



Primary Food Policy

#GN14

Last updated: 30 January 2024

Review Date: 31 August 2026

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Statement of intent

At Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT), we understand that what children eat, and drink is important, and the habits they develop from a young age will impact their future health. We value the importance of school in providing children with a nutritious, balanced diet that will encourage them to make healthy, informed choices. We share responsibility with parents to give guidance on the health issues and the risks of unhealthy eating practices.

We believe that food can be used in a variety of educational ways. Children are encouraged to celebrate holidays, religious festivals, special events and the various foods associated with these events, and are encouraged to experiment with unfamiliar foods.

Our primary schools meet the requirements of the 'Standards for school food in England' and we aim to maintain these standards across all meals provided.

1. Legal framework

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

- Public Health England (2017) 'Example menus for early years schools in England'
- DfE (2021) 'School food in England'
- DfE (2013) 'The school food plan'
- DfE (2021) 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'
- Food Safety Act 1990
- The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014
- School Food Plan (2015) 'School Food Standards'
- The Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (Natasha's Law)

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

- Healthy Eating and Drinking Policy
- Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy
- Whole-school Food Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy
- Ensuring that this policy does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, or religion
- Handling complaints regarding this policy, as outlined in the TCAT's Complaints Procedures Policy
- Ensuring TCAT uses reliable suppliers for the food purchased.
- Informing parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the individual school

School Leaders, in conjunction with Black Pepper School Lunches, are responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy
- Reviewing menus and meal times to ensure children's needs are being met
- Ensuring equipment is suitable for its use and providing separate facilities for hand-washing and for washing up in the kitchen area
- Ensuring all staff members are trained in basic food safety and hygiene
- Ensuring parents are given adequate notice of any changes to meals, food choices or any other aspect of food provision

All early years staff are responsible for:

- Sitting with children while they eat, where required, and being advocates of healthy eating

- Discouraging children from sharing or swapping their food in order to protect those with food allergies
- Treating all children equally, taking account of the eating practices in their cultures
- Modelling good cutlery use and eating habits but not intervening physically to bring about change
- Relaying through the school SLT any observed concerns with pupil eating habits and patterns to Parents and Carers and working collaboratively to make necessary changes where appropriate to do so

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing the school with information on their child's dietary requirements, preferences, and food allergies
- Providing specialist food for their child, where they may have an allergy, intolerance or medical need
- Giving consent for the school to give pre-made up milk to their child
- Working collaboratively with staff to make necessary changes to eating habits where appropriate to do so

3. Food and drink served

All meals will include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:

- Starchy foods
- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat, fish, eggs, beans, and non-dairy sources of protein
- Milk and dairy foods

Foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar will be limited in line with TCAT's current Healthy Lifestyle Policy for the age group of the children concerned.

Portion sizes will be based upon the recommended intake for the age group of the children concerned.

Menus will reflect the diversity of the community, with a variety of flavours and textures.

Where children are sleeping during mealtimes, their meal will be covered, stored correctly and served when the child awakens.

Fridges and store cupboards will be cleaned regularly to ensure they are clean. Food stored in the fridge will be kept at 5°C or lower and, where necessary, reheated until piping hot throughout. Food will be stored in sealed plastic containers, and tin cans will never be stored in the fridge.

Menus will rotate and meal suggestions from parents are welcomed during the planning of these menus.

Fresh drinking water will be available and accessible at all times and children will be encouraged to drink regularly.

Milk will be served with either the morning or afternoon snack (children attending part-time will always be offered milk with their snack).

All dairy products will be full fat. Children over two will also be allowed semi-skimmed products. Soya drinks are only given as a substitute for cow's milk with the agreement of the child's parents.

Fresh fruit juice will be the only drink offered to children other than milk or water. Juice will be diluted to one parts juice to 10 parts water and will only be given with meals rather than in between.

Fresh and frozen breast milk, provided by parents, will be used within 24 hours and have the expressed date on the container. Fresh and frozen breast milk will be heated in warm water, not in the microwave, and tested before being given to children. Breast milk will be discarded after one hour of being heated.

Powdered milk will be made up according to the manufacturers' instructions and discarded within one hour of being made.

Staff will not consume carbonated drinks in the presence of children.

4. Eating environment

The eating environment will be comfortable and relaxed. Children will be given plenty of time to feed themselves and hold feeding utensils. Staff should model good eating behaviours but not intervene directly with pupils. Concerns should be passed to school leaders who will contact Parents and Carers to work on a plan moving forward.

Children will be provided with utensils that are appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Staff will sit with children while they eat and encourage interaction at each table. Children will be observed to ensure they are drinking and eating enough, and staff will be aware of the behaviour that may suggest a child is thirsty or hungry.

Children will be encouraged to develop good eating skills and table manners.

Meals times will be used to help children develop independence, through making food choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves.

5. Celebrations and special occasions

'Party food' will not be permitted as it contains high percentages of salt, fat, and sugar. Each school will, instead, celebrate with the following:

- Craft activities
- Songs and stories
- Dressing up
- Decorating rooms
- Playing special games
- Encouraging children to find out about a wide range of events from a variety of cultures

Parents will be encouraged to bring in healthier food, or non-food items (such as stickers), instead of cakes or sweets for birthdays and other celebrations.

6. Allergies and special requirements

Parents will make the school aware of any allergies their child has and the actions that need to be taken if a reaction occurs.

A protocol will be established and made accessible to all staff to ensure everyone is aware of a child's allergies and symptoms.

Where it is suspected that a child has an allergy, TCAT will encourage the child's parents to seek advice and diagnosis from their doctor.

TCAT will ensure children with allergies are not exposed to foods that trigger allergies. Appropriate alternatives will be identified to ensure the child still eats a balanced diet.

All staff will be instructed, where necessary, to ensure they understand how to identify which allergens are present in every meal and snack provided.

All food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS) will have the name of the food and the full ingredients list, with allergens emphasised, e.g. in bold, italics or a different colour, clearly displayed.

All preparation of food containing common allergens, e.g. nuts, will be kept completely separate from other food preparation.

There will be a set of kitchen utensils that are only for use with the food and drink of the children at risk of allergic reactions. There will also be a set of kitchen utensils with a designated colour. These utensils will be used only for food items that contain bread and wheat related products.

Food items containing nuts, bread and wheat will be stored separately.

Learning activities which involve the use of food will be planned in accordance with children's' individual healthcare plans (IHPs), taking into account any known allergies of the children involved.

Children will be discouraged from sharing or swapping their food with other children.

Food provided for children with allergies will be managed in accordance with the Allergen and Anaphylaxis Policy.

Appropriate provision will be made for parental preferences, including cultural and religious food sensitivities, e.g. providing halal and kosher food as appropriate.

7. Food brought in from home

Food that is brought into the school from home will comply with this policy and include the foods outlined in the 'Food and drink served' section of this policy.

Food and drink will be appropriately labelled with the child's details, safely stored until needed and heated properly, if necessary.

Any food that is not consumed during the day will be sent home with the child.

8. Eating habits

All children will be supported to manage their own personal needs as far as possible, including understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

At meal times, fussy eaters will be seated with children that are more adventurous with their food to encourage the adoption of different food preferences.

Children will be regularly exposed to new foods in order to increase their liking for, and consumption of, a variety of new foods (providing these foods meet their specific dietary requirements).

Favourite foods will not be used as a reward to encourage children to eat foods they do not like.

TCAT is aware that some children will have allergies or different dietary requirements; this will be taken into account when encouraging children to try new foods.

Before a child is admitted, TCAT will obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, and food allergies – this information will be recorded and acted upon as appropriate.

Children will **never be forced** to finish everything on their plate. Small servings will be given, with the opportunity to have second helpings if the first serving is finished. **Under no circumstances** must staff be assisting children to eat or physically intervening unless requested to do so or in the instance of a medical emergency e.g., potential choking, and in that instance, they will alert a member of school leadership to the intervention who will make a record as such and inform parents.

9. Food safety and hygiene

Food will be stored, prepared and presented in a safe and hygienic environment which is adequately equipped to provide healthy meals, snacks and drinks for children.

Where necessary, suitable equipment for the sterilisation of babies' food will be available.

Children will be taught basic hygiene, such as not eating food that has fallen on the floor and washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet.

All staff will receive training in food hygiene before preparing or handling food.

All staff involved in preparing food for young children, or helping them eat, will be aware of the requirements of the Food Safety Act 1990.

10. Communication

Parents will be provided with information on the routine meals and snacks that their children are given.

Parents will be given a copy of this policy when their children start to attend the school and will be consulted via letter when the policy is updated.

Parents will be given regular feedback on how well, and what, their children are eating.

Menus will be distributed for all parents to see.

TCAT will consult with parents on the food that is provided and will ask them for feedback as the menus are developed and introduced.

TCAT will agree with parents on the methods used to manage fussy eating, ensuring they are consistent with those used at home.

Parents will be encouraged to attend events to celebrate special and cultural occasions.

11. 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, Chief Finance Officer, Executive Leader for Safeguarding and Inclusion and Headteacher/Heads of School in conjunction with the Governing Board. Any changes made to the policy will be amended by the Executive Headteacher/CEO and will be communicated to all members of staff.

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

Signed by:

_____	Executive Headteacher/CEO	Date: _____
_____	Chair of the Trust Board	Date: _____

Schedule of revisions

Version #	Detail	Actioned by	Date
002	Clarification of procedures for managing eating habits and staff expectations	MF	30.01.24