

Packed Lunch Allergy Safety – Guidance for Schools

This guidance supports schools in managing allergy risks associated with packed lunches and other food brought from home, as part of the school's wider Allergy Safety Policy and relevant Individual Healthcare Plans (IHPs).

Promoting school meals

Where possible, we encourage schools to promote a school meal as the first choice for pupils. A healthy, nutritious and filling school meal can make an important contribution to a child's overall diet and help ensure they have the energy they need to learn and enjoy the school day.

For support with increasing school meal uptake, please speak to your Area Manager or our School Programmes Manager.

Managing packed lunches safely

Schools should set clear expectations for pupils, parents and carers around food brought into school. These arrangements may be reflected in the school's Packed Lunch Policy where appropriate and may include:

- **Healthy and balanced lunches** – what the school encourages pupils to bring and any foods or drinks that are discouraged.
- **Labelling and storage** – lunchboxes, drinks and food containers should be clearly named and stored appropriately.
- **Food sharing** – pupils should be encouraged not to share or swap food, drinks or utensils.
- **Individual allergy arrangements** – lunchtime staff should be aware of pupils with known allergies and relevant Individual Healthcare Plans. Pupils with allergies should be able to eat safely without being unnecessarily separated from their peers.
- **Cleaning and hygiene** – appropriate cleaning of eating areas and good hand hygiene should be encouraged to help minimise allergen cross-contact.
- **Food restrictions** – schools may consider discouraging or restricting particular foods where this forms part of their allergy risk-management arrangements. A blanket "allergen-free" approach should not replace appropriate allergy management, individual risk assessment and emergency arrangements.
- **Communication and support** – expectations should be clearly communicated to pupils, parents and carers. Families should also be reminded to keep the school informed of any changes to their child's allergies or medical needs. Schools should take a proportionate and supportive approach where packed lunch expectations are not met.

- **Review** – arrangements should be reviewed regularly and when a pupil's needs or national guidance changes.

Any packed lunch arrangements should complement, rather than replace, the school's wider Allergy Safety Policy, individual risk assessments and emergency procedures.

FFT catering arrangements

Food brought into school from home sits outside FFT's catering arrangements, and FFT is therefore unable to provide allergen information or assurances in relation to this food.

Food produced through the school catering service should use FFT-approved products and suppliers and follow established allergen management procedures.

Where catering teams provide packed lunches for trips or other activities, allergen information should be checked for all products used and the requirements of pupils with allergies and special diets appropriately catered for. Some food prepared and packaged in advance may also be subject to Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS) labelling requirements.

Catering teams should contact their Area Manager if they are unsure about the suitability of a product, catering for a pupil with an allergy, or whether labelling requirements apply.

Useful resources

- **Food for Life – Packed Lunch Policy Template** [View the Packed Lunch Policy Template](#)

A useful starting point for schools developing or reviewing their own Packed Lunch Policy.

- **School Food Matters – Packed Lunch Guidance** [View the Packed Lunch Guidance](#)

Practical healthy packed lunch guidance which schools may wish to share with families.

- **NHS – Healthier Families Lunchbox Ideas** [Visit NHS Healthier Families](#)

Practical ideas for healthier packed lunches.

- **Food Standards Agency – Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS) Labelling Guidance** [View the FSA guidance](#)

Guidance for catering teams on PPDS food labelling requirements.

Further support

This guidance should be read alongside the Department for Education's Allergy Safety in Schools statutory guidance and the school's own allergy and medical needs arrangements. [DfE – Allergy Safety in Schools](#)

For support with allergen management within the catering service, please contact your Area Manager.