



Compulsory Infant School Meal Policy - KS1 - September 2021

Dunmow St Mary's operates a compulsory infant school meal policy for our KS1 children. This means that children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are not able to bring a packed lunch into school and will be expected to have a hot meal provided by the school. There will, of course, be no cost to parents as the meals are funded by the Government.

With this policy we aim to support parents/carers in the following ways:

- to ensure children are eating healthily throughout the school day
- to reduce family food costs/bills and ease pressure on family budgets
- to educate children about healthy eating and diet
- to help children to develop positive eating habits
- to present children with opportunities to experience a variety of different foods.

Agreed by Governing Body - 18/1/2019

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is affected by this policy?

Since September 2019 our reception children have been given a hot dinner every day. From September 2021, this policy will apply to Year 1 and Year 2 children.

2. Do I have to pay for this?

There is no cost as all children in reception, year one and year two are entitled to receive a free school meal. This is funded by the government at £2.35 per day and works out at an annual benefit for parents of £458 per annum.

3. What about my other children?

There is no change to our policy in relation to children in years 3-6. If they are eligible for free school meals (years 3-6) these will be provided free of charge. If not, and they choose to have a school lunch, the same charge of £2.35 applies. Otherwise they can choose to have a packed lunch.

4. What if I forget and send my child in with a packed lunch?

Any child who comes to school with a packed lunch will have their packed lunch put to one side for them to collect at home time.

5. What if I don't want my child to have a school lunch?

The school policy is that any child staying at school will be provided with a hot lunch. Should you not wish for this to happen then it is your prerogative to collect your child and take them home for lunch. We very much hope that we will be able to work with you to address any concerns you have and to ensure that lunchtime is a positive experience for your child.

6. I don't believe that school meals are healthier than a packed lunch that I make.

We know that parents are often concerned about whether school meals are healthy especially as children often talk about the chips/burgers and pizzas they eat. In 2015 the following rules for schools were set in place and Mrs Tyrell designs the termly menus so they adhere to these and also are attractive to the young children who eat them.

Meals have to adhere to the nutrient-based standards for schools, which set out precise requirements such as calorific value, minimum levels of key nutrients like iron, calcium and carbohydrate, and maximum levels of salt, fat and sugar. These rules also state that:

- One or more portions of vegetables or salad must be offered every day
- At least three different types of fruit and three different vegetables must be offered across the week
- Wholegrain foods should be used as much as possible, rather than refined carbohydrates
- Water should be the drink of choice
- Fruit juice can be served in portions of no more than 150ml
- Added sugars or honey in other drinks are restricted to five per cent
- Deep-fried, battered or breadcrumbed food can be served no more than twice a week
- Pastry products can only be served twice a week
- One portion of low-fat milk has to be offered every day

Schools are being advised to develop menus that are appealing and familiar to children, and to keep meals simple, with not too many options, to make it easy for them to choose.

7. What if my child refuses to eat anything?

During service Mrs Tyrell and her team actively encourage the children to have all parts of the meal. Once the children are eating in the dinner hall the team will encourage them to use their cutlery (helping with cutting where necessary) and to eat their food. Nobody is forced to eat anything and if for some reason a child doesn't eat what we would consider a reasonable amount we would let their teacher know so that this can be passed back to parents.

We know from working closely with a number of parents who have shared their concerns about their child's eating habits that a collaborative approach can have a very positive outcome. Mrs Tyrell is extremely experienced in supporting parents and children with particular food concerns and we have seen children who refuse all new food learn to try and enjoy new items; children who won't eat vegetables moving to eating a variety of these and children who were anxious about school dinners now asking for seconds.

8. My child has food allergies and I worry about what they can eat.

We will hopefully already be aware of any current food allergies and/or medical conditions that children have in relation to food. We are able to provide food for children with special dietary requirements/food intolerances: children who are vegan/vegetarian and children who cannot eat specific foods due to religious/cultural beliefs.

Please be aware the school will require supporting medical evidence or a referral from a dietician/GP to ensure dietary needs are correctly met and a bespoke school meal plan is implemented.