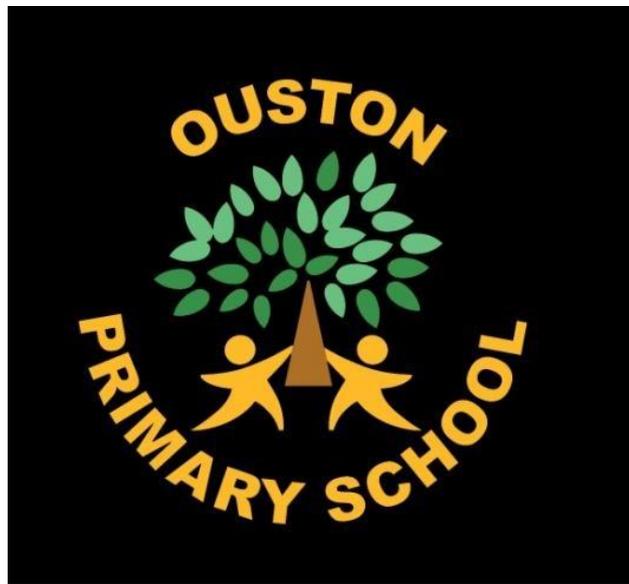


Ouston Primary School

Packed Lunch Policy



Review Date: Autumn 2025

Reviewed by: Curriculum Review Committee

Next Review date: Autumn 2027

Introduction

To grow and stay healthy children need to eat a nutritionally well balanced diet. Schools are an influential setting and can contribute significantly to improving the health and well-being of pupils.

Good nutrition in childhood can help to prevent a variety of health problems, both in the short term and later in life. There is increasing concern that many children are consuming too much fat, sugar and salt and too little fibre, fruit and vegetables.

Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly food intake and therefore need to be balanced and nutritious.

Aim

To ensure that all pupils have access to a healthy, balanced meal that supports their learning, wellbeing, and long-term health. It aligns with national healthy eating guidance and reflects Ofsted's expectations around promoting pupils' welfare, behaviour, and personal development.

Rationale:

- The school has a responsibility to promote healthy choices and create a culture where nutritious food is normal and valued. This is in line with statutory requirements to demonstrate how we support pupils' personal development and wellbeing.
- The content of lunchboxes needs to reflect the requirement of schools to meet minimum food and nutrition standards for school meals.
- The contents of lunchboxes in some schools can be extremely unhealthy, recent audits of lunchboxes have shown that in the main they contain foods with high levels of fat, sugar and salt, and very few fruit and vegetables.
- To encourage healthy eating habits from an early age and improve the overall nutrition of pupils.
- The short term effects of unhealthy packed lunches and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration and behavioural problems which may have an impact on a child's learning.
- The longer term effects of a poor diet in childhood can be an increased risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease and diabetes in adulthood.

Objectives

- To improve the nutritional quality of packed lunches in schools and the eating habits of children at lunchtimes.
- To develop an awareness in pupils, parents, staff and the wider community that the school takes a proactive approach to promoting healthy eating.
- To encourage healthy eating habits in childhood that can influence health and wellbeing in later life.

Implementation

This packed lunch policy fits within a wider context of promoting a whole school approach to food and healthy eating.

Packed lunches should aim to include:

Everyday Items (Encouraged)

- **Starchy foods** (e.g., bread, wraps, pasta, rice, potatoes)

These starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Packed lunches should include 2 or more portions.

- **Fruit and vegetables** (e.g., apple, carrot sticks, grapes, cucumber)
These foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Lunches should include at least 1 portion of fruit and 1 portion of vegetables / salad, or more.
- **Dairy or alternatives (e.g., yoghurt, cheese, fortified plant alternatives)**
These foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Include 1 portion at lunch
- **Protein sources (e.g., lean meat, eggs, beans, lentils, fish)**
These foods provide protein for growth. Packed lunches should include 1 portion of these foods
- **Water** as the main drink (school provides water throughout the day)

Items to Limit

These may be included occasionally, but not daily:

- Small cakes or muffins
- Plain biscuits
- Low-sugar cereal bars

Items Not Permitted

To support health, behaviour, and safety:

- Sweets or confectionery
- Chocolate bars
- Fizzy, sugary, energy drinks in cartons, bottles or cans
- Fast food or takeaway items
- Nuts or nut-based products (due to allergy risks)
- Varieties of crisps and savoury snacks that are high in fat and salt, e.g Pringles and Doritos
- Chocolate spread as a filling for sandwiches (our school is a nut free school and many chocolate spreads contain traces of nuts)

Foods and drinks high in fat and / or sugar

It is important not to fill up on too many foods that are high in fat and / or sugar at the expense of other more nutritious foods. Limiting high fat and sugar foods will help protect young people from becoming overweight as well as helping prevent tooth decay, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. This is why some items are no longer available in schools and parents are asked to not include them in a packed lunch.

Drinks – any drinks provided in lunch boxes **should only** include either plain water, milk (semi-skimmed), unsweetened fresh fruit juice, diluted fresh fruit juice, fruit or dairy based smoothies.

Parental feedback shows that parents feel school meals provide items from the 'items not permitted' list. Meals provided by school are scientifically nutritionally balanced which enables children to enjoy items like cookies and chocolate cake in moderation.

Special Dietary Requirements

The school recognises that some pupils have:

- Medical dietary needs
- Religious or cultural food requirements
- Sensory or additional needs

Parents should inform the school so reasonable adjustments can be made.

Allergies and Food Safety

- The school is a **nut-aware environment**; families must avoid sending any nut products.
- It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to provide an appropriate packed lunch container where food items can be stored securely and appropriately until the lunchtime period.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to use ice packs to keep food chilled as food products prepared and stored in ambient temperatures can have increased levels of bacteria in them after a period of time.
- The school will provide storage area/facilities for packed lunch bags, in the most convenient and appropriate place possible. However, the school cannot provide cooled storage areas and therefore cannot take legal responsibility for foods prepared at home and then brought into school.
- The school will provide an appropriate area where pupils who choose to bring packed lunches can eat and be supervised by an adult.
- If you send grapes into school with your child, could you please ensure you cut them in half length ways. This is for health and safety reasons due to the choking hazard posed. Please be considerate of all our pupils as food can often be dropped by children at lunchtime.

Waste and Disposal

The school will, within reason, send any uneaten packed lunch food items back home. The rationale for this is that parents can also monitor what their child has consumed during the day and then raise any concerns over their child's food intake with the school.

The school encourages families to reduce waste by choosing reusable options for packaging to support our commitment to recycling and sustainability.

Monitoring and Support

- Staff will monitor packed lunches informally to ensure they broadly meet expectations.
- If a lunch regularly falls outside the policy, the school will contact parents sensitively to offer guidance.
- The school will never remove food from a child's lunch but may provide alternatives if safety is a concern (e.g., nut products).

Promotion of Healthy Packed Lunches

There will be ongoing promotion of the need to provide healthy packed lunches through:

- Pupil, parent / carers newsletters
- School prospectus / brochure
- Whole School / Packed Lunch Policy
- Health weeks / healthy eating activities
- Curriculum content
- Parents evenings / parent consultations
- Discussion with our School Council
- School website
- Reward schemes, such as stickers
- School involvement in National Healthy Initiatives

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Parents/carers:** Provide a lunch that meets the policy
- **Pupils:** Engage with healthy eating messages and try new foods
- **Staff:** Promote healthy choices and communicate concerns sensitively
- **School leadership:** Review the policy bi-annually and ensure consistency

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the schools agreed policy review process. In addition, any major legislative or governmental changes regarding school food may lead to this policy being amended.

Endorsement

The School Governing Body, Pupils, Parent / Carer Representative and Staff endorse this policy for implementation.