



## Healthy Eating Policy

**Related Documents: Curriculum Policy, Safeguarding Policy, What We Do & How We Do It Policy, School food guide**

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### OUR VISION

Our vision is to provide pupils with the confidence, skills and ambition to achieve a successful and productive life. We aim to ensure they leave the school with a 'new day, new opportunity' ethos and are capable of becoming positive members of their communities. To do this, we have 3 principles that underpin our policies, practices and everything we do:

- Everyone can learn, achieve and has the potential to be successful
- Positive relationships are key to success and are underpinned by mutual trust, respect and caring for one another

<b>Policy owner</b>	WhiteTrees School	<b>Last review</b>	March 2026
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Date Created	March 2025	Next review	March 2027
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## Introduction

At White Trees Independent School, we are committed to fostering an environment that supports both the physical health and mental well-being of our students. Recognising the unique social and emotional challenges our pupils face, we understand that a balanced approach to nutrition and emotional support is essential for their overall development. We acknowledge that food plays a critical role not just in physical health but also in social interactions, mental resilience, and emotional stability. As such, our food policy is designed to be flexible, understanding, and supportive of individual needs, while promoting positive long-term habits.

We believe that a structured yet adaptable food policy ensures that pupils feel safe, nurtured, and encouraged to develop healthy eating habits. The policy is rooted in evidence-based nutritional guidelines, with additional considerations for the psychological and emotional impact of food choices. At White Trees Independent School, we value inclusivity and recognize that each student has a unique relationship with food. Our goal is to create a culture where food is seen as a source of nourishment, comfort, and community rather than a source of anxiety or restriction.

## Aims

- Promote healthy eating habits that contribute to the physical well-being of our pupils.
- Acknowledge the importance of mental health and its connection to nutrition.
- Provide flexibility in our food policies to accommodate the diverse needs of our pupils.
- Encourage a balanced approach where students can enjoy food without anxiety or stress, promoting a positive relationship with eating.
- Help pupils develop lifelong skills in making informed, responsible, and healthy food choices.
- Foster a sense of community and inclusion through shared meal experiences and celebrations.
- Empower pupils with knowledge about food sustainability and ethical food choices.
- Ensure that no student goes hungry, acknowledging that for some, school may be their only source of consistent nourishment.
- Create an environment where food is seen as a tool for both physical energy and emotional security, reinforcing positive mental health strategies.

## **Guiding Principles**

### **Whole School Approach**

- Adopt a comprehensive strategy that integrates healthy eating into all aspects of school life, ensuring consistency across the curriculum, school policies, and the wider school community.
- Given the unique nature of White Trees and the diverse needs of our pupils, a one-size-fits-all approach is not always practical. Flexibility and understanding are key to ensuring the best outcomes for all pupils.
- Recognise that food is more than just sustenance; it plays a significant role in social bonding, emotional regulation, and personal growth.
- Support a positive eating culture by integrating food-related activities, discussions, and experiences within the school environment.
- Promote positive food attitudes by reducing stigma around different eating habits and dietary restrictions.

### **Nutritional Standards**

- Ensure that meals provided meet the School Food Standards, offering a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- Limit but do not completely restrict the availability of foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fats during regular meal times to promote healthier choices while avoiding unnecessary food anxiety.
- Encourage a varied diet that includes different food groups, ensuring students have access to a range of nutrients that support both their physical and mental health.
- Provide clear, accessible nutritional information to help pupils make informed choices about their food.
- Encourage hydration by promoting water consumption and limiting access to sugary drinks.
- Provide alternative meal options for students with allergies, dietary restrictions, or specific cultural or religious food requirements.
- Offer structured mealtimes to create a calm and supportive eating environment that minimises stress and sensory overload.

### **Mental Wellbeing and Flexibility**

- Recognize that for some pupils, consuming any available food may be crucial, especially if it is their only substantial meal of the day. In such instances, the immediate need for nourishment takes precedence over strict adherence to nutritional guidelines.
- Celebrate special occasions, such as birthdays and achievements, with treats like birthday cakes, acknowledging their significance in providing joy and a

sense of normalcy for pupils who might not experience these celebrations outside of school.

- Food can be a difficult subject for some of our pupils. They may have disorganized eating patterns or unhealthy ideas about what food does to their bodies. Understanding each pupil's individual needs is imperative.
- Education around food is key to our pupils understanding the importance of making food choices. Providing guidance on portion sizes, meal timing, and food balance can help them feel more in control of their own well-being.
- The most impactful form of education is role modelling. It is essential for our entire school community to demonstrate diverse, balanced eating habits. Showing pupils that it is okay to have a chocolate bar or a small piece of cake after a nutritious meal reinforces a healthy relationship with food.
- Implement sensory-friendly meal options for pupils who struggle with texture, taste, or other food sensitivities.

## **Staff Participation**

- Encourage teaching staff to share meals and snacks with pupils during off-site activities when practical, fostering a sense of community and modelling positive eating behaviours.
- Pupils should have opportunities to eat in pleasant, social environments within the community, such as restaurants or cafes, helping them develop social skills, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging.
- Staff members should be mindful of their own eating habits in front of pupils, as their behaviours set an example for positive food choices and attitudes.
- Ensure that staff receive training on supporting pupils with food-related anxieties and sensitivities.

## **Education & Management**

- Integrate lessons on healthy eating and its impact on both physical health and mental well-being into the curriculum, making these lessons interactive and relevant to pupils' lives.
- Provide hands-on opportunities such as cooking lessons, gardening projects, or food-related science experiments to reinforce key messages about food, nutrition, and sustainability.
- Engage pupils in discussions about ethical eating, food sources, and environmental impact.
- Role modelling remains a central focus—staff and school leaders should consistently demonstrate positive food behaviours to reinforce healthy eating norms.

## Parental & Community Involvement

- Engage with parents and caregivers to promote consistent messages about healthy eating and mental well-being at home, offering workshops and resources to support them.
- Collaborate with local organizations to support our pupils nutritional and emotional needs, building partnerships that enhance our ability to provide nutritious food options and education.
- Encourage parents to participate in school meal planning and food-related events to foster a community-oriented approach to healthy eating.
- Work with external agencies to ensure access to food for families in need, providing support beyond school hours.

## Implementation & Monitoring

- The senior leadership team will oversee the implementation of this policy, ensuring that it aligns with the Department for Education's guidance on promoting children and young people's mental health and well-being.
- Regular reviews will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the policy, with input from pupils, staff, and parents.
- Adjustments will be made as necessary to respond to the evolving needs of our pupils and the school community.
- Staff will receive ongoing training and support to ensure they can effectively promote and implement the principles of this policy.

## Conclusion

By embracing a balanced approach that values both healthy eating and mental well-being, White Trees aims to create a nurturing environment where all students can thrive. Through education, flexibility, and community support, we empower our pupils to develop positive, lifelong relationships with food, ensuring their well-being both inside and outside of school.

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