and treats at parties or celebrations to mark religious or cultural occasions
* Provisions at fund-raising events
* Treats as rewards for achievement, good behaviour or effort
* 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

Whole milk, rather than lower fat milk, may be provided at lunchtime.

# Curriculum

TCAT’s Healthy Eating and Drinking Policy will be integrated into the curriculum of each TCAT school.

Each TCAT school will communicate how to lead a healthy lifestyle and make good food choices at all appropriate opportunities within their curriculum.

# Allergies and dietary requirements

TCAT and each TCAT school will ensure the correct food safety measures are in place, in line with the Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy and the Health and Safety Policy, to protect pupils with known allergies, intolerances, anaphylaxis, diabetes and other medical conditions associated with diet.

All foods that are pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS) will be labelled in line with the requirements of The Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019, known as Natasha’s Law, as outlined in the Whole-school Food Policy.

Parents will be required to provide the school with a written list of any foods their child may have an adverse reaction to, as well as the necessary actions to be taken in the event of an allergic reaction, such as any medication required.

TCAT’s chosen catering service, Black Pepper School Lunches/AIP, will be responsible for ensuring that our policies are adhered to at all times, including those in relation to the preparation of food, taking into account any allergens.

Learning activities which involve the use of food, such as food technology lessons, will be planned in accordance with pupils’ IHP’s, accounting for any known allergies of the pupils involved.

Treats for effort or good behaviour will be awarded in accordance with pupils’ IHP’s, including known allergies.

# Mental health and wellbeing

TCAT understands that some pupils may develop disordered eating. Staff will be trained to identify potential signs of disordered eating, which can include the following:

* Skipping lunchtime
* Avoiding eating around other people
* Eating very slowly
* Going to the bathroom soon after eating
* Becoming socially withdrawn and isolated
* Not participating in physical activities

Other physical signs can include the following:

* Thinning hair
* Dry skin
* Wearing baggy clothes
* Often saying they are cold
* Persistent low mood
* Irritability
* Unpredictable mood swings

If a member of staff has a concern about a pupil, they will speak to the DSL and senior mental health lead, as appropriate. Depending on the concern raised, support will be delivered in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures or Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy, or a combination of both.

TCAT will strive to protect pupils from developing disordered eating through a variety of methods, including the following:

* Developing pupils’ social and emotional skills
* Teaching pupils about physical health
* Teaching pupils about body image

Pupils will be encouraged to speak to a trusted adult if they have concerns about their eating behaviour or relationship with food.

# Communication with parents

Each TCAT school will communicate any changes and updates to this policy to parents.

Each school will send healthy eating information to parents regularly.

Each TCAT school will inform parents if concerns are raised about their child’s eating habits.

Each TCAT school will inform parents which foods are not permitted as part of packed lunches, and how they will be returned once confiscated.

They will involve parents in the healthy eating ethos, enabling them to provide consistent messaging about healthy choices at home.

Parents will keep the school updated with any changes to their child’s dietary requirements, including allergies, and any cultural, religious, or ethical food requirements.

Parents will inform the Head of School/Headteacher if they are concerned their child’s eating habits during the school day.

# Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed in line with the published schedule at the front of this document and at any point material changes require it by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and Chief Finance Officer in conjunction with Headteachers/Heads of School, Black Pepper School Lunches, AIP and the Trust Board. Any changes made to the policy will be amended by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and will be communicated to all members of staff, including Black Pepper School Lunches.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is 31st August 2026.

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| Signed by: | | | |
|  | Executive Headteacher/CEO | Date: |  |
|  | Chair of the Trust Board | Date: |  |