



St Lawrence Catholic Primary School

Packed Lunch Policy

September 2026

“Our school is a place where we all come together as one community to learn, have fun and make lasting friendships all under God’s love and care”

Approved by	Full Governing Body
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Policy lead	Headteacher / Named Allergy Lead

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1 Purpose and scope

This policy explains St Lawrence Catholic Primary School's expectations for packed lunches. Its purpose is to support healthy choices, reduce avoidable allergy risks and ensure that every child can eat safely, comfortably and with dignity.

It applies to packed lunches brought from home and eaten at school, on educational visits or during other school activities. It also applies to packed lunches provided by the school. Where the school provides food, the statutory School Food Standards and applicable food information requirements will be followed.

2 Policy basis

This policy draws on the NHS Eatwell Guide and Healthier Families lunchbox guidance. It should be read alongside the school's Allergy Safety Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, First Aid Policy, Health and Safety Policy and Educational Visits Policy.

The statutory School Food Standards apply to food provided by the school. They do not normally apply to lunches prepared at home; however, the governing body may set reasonable expectations to promote health, safety and wellbeing.

3 What a healthy packed lunch should contain

A balanced packed lunch should normally include a suitable choice from the following groups. Variety across the week is encouraged.

- Starchy food, preferably higher-fibre where suitable, such as bread, wraps, rice, pasta, couscous, potatoes, chapatti or roti.
- A source of protein, such as lean meat, fish, eggs, beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, dhal or another suitable alternative.
- Vegetables or salad.
- A portion of fruit.
- A dairy food, or a suitable alternative, such as milk, cheese, yoghurt or a calcium-fortified dairy alternative.
- Water as the usual drink. Plain milk is also suitable.

Oily fish may be included, for example salmon, mackerel or sardines. Fresh and canned tuna are nutritious choices but are not classed as oily fish.

4 Foods and drinks to limit or avoid

Packed lunches should support children's health without creating anxiety or conflict around food. Families are asked to limit foods high in saturated fat, salt or free sugars, including crisps, cakes, sweet biscuits, pastries, sausage rolls and similar processed products.

Packed lunches must not include:

- fizzy drinks, energy drinks or high-caffeine drinks;
- sweets or confectionery bars;
- glass bottles or containers; or
- foods restricted under the allergy-aware arrangements below.

A small sweet item may occasionally be included as part of an otherwise balanced lunch, but it should not replace the main food, fruit or vegetables. Staff will take a supportive and proportionate approach.

5 Allergy awareness and special dietary needs

The school is allergy-aware but cannot guarantee an entirely allergen-free environment. The controls in this section reduce risk but do not replace individual healthcare plans, Allergy Action Plans, staff training or emergency procedures.

To reduce foreseeable risk, families and staff must:

- not include peanuts, tree nuts, nut butters or foods knowingly containing these ingredients in packed lunches;
- not include sesame seeds or sesame-based products, including tahini, unless the school communicates a change to this arrangement;
- not allow pupils to share or swap food, drinks, cutlery or food containers;
- follow any additional restriction communicated by the school in response to an individual pupil's assessed needs; and
- ensure children wash their hands before and after eating where directed.

These arrangements do not mean the school is "nut-free", "sesame-free" or free from any other allergen. Parents and carers of a child with a diagnosed allergy must provide current information, prescribed medication and an up-to-date Allergy Action Plan in accordance with the Allergy Safety Policy.

Medical, allergy-related, disability-related, religious, cultural, ethical and sensory dietary needs will be respected. Parents and carers should contact the school so that appropriate and safe arrangements can be agreed. Pupils will not be excluded, embarrassed or disadvantaged because of their dietary needs.

6 Food safety and packed lunch containers

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that food brought from home is suitable for their child and has been prepared, stored and transported safely.

- Use a clean, clearly named, secure and reusable lunchbox or bag.
- Use an insulated bag and a frozen ice pack for foods that normally require refrigeration. The school cannot provide refrigerated storage for home packed lunches.
- Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate during preparation.
- Do not send food that requires reheating or cooking at school.
- Choose portions and packaging that the child can manage as independently as possible.
- Avoid single-use packaging where reasonably practicable.

7 Lunchtime arrangements

The school will provide suitable accommodation, furniture, supervision and access to free fresh drinking water. Pupils eating packed lunches and school meals will be able to sit together wherever practicable.

Staff will encourage good hygiene, safe eating and positive social interaction. Children will be given reasonable time to eat and will not be pressured to finish food. Uneaten food will normally be returned in the lunchbox so parents and carers can see what has been eaten, unless this would create a food-safety concern.

8 Educational visits and school provided packed lunches

This policy applies to packed lunches taken on educational visits. Visit leaders must consider known allergies, food storage, medication access and emergency arrangements within the visit risk assessment.

Any packed lunch supplied by the school must meet the School Food Standards and applicable allergen-information requirements. Appropriate alternatives will be arranged for pupils with notified dietary needs.

9 Monitoring and support

The school will promote healthy eating through education, positive encouragement and practical guidance. Staff may monitor lunch contents where there is a reasonable health, safety or welfare concern, but routine checks will be handled sensitively and without publicly singling out a child.

If a lunch does not follow this policy:

- the child will still be supported to eat an adequate lunch;
- staff will not use the removal of food as a punishment;
- an unsafe item may be set aside and returned to the parent or carer at the end of the day;
- alternative food or drink will only be offered after checking known allergies and dietary requirements; and
- the school will contact the parent or carer and offer guidance where concerns are repeated or significant.

Where the school believes that a child is regularly arriving without enough suitable food, it will work with the family to understand the circumstances and offer support. Welfare or safeguarding procedures will be followed where necessary.

10 Roles and responsibilities

10.1 The governing body and headteacher

- Approve and oversee this policy and ensure that it is consistent with the school's wider duties.
- Ensure that suitable lunchtime facilities, supervision and procedures are in place.
- Ensure that staff understand the school's allergy-aware arrangements.

10.2 Staff

- Promote the policy consistently, positively and without shaming pupils or families.
- Know the relevant allergy and dietary information for pupils in their care.
- Prevent food sharing and follow individual plans and emergency procedures.
- Report concerns, reactions and near misses in accordance with the Allergy Safety Policy.

10.3 Parents and carers

- Provide a suitable, balanced and safely packed lunch.
- Follow the school's allergy-aware restrictions and ensure the lunchbox is clearly named.
- Inform the school promptly about allergies, medical conditions or dietary needs and any changes.
- Work constructively with the school where advice or support is offered.

10.4 Pupils

- Follow age-appropriate hygiene and lunchtime expectations.
- Do not share or swap food, drinks, cutlery or containers.

- Tell an adult immediately if they or another pupil may be having an allergic reaction.

11 Equality and inclusion

The school will apply this policy fairly and make reasonable adjustments where required. Consideration will be given to disability, medical need, allergy, sensory need, religion, culture and family circumstances. The policy will not be used to stigmatise pupils, restrict access to school activities unnecessarily or make assumptions about a family's choices or resources.

12 Monitoring and review

The headteacher and Named Allergy Lead will monitor implementation. The policy will be reviewed annually, and sooner following a significant allergy incident or near miss, a change in legislation or national guidance, or a material change to the school's arrangements.

The revised national School Food Standards are due to apply from September 2027. This policy should be checked against the final requirements before that date, particularly where the school provides packed lunches or other food.

13 Useful guidance

- NHS Eatwell Guide: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/>
- NHS Healthier Families lunchbox ideas: <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>
- Department for Education school food standards: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-food-standards>
- Department for Education allergy safety in schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allergy-safety-in-schools>