



Nutrition and Food Education at The Vineyard School, Richmond

Our Aim and Vision

At our school, we are dedicated to ensuring that all our children are happy and reach their full potential.

We have ambitious goals for our students, and this extends to our food and nutrition education and offerings. We believe that feeding our children with real, nutritious foods is fundamental to nourishing their brains and bodies, and this vision underpins our food education and provision. Our aim is for every child in our school to become 'Food Literate'. To know what real food is, and be able to cook, prepare, and clean up after food by the time they leave us in Year 6. They should have a positive attitude toward food and the confidence and knowledge to choose foods that nourish them and promote their health.

What does 'Food Literate' mean?

Becoming food literate means children will:

- * Develop a positive attitude towards food.
- * Understand what "real food" is.
- * Real food is whole and has had limited processing. The food originates from nature either from plants (fruits and vegetables) or from animals (meat and dairy)
- * Recognize that food is fuel and significantly impacts health and well-being.
- * Acquire the skills and knowledge to choose, prepare, and cook foods that positively affect their health.
- * Gain solid nutrition knowledge, understanding different food groups and nutrients, their roles in the body, and how and why to obtain them through real food.

Why - the importance of Nutrition Knowledge and Food Education

The impact of nutrition and eating real food on our children's health, education, attainment, and happiness cannot be underestimated. It is our duty to teach them the science alongside hands-on cooking experiences.

We are focused on educating our children in food education and fostering a positive attitude toward food, understanding its role in our health and well-being. This is especially important in the primary years, as this is the time to build their confidence around food.

Nutrition impacts sleep, hormone function, energy, attainment (academic and sporting), emotions, and the ability to learn effectively. Hands-on experiences with food are creative, mathematical, develop fine motor skills, and provide opportunities for science, getting messy, making mistakes, problem-solving, using initiative, speaking, listening, understanding, self-expression, manners, common sense, service, pride, patience, resilience, turn-taking, appreciation, ownership, and responsibility.

The impact of our vision and provision is far reaching for all our students.

How - Our starting point

By bringing our Extended School Provision in-house, we've identified an opportunity to significantly enhance and develop our food and nutrition programs. This is just the beginning; our ultimate goal is to improve food provision across the entire school day, creating the best possible environment for our children to thrive and achieve their potential. We believe that feeding our children with real, nutritious foods is fundamental to nourishing their brains and bodies, and this vision underpins all our food education and provision.

How we are achieving this:

- * Only offering real food in our EDP (breakfast and light supper) and omitting ultra-processed foods.
- * Designing and implementing a bespoke menu unique to our setting
- * Following basic nutrition principles, including foods from all main food groups, fresh fruits and vegetables, and emphasizing hydration.
- * Teaching children how to construct a balanced meal or snack.
- * Combining slow-release complex carbohydrate foods with protein.
- * Providing daily opportunities for them to make their own food.
- * Fostering a positive and fun environment and attitude toward food.
- * Making food education enjoyable and a safe place to make mistakes and be creative.

Our ethos is grounded in allowing and encouraging children to make their own food. This approach combines nutrition science with practical skills, bringing the science to life and making it more relevant and embedded for a lasting real-life impact.



We teach nutrition facts and knowledge, and these practical, hands-on cooking experiences offer far-reaching benefits such as kitchen safety, knife skills, preparation skills, cleaning up, organizational skills, and an understanding of where food comes from and its role in the body.

Children learn about different food groups, vitamins, and minerals, and how to obtain them through food. They learn what their function is within the body. They gain the confidence to make positive choices to feed themselves and those they care for, and how to create a balanced plate of food—without calorie counting or restrictive trends.

We emphasize the importance of chewing food properly, experiencing different textures, colors, and varieties of food, and understanding affordability and sustainability.

Specialist Nutrition and Teaching Support

We are working with a local nutritionist who runs a food education business (Kate Cox Nutrition/Real Food Education) focused on teaching children and adults how and why to eat real food. She is a parent with a teaching background and is a Registered Nutritional Therapist whose business promotes a positive attitude towards real food and practical experiences, helping individuals become food literate and confident around food.

Our provision is grounded in nutrition science, along with research undertaken by organizations and initiatives such as the National Food Strategy, The Food Foundation, the British Association of Nutritional Therapists, the British Nutrition Foundation, and The British Dietetic Association.

Information for New Parents and Vineyard Families

The happiness, health and success of your children is our top priority and we hope you join us in supporting our aims and ethos regarding nutrition and food education.

Below are some ideas and examples for snacks that we welcome at school. These suggestions are designed to enhance well-being, attainment, concentration, and mood for everyone—children and adults alike. Our aim is for this to become part of our whole school policy and we welcome your support.

We know the crucial role that food, fueling, and nutrition play in our lives. A child's learning is directly impacted by what they eat. Hunger reduces concentration and mood, and a "pure glucose" snack can lead to a quick energy spike followed by a dip, which directly affects their ability to concentrate, focus, and learn.

To understand how this may affect your children, consider your own experience. When you've eaten something processed or sugary, or when you've been hungry, how well can you concentrate? How is your patience? What is your mood like? You may have felt angry, frustrated, or annoyed. This real-life connection helps us all understand the science behind our vision.

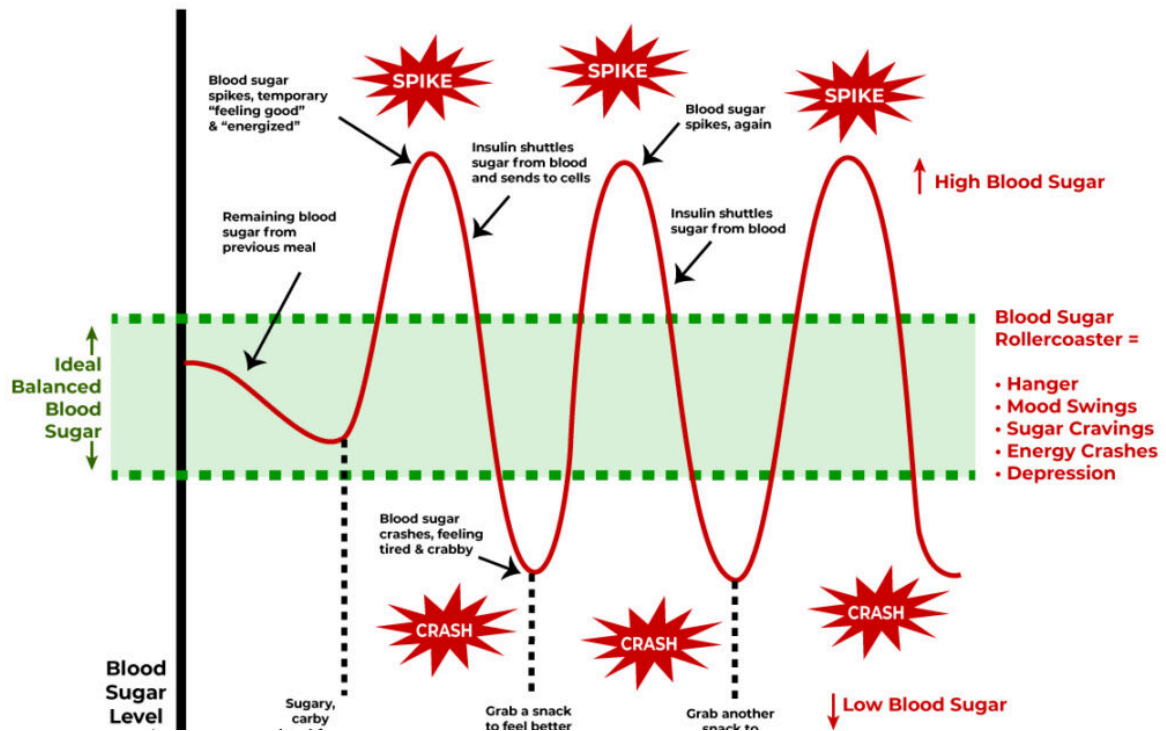
The Nutrition Science

The recommended snacks and foods are based on balancing blood sugar levels to keep the body fueled for longer. This is a fundamental but often overlooked aspect of nutrition, profoundly impacting how we feel and our productivity.

The snack examples combine slow-releasing, fiber-rich carbohydrate foods (like oat cakes) with protein foods (like hummus). This combination promotes stable blood sugar or glucose levels by slowing down carbohydrate digestion and delaying sugar absorption into the bloodstream, preventing glucose spikes after eating. This balanced approach ensures the pancreas releases the correct amount of insulin, maintaining optimal blood sugar levels without highs or lows.

In practical terms, this means sustained energy, improved concentration and stability, better mood, and ultimately, enhanced attainment and success for both children and adults. The impact of eating this way extends to school attainment, mood, sleep, weight management, behavior, happiness, sporting achievements, creativity, emotional stability, friendships, communication, and a renewed interest in the importance and enjoyment of food. These are all highly relevant and important aspects for our school community.

Below is an infographic that visually explains this concept, followed by some carbohydrate and protein snack suggestions:



Snack Suggestions

- * Banana wholemeal sandwich & yogurt pot
- * Apple and cheddar cheese
- * Oat cakes and Babybel
- * Vegetable sticks and hummus
- * Olives and trail mix (no nuts)
- * Fruit and plain yogurt pot
- * Crackers and cottage cheese
- * Chicken wholemeal wrap
- * Plain rice cakes with Marmite and cheese
- * Vegetable sticks and tzatziki
- * Wholemeal pitta bread and guacamole
- * Cherry tomatoes, crackers & mashed avocado
- * Wholemeal turkey and salad roll
- * Ryvita and hummus, carrot & pepper
- * Dried mango and falafel
- * Oatcakes, boiled egg, grapes

- * Berries & yogurt pot
- * Egg mayonnaise wholemeal roll
- * Satsuma, seed mix and beef jerky

All these options are readily available, use real food, and are affordable. The main challenge for us all is transitioning away from convenient packaged snacks like crisps and biscuits.

We hope you feel informed and excited about our Nutrition and Food Education Provision. We believe it is incredibly important and look forward to embedding it further into our school life.

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