

Three Counties Academy Trust



Healthy Eating and Drinking Policy

#CU5

Last amended 26th June 2026 (v1.0)

Policy lifespan: 3 years. Subject to annual compliance check. Next full review 25th June 2029.

Version history

Date	Version	Details	Actioned by	PDF to Websites	Word to Governor Hub
26.06.26	1.0	Formatted to house style and checked against model for updates.	MF	✓	✓

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Trust Glossary

Policy Abbreviations and Acronyms

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
DfE	Department for Education
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
IHP	Individual Healthcare Plan
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
TCAT	Three Counties Academy Trust

NB. Where the term “parent” or “parents” is used this includes those who act as carers or have parental responsibility.

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.

Trustee, Local Governor and Staff Summary

Core Principles

- Promote healthy eating and hydration across all schools
- Link diet to learning, concentration, attainment and wellbeing
- Deliver consistent messages to pupils, staff and families
- Ensure high standards of food quality, nutrition and hygiene
- Apply School Food Standards across all settings

Healthy Eating Expectations

- Food provision supports a balanced, nutritious diet
- Use healthier cooking methods (lower fat, sugar, salt; higher fibre)
- Menus comply with national food regulations

Hydration and Drinks

- Access to safe drinking water throughout the day
- Sugary and fizzy drinks are not permitted
- Encourage water bottles and regular hydration

Breaktime and Snacks

- Fruit or vegetables without added sugar, fat or salt
- Aligned with government fruit and vegetable schemes

School Meals

- Meet national nutritional and food safety standards
- Include fruit, vegetables and balanced nutrition

- Exclude sugary drinks, sweets, chocolate and crisps
- Adjust for medical, dietary and cultural needs

Packed Lunches

- Reflect school meal standards
- Include key food groups (fruit, protein, carbohydrates, dairy)
- Exclude sweets, caffeinated and fizzy drinks
- Non-compliant items may be removed and parents informed

Curriculum and Education

- Healthy eating embedded within the curriculum
- Teach lifestyle choices, food preparation and hygiene

Allergies and Dietary Needs

- Systems in place for allergies and medical dietary needs
- Compliance with food labelling regulations
- Parents provide allergy and medical information

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Recognises links between diet and mental health
- Identify signs of disordered eating
- Provide support through safeguarding systems

Inclusivity and Adjustments

- Reflect medical, religious and cultural requirements
- Ensure equitable access for all pupils

Exceptions

- Allowed for celebrations, rewards and curriculum activities

Monitoring and Compliance

- Reviewed regularly
- Updates applied across all schools
- Subject to governance oversight

Parent Summary

Our Approach

- We promote healthy eating and drinking to support learning, development and wellbeing
- Healthy diets support concentration, physical health and emotional wellbeing
- We aim for a consistent approach between school and home
- All provision meets national standards and legal requirements

Healthy Eating in School

- Meals are balanced and nutritious
- Healthier cooking methods are used (less fat, sugar and salt)
- Pupils are encouraged to try new foods and develop positive habits
- Healthy choices are promoted as the norm

Drinks and Hydration

- Fresh drinking water is available throughout the day
- Water is encouraged to support concentration and health
- Pupils should bring water bottles
- Fizzy and sugary drinks are not permitted

Snacks and Breaktime Food

- Healthy snacks include fruit and vegetables
- Younger pupils may receive fruit through government schemes
- High fat, sugar and salt snacks are not permitted

School Meals

- Meals meet national nutritional and food safety standards
- Include fruit, vegetables and balanced portions
- Do not include sweets, chocolate, crisps or sugary drinks
- Menus support health and development

Packed Lunches

- Should follow the same healthy principles as school meals
- Include fruit/vegetables, protein, carbohydrates and dairy
- Do not include sweets, fizzy or high caffeine drinks
- Parents may be contacted if lunches are not suitable

Allergies and Dietary Needs

- Allergies and medical needs are carefully managed
- Parents must provide clear medical and allergy information
- Food labelling and safety requirements are followed

Supporting Wellbeing

- Eating habits are linked to mental health and wellbeing
- Staff identify concerns such as changes in eating behaviour
- Support is provided where needed

Learning and the Curriculum

- Healthy eating is taught through the curriculum
- Pupils learn about nutrition, hygiene and lifestyle choices

Equality and Inclusion

- Dietary needs linked to medical, cultural and religious requirements are respected
- All pupils are supported to access food safely

Exceptions

- Occasional treats allowed for celebrations and special events
- These are managed appropriately and do not form daily practice

Working with Parents

- We work in partnership with parents to support healthy habits
- Guidance is provided on packed lunches and healthy choices
- Communication takes place where concerns arise

Monitoring and Review

- The policy is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains effective
- Updates follow national guidance and are applied consistently

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation 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](#)
- [DfE 'School food in England'](#)
- [DfE 'School food standards practical guide'](#)

Where legislation has been passed or updated during the shelf life of this policy, we will always apply the latest version available irrespective of the version quoted here.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Whole-School Food Policy (CU4)
- Pupil Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy (GN19)
- Health and Safety Policy (HS1)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (SG1)
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy (SG4)
- Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy (SG17)
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy (SG21)

Central TCAT policies have the policy number identified, e.g. "SG1". Where no policy number is identified this indicates the policy is a school specific policy available from an individual TCAT school's website.

2. 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 CEO in collaboration with the CFO will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy across TCAT
- Putting measures in place to ensure TCAT meets the requirements of the School Food Standards and other related legislation, such as Natasha's Law

Executive Headteachers/Headteachers and where delegated, Heads of School will be responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy within their school
- Making reasonable adjustments where necessary for pupils with particular requirements, e.g. to reflect medical, dietary or cultural needs
- Promoting healthy eating and drinking habits to their pupils

Staff will be responsible for:

- Promoting healthy eating and drinking habits

3. 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

4. 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.

5. 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 be 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 under 5 years of age and all other eligible pupils.

6. 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.

7. 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, and access to semi-skimmed milk, or sugar-free fruit or vegetable juice with their meal for those who wish to purchase such options. 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.

8. 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 should 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 should 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 Headteacher/Head of School may contact the parents to arrange a meeting to discuss the matter further.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Allergies and dietary requirements

TCAT and each TCAT school will ensure the correct food safety measures are in place, in line with TCAT's Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy and 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.

12. 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 TCAT's 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.

13. Communication with parents

TCAT schools will communicate any changes and updates to this policy to parents and will promote healthy eating to parents regularly.

TCAT schools will inform parents if concerns are raised about their child's eating habits.

Our schools will inform parents which foods are not permitted as part of packed lunches, and how they will be returned if confiscated.

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

Parents will keep 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 Headteacher or Head of School if they are concerned their child's eating habits during the school day.

Monitoring and review

At any point this policy is updated or fully reviewed, it will be updated on the main TCAT website and will automatically update on all TCAT school websites simultaneously.

Where an annual check or other check results in minor changes, the Version History will be reviewed and updated with a change in the number following the decimal point, for example, v1.1 ⇒ v1.2. Where the policy is reviewed in full, then the number before the decimal point will change and reset, for example v1.4 ⇒ v2.0.

Any changes made by the CEO in collaboration with the Board Appointed Trustee will be passed to the Trust Board for ratification and subsequently be notified to Clerks to Local Governing Bodies and Headteachers/Heads of School.

The next scheduled full review date for this policy is 25th June 2029.

Date approved by the Board Appointed Trustee: 26th June 2026.

To be ratified and recorded in the minutes at the first Trust Board Meeting after 26^h June 2026.

Trust Glossary

AA	Admissions Authority	H&S	Health and Safety
AAI	Adrenaline Auto-Injector (Epi Pen)	HoS	Head of School
ACM	Asbestos Containing Materials	HSE	Health and Safety Executive
AHT	Assistant Headteacher	ICO	Information Commissioners Office
AIR	Attendance Intervention Reviews	IDSR	Inspection Data Summary Report
APDR	Assess Plan Do Review Cycle	IHP	Individual Healthcare Plan
APIs	Application Programming Interfaces	IRMS	Information and Records Management Society
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition	IWF	Internet Watch Foundation
ASP	Analyse School Performance	KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
ATH	Academy Trust Handbook	KS1/2/3/4	Key Stage 1/2/3/4
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds	LAC	Looked After Child
BAT	Board Appointed Trustee	LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
BCP	Business Continuity Plan	LGB	Local Governing Body
BFR	Budget Forecast Return	LLC	Low-Level Concerns
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	LSA	Learning Support Assistants
CFO	Chief Financial Officer	MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
CIF	Condition Improvement Fund	MAT	Multi-Academy Trust

CIN	Child in Need	MFA	Multi-Factor Authentication
CLA	Children Looked After	MFL	Modern Foreign Language
CMIE	Child Missing in Education	NCSC	National Cyber Security Centre
COO	Chief Operating Officer	NoV	Note of Visit
COSHH	Control of Substances Hazardous to Health	NPQ	National Professional Qualifications
CP	Child Protection	PA	Persistent Absence
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	PAN	Published Admission Number
CPOMS	Child Protection Online Management System	PECR	Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations
CSCS	Children's Social Care Services	PEP	Personal Education Plan
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation	PEEP	Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan
CTIRU	Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit	PEx	Permanent Exclusion
CWD	Children with Disabilities	PP	Pupil Premium
CYPMHS	Children and Young People's Mental Health Services	PPG	Pupil Premium Grant
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service	PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
DDSL	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
DfE	Department for Education	PTFA	Parent, Teacher and Friends Association
DHT	Deputy Headteacher	QA	Quality Assurance

DSE	Display Screen Equipment	RIDDOR	Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead	RHE	Relationships and Health Education
DPO	Data Protection Officer	RPA	Risk Protection Arrangement
EAL	English as an Additional Language	RSHE	Relationships, Sex and Health Education
ECT	Early Career Teacher	SA	Severely Absent
EDIB	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging	SALT	Speech and Language Therapist
EHA	Early Help Assessment	SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
EHCNA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment	SBM	School Business Manager
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan	SCC	Standard Contractual Clause
EHE	Elective Home Education	SCITT	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant	SCR	Single Central Record
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency	SDP	School Development Plan
EVC	Educational Visit Coordinator	SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
EWOSSO	Education Welfare and Safeguarding Support Officer	SEF	Self-Evaluation Form
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage	SEMH	Social, Emotional, and Mental Health
FBV	Fundamental British Values	SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
FFT	Fischer Family Trust	SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

FGM	Female Genital Mutilation	SIP	School Improvement Partner
FGMPO	FGM Protection Order	SLA	Service Level Agreement
FOI	Freedom of Information	SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
FSM	Free School Meals	SLT	Senior Leadership Team
FTS	Find a Tender Service	SPOC	Single Point of Contact
GAG	General Annual Grant	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	TA	Teaching Assistant
GIAS	Get Information about Schools	TAC	Team Around the Child
HASH	Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads	TCAT	Three Counties Academy Trust
HBA	Honour Based Abuse	TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)
HR	Human Resources	VSH	Virtual School Headteacher