The Vineyard School's Packed Lunch Policy

Date created: September 2026	**Date approved:** September 2026
Approved by: Full Governing Board	
Review date: September 2027	

1. Aim, Vision & Rationale

At our school, we are dedicated to ensuring that all our children are happy and thrive so that they develop a love of learning and achieve their personal best. We know that the food our children consume whilst at school plays an important role in achieving this.

It is our duty to ensure that all our pupils are fuelled properly at lunchtime so they can achieve their personal best at school.

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 belief underpins our food policies, food education and provision. Our aim is for every child in our school to become 'Food Literate'.

This means 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. Our aim is to foster a positive attitude toward food and have the confidence and knowledge to choose foods that nourish them and promote their health. Lunchtimes play an important role in achieving this. These aims and vision are embedded in our whole school packed lunch policy.

1.1 Real Food Literate

Becoming food literate means our children will:

- Develop a positive attitude towards real 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)
- Recognise 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.

Enabling all children to learn and grow

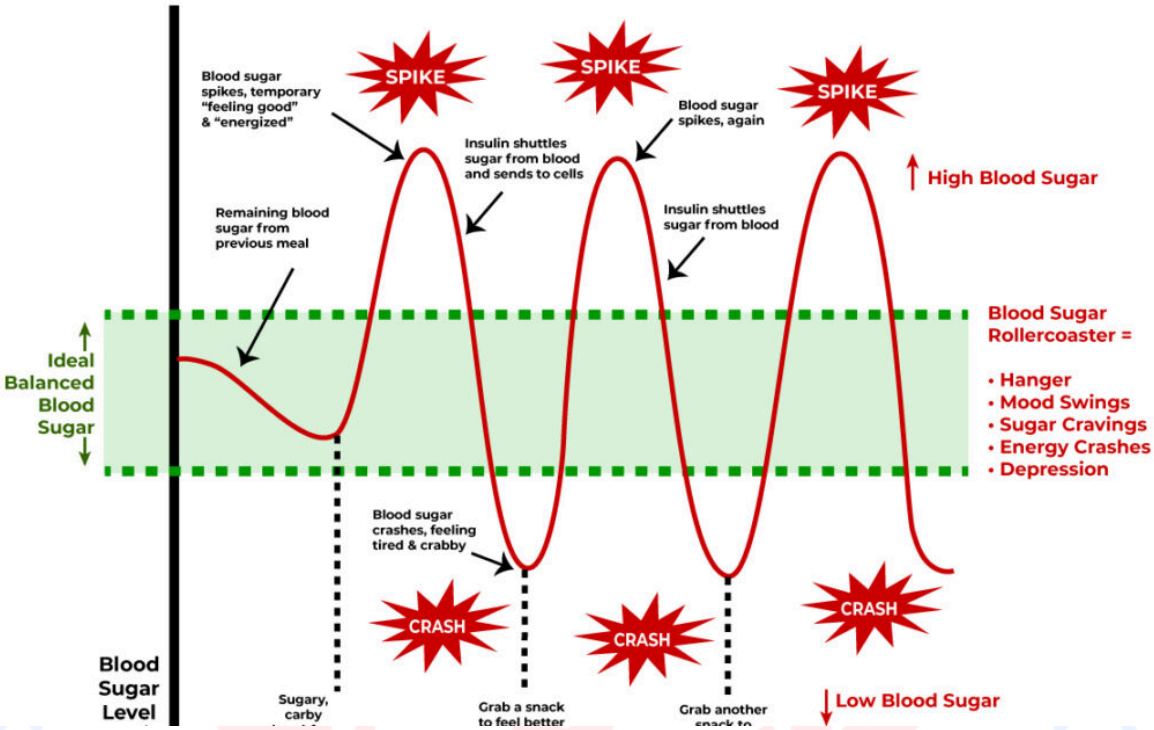
1.2 **The Nutrition Science**

Our Packed lunch recommendations are underpinned by our whole school approach to food and nutrition and based on balancing blood sugar levels to keep the body fueled for longer. This is a fundamental aspect of nutrition and impacts how our children feel and learn.

The foods included in our packed lunch policy balance blood sugar and provide long lasting fuel by combining slow-releasing, fiber-rich carbohydrate foods (like wholemeal bread) with protein foods (like

chicken and cheese). This combination promotes stable blood sugar/glucose levels resulting in sustained energy, improved concentration, better mood, enhanced attainment and success for our children. The policy includes all food groups (Carbohydrate, protein and fats) vitamins and minerals.

Below is an infographic that visually explains this concept.



Our policy focuses on including 'real foods' with minimal processing and packaging.

By default we aim for foods to be consumed in their natural state and to be naturally low in trans fats, added sugar and added salt.

Processed foods high in fat, sugar and salt are not suitable and do not meet the packed lunch school food government guidelines.

2. Packed lunches at The Vineyard School

The majority of our families choose that their children have a hot meal at school. We believe it is easier to provide all the nutrients children need in a hot, freshly cooked meal which is provided by our inhouse school catering team and meal provider, ABM.

Here is a link to the ABM school 3 week menu:

https://www.vineyard.richmond.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=938

However, the school also recognises that some families prefer to provide a packed lunch for their child, either all the time, or on occasion.

We ask that families who choose the packed lunch option for their children provide them with a packed lunch that is inline with our approach to food and nutrition; uses non processed real food, is well-balanced including all food groups, contains different 'colourful' foods, designed to 'fuel' the growing body and uses reusable packaging and no wrappers.

Packed lunches must also incorporate guidance from the School Food Plan, a set of standards for all food served and consumed in schools was launched by the Department for Education and became mandatory in January 2015. It is also recommended they adhere to the new School Food Standards 2026 which are currently being reviewed by the central government (School Food Standards).

Our policy ensures that children who bring a packed lunch to eat in school (or on school trips) have food which is just as healthy and nutritious as food served in school by our school chef and is regulated by national standards. This guidance applies to all families providing packed lunches to be eaten within school or on school trips during normal school hours.

It is our responsibility as a school to work with our families to ensure that packed lunches meet the standards listed in The School Food Plan as well as our whole school approach to food and nutrition.

3. **Packed lunches should include these items everyday:**

- **Carbohydrate: Energy food -** choose wholegrain/wholewheat varieties such as bread, pasta, rice, noodles, couscous, pitta, wrap, chapattis, potatoes or other types of cereals every day. Provide different types across the week for variety

- **Protein: growth and repair food** - choose unprocessed Meat, fish, dairy and non dairy protein like egg, lentils, beans, tofu, houmous, chickpeas, seeds - offered in sandwiches, rolls, pittas, salads etc

- At least **one portion of fresh fruit** and **one portion of vegetables or a salad** every day. Across the week try to provide a variety of different fruits and vegetables which provide colour, fibre and different vitamins and minerals.

- **Oily fish & beneficial dietary fats**, such as mackerel, salmon or sardines, seeds, olives, avocado at least once every three weeks

- **Dairy foods** such as milk, cheese, yogurt, or dairy alternatives

Other welcomed Foods:

- Dried fruit

- Pinenuts (seed), coconut, seeds (sunflower, pumpkin, linseed, poppy, chia, sesame, hemp) Hummus & Tahini are all permitted

- Plain breadsticks, crackers, oatcakes, plain popcorn, wholemeal rice cakes.

- Smoothies (oats, milk, fruit, honey, yogurt)
- Wholegrain and oat based homemade product - biscuits/muffins/cookies 3 x week
- A drink of water – no other drinks are permitted. We are a water only school.

4. **Packed lunches should not include:**

Confectionary such as chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits, cakes, muffins, doughnuts, flapjacks, fruit bars, sweets, cereal bars and chewing gum - instead include whole fruit



Processed foods high in salt like crisps - instead include plain popcorn, oatcakes, vegetable sticks, seeds, savoury crackers or breadsticks



Processed fruit snacks (e.g. Fruit winders)



Meat and pastry products such as sausage rolls and processed pies



Fruit juice, squash, 'fizzy' drinks or those containing added sugar or artificial sweeteners - instead provide water with cucumber/slice lemon or orange



5. Allergy Awareness

Key Definitions

An *allergy* is a medically diagnosed, mild to life-threatening immune response requiring potential medication.

An *intolerance* is a difficulty digesting or processing a food

A *food preference* is a personal choice.

Prohibited and Permitted Allergens

The Vineyard School operates an **allergy-aware approach** to reduce the risk of exposure to known allergens.

The school strongly discourages pupils, staff and visitors from bringing in nut products, including peanuts and tree nuts, because of the risk they may pose to members of the school community.

However, the school does not rely on a "nut-free" label alone and recognises that effective allergy safety depends on awareness, risk reduction, clear allergen information, robust hygiene measures and effective emergency response arrangements.

Foods containing nuts (peanuts, almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecans, Brazil nuts, pistachios, macadamia nuts), should not be brought into school unless specifically agreed in advance by the school for a controlled purpose and subject to risk assessment.

All other major allergens from the 14 common allergens are permitted:

- celery
- cereals containing gluten (wheat, rye, barley, oats)
- crustaceans (prawns, crabs, lobsters)
- eggs

- fish
- Lupin
- milk
- molluscs (mussels, oysters, squid)
- mustard
- sesame
- soya
- sulphur dioxide and sulphites

Seeds, pine nuts, and coconut are permitted due to their nutritional value.

Pupils are reminded to wash their hands before and after eating

Staff will follow the school's Allergy Safety Policy, medical conditions procedures and any relevant individual healthcare plans when supervising food brought into school and responding to allergy related concerns.

6. **Further guidance from Central Government**

The School Food Standards (2026) offers further guidance The School Food Standards

For more information on what is classed as the high level of fat, sugar and salt, please visit the following government guidelines foods high in fat, sugar and salt.

Parents are also advised to use the Better Health - Food scanner app to help them to navigate what food options are healthier.

Alternatively, to learn how to read and make sense of food labels visit British Nutrition Foundation.

7. **Practical considerations: Containers and wrappers**

- Children are to bring their packed lunch in a named suitable container such as a reusable plastic or metal bento box with a water tight lid or a commercially available lunchbox.
- Soups and other hot foods should be brought in a thermo flask.
- Carrier bags are not appropriate containers.
- Reusable food wrappers, covers and containers are highly recommended in support of our aim to **reduce and eliminate single use plastics** in our school.
- Unfortunately, we do not have any facilities to heat up any food during our lunchtime sittings.
- We will store packed lunches in a cool dry place.
- We will provide a safe, clean and positive environment for our pupils in which to eat and enjoy their packed lunch.
- We will allow pupils with packed lunches and school lunches to sit together and enjoy their food together.

8. Individual needs and requirements

Our whole school food and nutrition policy in conjunction with our in house school meal provider caters for all our pupils and for a variety of individual nutrition and food needs including vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free and halal provision.

Our school community is culturally and religiously diverse and we welcome and encourage packed lunches that reflect this while also adhering to school policy and guidelines.

Children may have verified medical conditions or special educational needs and therefore require special diets that do not meet standard guidelines. In these cases, families are urged to be responsible for ensuring that packed lunches meet the needs of their children while also incorporating the school guidelines and policy as much as possible.

For these reasons and to keep all our students safe, sharing of food, food containers, and food utensils is not allowed. Pupils are also not permitted to swap food items.

9. Monitoring

Our Lunchtime supervisors will support and advise pupils at lunchtime and will communicate with our lunchtime team leader and teachers should they have any concerns regarding the content of a child's packed lunch. Any communication will be done away from children and in a positive and supportive manner. Our staff and families will work together to find solutions to any problems.

Pupils with food allergies and intolerances will be supported by our lunchtime staff with everyone aware of individual needs and requirements.

10. Dissemination

The packed lunch policy and guidelines will be shared with families via our weekly whole school newsletters and communications. All school staff, including teaching and catering staff, will be informed of this guidance and will support its implementation.

All staff will use positive language at lunchtimes and promote a positive attitude and atmosphere during lunchtimes and around food. Food is to be enjoyed together in our school.

Families whose child/children repeatedly bring in foods which are not compliant with our packed lunch policy will be informed verbally and/or via written letter by our Lunchtime team lead and offered help and support to comply with the policy.

Enabling all children to learn and grow

Children will always be encouraged to eat their packed lunch regardless of the contents adherence to our policy. No child will go without any food.

Our lunchtime staff will discuss any concerns with relevant adults and never with the children.

11. Resources:

Packed Lunch Ideas and affordability

Packed lunches can be difficult to manage; thinking of ideas for their contents can be challenging for families.

For guidance and inspiration on healthy lunch box ideas please refer to the links and suggestions below to our whole school snack policy and example photographs in this document where different snacks made from 'real food' can be offered alongside a sandwich or roll to create a substantial packed lunch full of variety, colour, fibre and nutrition.

There are many resources online which are full of ideas and guidance:

Guidance from central Government: School Food Standards

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/school-food-standards-practical-guide

School Food Matters:

https://www.schoolfoodmatters.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Packed%20lunch%20guidance_0.pdf

Food for Life:
https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/

Lunchbox ideas and recipes - Healthier families - NHS:
https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/

12. Lunchbox Suggestions





Enabling all children to learn and grow





Wholemeal rolls with tuna, chicken, houmous, salad and cucumber
Wholemeal pasta with nut free pesto

* 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
















Kate Cox,
Nutrition Lead The Vineyard School
Kate Cox Nutrition www.katecoxnutrition.co.uk, 07973298524

Real Food EDUCATION