A model school food policy - a practical guide
This booklet is intended to outline the advantages to a school of adopting a food policy and to provide practical guidance on how to go about this.

We hope you find it helpful.

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Background - Why have a school food policy?

Numerous scientific reports have outlined the case for a healthy diet that is low in fat, sugar and salt, and high in fibre, with plenty of starchy foods, fruit and vegetables. Many have emphasised the need for this to begin in childhood.

It is well established that obesity and many illnesses are related to poor diet or incorrectly prepared food.

- A healthy balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables and starchy foods can help reduce the risk of diseases such as heart disease and some cancers.
- Good food hygiene practices can reduce the risk of food poisoning illnesses such as those caused by e-coli and salmonella.

Well nourished pupils are likely to be more receptive to teaching and will learn better.

Food knowledge and skills, including menu planning, cooking and gardening, have an important role to play in enriching our social development and in celebrating, nurturing and increasing our appreciation of cultural diversity.

Given the increasing evidence of the social and environmental damage caused by some methods of food production, manufacturing and distribution, there is a growing belief that everyone should learn about and understand:

a) Issues around food production e.g.

- Organic food
- Free range food
- Genetically modified food
- Sustainable food and farming practices

b) Food marketing techniques and labelling information.

The school can make a major contribution to improving both the environment and the health of pupils, staff and their families by increasing their knowledge and awareness of food issues and helping to influence their eating habits. By developing and implementing a food policy that encompasses all of the above issues, a school can show its commitment to improving the health of students, staff and the school community. A food policy sets a framework for all food related
activities in school, ensuring that aims and outcomes are consistent with and supportive of the overall goal of improving health and well-being.

A model food policy framework that school governing boards could consider, adapt and use as appropriate is found on pages 3 and 4 of this booklet.

To develop and support a specific food policy suitable for its particular circumstances each school is advised to add to this framework. A range of issues and approaches for consideration are included in the appendices - pages 5-10.

Materials that may be helpful in developing your school food policy are:

1. **The Food in Schools Toolkit and website** - [www.foodinschools.org](http://www.foodinschools.org) includes guidance on a whole school approach and an interactive audit tool


3. **The Chips are Down - a guide to food policy in schools.** Available from the Health Education Trust, 18 High Street, Broom, Alcester, Warwickshire B50 4HJ (tel 01789 773915) price £10. This booklet provides guidance on promoting a whole school approach to food education. Visit their website [www.healthedtrust.com](http://www.healthedtrust.com) for information on how to order a copy.
The Grab 5! Model
School Food Policy

1. Responsibilities

The Board of Governors recognizes the important connection between a healthy diet and a student’s ability to learn effectively and achieve high standards in school. The Board also recognizes the role a school can play, as part of the larger community, to promote family health, and sustainable food and farming practices.

The Board of Governors recognizes that sharing food is a fundamental experience for all people; a primary way to nurture and celebrate our cultural diversity; and an excellent bridge for building friendships, and inter-generational bonds.

2. Mission

The educational mission is to improve the health of the entire community by teaching students and families ways to establish and maintain life-long healthy and environmentally sustainable eating habits. The mission shall be accomplished through food education and skills (such as cooking and growing food), the food served in schools, and core academic content in the classroom.

3. Aims

3.1 To improve the health of pupils, staff and their families by helping to influence their eating habits through increasing their knowledge and awareness of food issues, including what constitutes a healthy and environmentally sustainable diet, and hygienic food preparation and storage methods.

3.2 To increase pupils’ knowledge of food production, manufacturing, distribution and marketing practices, and their impact on both health and the environment.

3.3 To ensure pupils are well nourished at school, and that every pupil has access to safe, tasty, and nutritious food, and a safe, easily available water supply during the school day.

3.4 To ensure that food provision in the school reflects the ethical and medical requirements of staff and pupils e.g. religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical, and allergenic needs.

3.5 To make the provision and consumption of food an enjoyable and safe experience.

3.6 To introduce and promote practices within the school to reinforce these aims, and to remove or discourage practices that negate them.
4. Objectives

4.1 To work towards ensuring that this policy is both accepted and embraced by
- Governors
- School management
- Teachers and support staff
- Pupils
- Parents
- Food providers
- The school's wider community

4.2 To integrate these aims into all aspects of school life, in particular
- Food provision within the school
- The curriculum
- Pastoral and social activities

5. Methods

5.1 Establish an effective structure to oversee the development, implementation, and monitoring of this policy, and to encourage a participatory approach to meeting the objectives. Refer to appendix A for ideas.

5.2 Develop an understanding and ethos within the school of safe, tasty, nutritious, environmentally sustainable food, through both education and example. Refer to appendix B for ideas.

5.3 Create an environment, both physical and social, conducive to the enjoyment of safe, tasty, nutritious, environmentally sustainable food. Refer to appendix C and E for ideas.

5.4 Help to promote and raise awareness of environmentally sustainable food production methods and socially responsible food marketing practices. Refer to appendix D for ideas.

Signed ................................................................. Chair of Governors

Date ......................................................
Establish the organisational structure and arrangements to oversee the policy and encourage a participatory approach

- Identify who will take lead responsibility, i.e. who will make it work?

- Take a whole school approach - include consideration of curriculum, food service, pastoral and social care

- Set up a school Nutrition Action Group (SNAG).
  - Invite parents, pupils, teachers, school meal provider, health workers, interested members of the local community etc.
  - Consider the frequency of meetings.

- Include in the annual reports to governors and parents:
  - Description of the level of service.
  - Meal uptake.
  - School meal promotion marketing plan.
  - Progress in meeting food policy goals.
  - Quality of food being served (hygiene, nutrition, sustainability).

- Solicit pupil preferences in planning menus and snacks. This could be done with focus groups, surveys, taste tests etc.

- Decide how to involve parents and the wider community.
Appendix B
Integrating into the curriculum

Integrating an ethos of safe, tasty, nutritious and environmentally sustainable food into the curriculum

Food topics covered within curriculum areas (check content, year group, timing etc.)

- Art, e.g. observation drawings of food, healthy eating poster design
- Personal Social and Health Education, e.g. menu planning, nutrition
- Design and Technology, e.g. cooking, designing tools
- English, e.g. food diaries, following instructions
- Geography, e.g. what food grows where, food miles, transporting food, waste
- History, e.g. past diets, discoveries
- Information Technology, e.g. recording results of a food survey, website review
- Maths, e.g. weights and measures
- Physical Education, e.g. links between healthy eating and exercise
- Science, e.g. effects of heat on food, plant growth, nutrition

Topic cross reference (check to see where and how these issues are covered in the curriculum)

- Nutrition
- Dining
- Cooking (any out of hours activities? external demonstrators?)
- Menu planning skills
- Food hygiene (e.g. common food poisons, bacterial growth, contamination, washing hands, temperatures, storage, cleaning and disinfectant, pests)
- Cultural diversity
- Food production, marketing and labelling
- Recycling
- How plants grow

Examples of activities that could support curriculum work

- Relationships with local food businesses, e.g. farms, shops and restaurants (encourage food professionals such as chefs to come into the classroom, and arrange for pupils to visit their premises).
- Tasting sessions (integrate a range of eating experiences into classroom work, e.g. tasting fresh, dried, juiced, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables)
- Cooking demonstrations
- Healthy eating drama activities
- Healthy eating projects
- School website with pages on food issues and links to other related sites
- Debates / guest speakers
- Eating experiences integrated into the curriculum for all subjects.
- School gardens (give pupils the opportunity to plant, harvest, prepare, cook and eat the food they grow).
Creating an environment conducive to the enjoyment of safe, tasty, nutritious and environmentally sustainable food

**Key questions**

- What is the on-site food provision? (list it). Does it need to change?
- How do the services provided meet the religious, ethnic, vegetarian, medical and allergenic needs of pupils and staff?
- Do we need a staff training programme for teachers and food service staff on basic nutrition, nutrition education and the benefits of organic and sustainable agriculture?
- Do we want to introduce a system of nutrient based menu planning and analysis for school meals? If so, what software, training and support do we need?

**Environment**

- Dining area - is it safe, pleasant, comfortable, attractive and clean?
- Are there sufficient dining room supervisors? Are they trained to provide advice on food choices / hygiene?
- Dining arrangements? Family or cafeteria?
- How can we ensure pupils have sufficient time to eat?
- How do we foster good manners and respect for fellow students?
- Are facilities for washing hands adequate?
- Are there sufficient litter bins and facilities for waste food? Are they emptied regularly?

**Food ideas**

- **Breakfast food**
  - Cereal
  - Fruit (fresh, canned and dried)
  - Yoghurt with fruit and/or cereal
  - Bread or toast (white or wholemeal), muffins, crumpets, butter or spread, marmalade, marmite
  - Fruit juice, water and milk

- **School tuck shop food**
  - Fresh fruit
  - Vegetables, e.g. carrot sticks, cucumber, celery
  - Crumpets, pitta bread, toast or bread (avoid sweet fillings, such as jams)
  - Bread sticks
  - Milk
Appendix C
The school environment

- Snack / packed lunch items we could consider prohibiting
  - Fizzy drinks
  - Chocolate
  - Crisps
  - Chewy / boiled sweets

- School lunch choices
  - Do they meet government nutritional standards?
  - Can the contract specification requirements be improved?
  - Do we provide guidelines on healthy packed lunches?

- Other food provision
  - What is our school milk policy?
  - Vending machines? Do they provide healthy choices?
  - What food choices do we offer at after school clubs / school events?
  - Do we want any rules regarding pupils leaving the premises before the end of the school day to buy food?
  - Do we encourage the use of school food facilities in holidays and out of school hours? (e.g. food co-ops, cooking clubs)
  - Are parents encouraged to sample school lunches?
  - What opportunities are there for people involved in the school food policy to share their experiences with others and spread good practice?

- Water issues e.g.
  - Safe provision points
  - How often should the water supply be tested?
  - Pupil access policy
  - Water breaks during sport / exercise activities
Appendix D
Raising awareness

Promotion and raising awareness of environmentally sustainable food production methods and socially responsible food marketing practices

Increasing the use of safe, environmentally sustainable local food

- Encourage caterers to use locally grown produce wherever possible
- Require use of organic food wherever possible
- Ensure menu planning is linked to seasonal produce
- Through the catering specification eliminate unnecessary and potentially harmful food additives such as bovine growth hormones, irradiation, and genetically modified foods

Public policy and school campaigns

- Aim to ensure maximum uptake of meals and that all pupils entitled to a free meal receive one. This may be done through parental information / communication, meals promotions and procedures to protect identity of free meal claimants. Have we developed a method of monitoring uptake?
- Maximise the reduction of waste by recycling, reusing, composting and purchasing recycled products. Include the school caterers in the project.
- Does the school want to advocate or stimulate debate on food issues e.g.
  - label disclosure?
  - organic farming targets?
  - advertising regulations for companies targeting children?
Methods include letters to members of parliament, debates, petitions, inviting speakers into school, pupils' question time.
Appendix E
Food hygiene

Why not find out if your local Environmental Health Office is willing to help prepare this appendix?

Points to consider:

- Lead responsibility
  - Who will be responsible for ensuring compliance with these requirements?

- Requirement on all providers
  Do the providers of food services meet the following requirements?
  - All the staff employed in food preparation hold a basic food hygiene certificate.
  - Staff are supervised by someone holding an advanced food hygiene certificate or equivalent.
  - A ‘Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points’ system is in operation and observed at all times. Is a copy of this available for inspection?
  - All Government/European Union regulations appertaining to food hygiene are complied with.

- Additional requirements on school meal providers
  - Arrange for a full independent food hygiene inspection of the food storage, meal preparation and food serving areas? How often? Should a copy of the inspectors' report be provided to the school?
  - Do they have a cleaning and disinfectant schedule that can be inspected?

- Pupils
  - Are pupils reminded to wash their hands every time they go to the toilet?
  - Do we ensure pupils wash their hands before they eat food?

- Adults
  - Require adults who assist with food preparation activities in the school, including classroom activities, to possess a basic food hygiene certificate or equivalent.

- Classroom food handling and preparation
  - Do we have a list of “do's” and “don't's”?

- Food Poisoning
  - What is policy/procedure in the event of an outbreak? Who should be aware of this? Are they aware?
The 'Grab 5! model school food policy - a practical guide' is one of three documents comprising the Grab 5! Pack. The other two documents are:

- the **Grab 5! action pack** - a toolkit giving background to the project and practical advice on activities schools can do around the promotion of healthy eating and fruit and vegetables

- the **Grab 5! curriculum pack** - a comprehensive pack of classroom activities that integrates into and supports the key stage 2 curriculum

The above materials and more details about Grab 5! can be viewed on [www.grab5.com](http://www.grab5.com)

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Grab 5! has been developed, and is managed by Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming.

Sustain advocates food and agricultural policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent over 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level. The Sustain website is [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)