



Helmshore Primary School

Packed Lunch Policy

2025 - 2026

Introduction

At Helmshore Primary School, we are committed to teaching your child about how to make sensible food choices as part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This packed lunch policy has been developed by drawing on key government guidance associated with healthy eating and the school day. Government strategy outlines an expectation on all schools:

To promote a culture of healthy eating the government now expects all schools, in consultation with parents, pupil and staff, to adopt whole school food policies. In particular, schools will be expected to develop healthy packed lunch policies so that those not yet taking up school lunches are also eating healthier.

We are also a Rights Respecting School. Article 24 of the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child states:

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must work to provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that children can stay healthy.

This policy applies to all pupils and parents providing packed lunches and other foods to be consumed within school or on school trips. This packed lunch policy fits within a wider context of promoting a whole school approach to food and healthy eating.

Aims

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with parents, pupils, staff and governors with the following aims:

- To ensure the contents of lunchboxes reflect the requirements of schools to meet minimum food and nutrition standards for school meals;
- To make a positive contribution to children's health by encouraging healthy eating habits in childhood that can influence health and wellbeing in later life;
- To take a proactive approach to promoting healthy eating;
- To give clear guidance to parents/carers, pupils, governors and staff on providing a healthy packed lunch;
- To support parents by holding healthy eating workshops and providing ideas for healthy packed lunches;

- To equip pupils with the skills, knowledge and understanding to enable them to make informed healthy lifestyle choices based on their nutritional understanding;
- To ensure that all children have a healthy and nutritious midday meal that sustains and prepares them for their afternoon learning.

Food contained in a packed lunch

Parents/carers of pupils who do not have school meals are expected to provide their children with packed lunches that are consistent with the nutritional standards based on the EatWell plate model and the School Food Trust guidelines.

The recommended contents of a healthy lunch box are:

- **Fruit and Vegetables**; at least two portions of fruit or vegetables every day (a portion is the amount your child can fit into the palm of their hand). This could be fresh, dried or tinned fruit
- **Carbohydrate**; a starchy food every day such as bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes, chapatis/roti, plain crackers, breadsticks, rice cakes
- **Protein**; meat, egg or other source of non-dairy protein such as lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus, dhal, falafel
- **Oily fish**; tinned or fresh mackerel, sardines, salmon or tuna should be included at least once every three weeks
- **Dairy**; every day such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage-frais, custard or calcium fortified soya products - reduced fat if possible
- **Drinks**; (with no added sugar) such as pure fruit juice, semi-skimmed/skimmed milk, milk-based or yoghurt-based drinks, fruit smoothies
- **A bottle of water**; It is recognised that the concentration and behaviour of children improve when children drink water throughout the day. Dehydration can give children headaches and make them tired.
- **Dessert/pudding**; such as a small cake, biscuit, cereal bar, fruit loaf/bun OR scotch pancake as part of a balanced meal. Please look carefully at packaging as many items that may look healthy can have high levels of sugar and fat. Look for those with 100 calories or less per portion and only include one-a-day for lunch.

Packed Lunches should not include:

- Sweets/confectionery/chewing gum
- Fizzy or sugary drinks, or energy drinks
- No more than one dessert item per day (cake, biscuit, cereal bar, fruit loaf/bun OR scotch pancake)
- No more than two portions of food each week that includes pastry

For a healthier snack:

- Replace cakes and pastries with fruit bread or teacake
- Replace salted savoury snacks, such as crisps, with breadsticks, rice cakes, cheese and crackers or popcorn (not sweet or toffee)
- Include dried fruit or fruit salad
- Drink water.

Children who eat school dinners will be asked to choose a vegetable or salad item as part of their lunch.

Special Diets and allergies

The school recognises that some pupils may require special diets that do not follow the National Food Standards exactly. In this case parents/carers are asked to inform the school and make their child's lunchbox as healthy as possible. For this reason, pupils are not permitted to swap food items.

Provision for Packed Lunches

- School will provide dining room facilities where pupils can eat their lunches.
- School will ensure that fresh drinking water is readily available at all times.

Packed Lunch Containers

We ask that parents/carers and pupils:

- provide a packed lunch container where food items can be stored securely and appropriately until the lunchtime period;
- bring packed lunches in reusable plastic containers, rather than disposing of plastic bags and bottles.

Fridge space for packed lunches is not available.

Waste and disposal

The school will, within reason, send any uneaten packed lunch food items back home. The rationale for this is that parents can also monitor what their child has consumed during the day and then raise any concerns over their child's food intake with the school.

Other issues

- Sweets or chocolate for special occasions, such as birthdays, are permitted and each child may consume 1 sweet or chocolate to help celebrate the occasion. Cake is not permitted for health and safety reasons. Birthday treats are not to be shared.
- Very occasionally, the children may organise a cake sale for charity and purchase cakes to raise money for a good cause.

- Very occasionally, the children may bring in food for parties such as Christmas, when the restrictions of this policy do not apply.
- The use of sweets for rewards is kept to a minimum. Instead, children are rewarded with stickers and dojos.

Curriculum

Whilst we fully respect individual food choices and understand that there are many different needs and tastes, we want to work with parents to educate children about healthy diet choices so that our children, through understanding a balanced diet, will develop a greater appreciation of a healthy lifestyle.

The formal curriculum develops pupils' knowledge of healthy eating predominantly through PSHE, Science and Design Technology lessons.

Monitoring

To promote healthy eating, class teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors and lunchtime supervisors will regularly monitor the content of packed lunches.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's agreed policy review process. In addition, any major legislative or governmental changes regarding school food may lead to this policy being amended.

March 2026

Please see below packed lunch guidance and top tips.



1. YUMMY WRAPS!

What's included in today's packed lunch?
• Cheese salad wraps • Pepper sticks • Grapes

TOP TIP!

Fruit and veg snacks are healthy and contribute towards your child's 5-a-day. See how many your child can eat in a week to 'eat the rainbow'.

TOP TIP!

These wraps are a mix of white and wholegrain flours, which are better for you and taste great. Wholegrain foods provide a good source of energy for growing children and fill up tummies.



TOP TIP!

These wraps include cheese as a vegetarian option, but you could use meat, fish or egg in wraps or sandwiches. You can find low fat hard and soft cheeses in supermarkets, too.

TOP TIP!

You can pop an icepack in your child's lunchbox to keep items fresher for longer.

2. LOVELY LEFTOVERS!

What's included in today's packed lunch?
• Tuna sweetcorn pasta • Carrot sticks • Grapes and blueberries

TOP TIP!

Using fruit that is UK grown and in season in your packed lunches will help to reduce air miles and can help local producers to thrive – e.g. Blueberries are in season in the UK between June and September.



TOP TIP!

Wholewheat pasta keeps tummies fuller for longer.

TOP TIP!

Pasta is such a versatile lunchbox ingredient. Using up leftovers in lunchboxes provides a tasty option, whilst reducing food waste. Try adding proteins such as chicken, ham, egg or cheese to pasta, or yummy sauces with hidden veg. You could even add kidney beans or butter beans.

TOP TIP!

Salad and vegetables provide healthy, tasty and budget-friendly snacks for your child. 'Wonky' veg or packs of veg are cheaper than pre-cut sticks. Look out for special offers in the supermarket, local market or at the greengrocer.

TOP TIP!

No need for fancy Tupperware, old takeaway boxes can work just as well! Eating leftovers is not only budget-friendly, it is a great way to support the planet too – we waste 40% of our food in the UK.

3. TASTY CHAPATTI!

What's included in today's packed lunch?

- Chapatti • Raita (made with low-fat plain yogurt, garlic, mint, cucumber and coriander) • Cucumber slices • Tomatoes

TOP TIP!

Using small pots instead of cling film or other single-use packaging reduces waste and is better for the environment.

TOP TIP!

If you don't have chapattis, a wholegrain pitta would be delicious too.



TOP TIP!

Use seasonal vegetables, these are often cheaper to buy and haven't travelled as far. Try including carrot sticks in the autumn term and peppers and cucumber from June to September.

TOP TIP!

Raita is great to add to a lunchbox as a leftover too.

4. SCRUMPTIOUS SANDWICHES!

What's included in today's packed lunch?

- Ham salad sandwich • Sliced cucumber and carrot
- A selection of fruit

TOP TIP!

Why not get your child involved in making their packed lunch? They are more likely to eat and enjoy their lunch if they help to make it.

TOP TIP!

Run out of fresh fruit? You can use tinned fruit in a small pot instead! Tinned fruit in fruit juice, not syrup, is a great addition.



TOP TIP!

Add lettuce, cucumber, peppers or any crunchy veg to a sandwich or roll to make it more interesting for children, and healthier too!

TOP TIP!

If your child does not like wholegrain bread, try making a sandwich from one slice of white bread and one slice of wholegrain bread.

TOP TIP!

Try keeping a variety of bread, pittas or wraps in the freezer so you can vary each week's options and reduce food waste.

5. CRACKING CRACKERS AND CHEESE!

What's included in today's packed lunch?

- Crackers and cheese • Tomatoes, cucumber and grapes • Malt loaf

TOP TIP!

Cheese and crackers make an interesting packed lunch for children, especially paired with fruit and veg for their own mini cheeseboard.

TOP TIP!

Treats don't have to be food! Why not add a note to your child's lunch box to make them smile?



TOP TIP!

If you are including a treat in your child's packed lunch, once a week is recommended. Examples can include: a slice of malt loaf or banana bread, a teacake, a scone, or a flapjack.

TOP TIP!

Remember to chop up fruit and veg such as grapes or tomatoes for smaller children.

BUILD YOUR OWN MIX AND MATCH PACKED LUNCH

THINGS TO FILL YOU UP

Bread, wraps, chapattis, fufu, pasta, noodles, pitta, cassava, potatoes, crackers, breadsticks, cous cous, rice, roti.



TOP TIP
Choose wholegrain where you can.

THINGS TO KEEP YOU FULLER FOR LONGER

Chicken, cheese, fish, hummus, soy chunks, turkey, lentils.



TOP TIP
Choose lower-fat fillings like lean meat or reduced fat cheese.

VEG TO ENERGISE YOU

Halved cherry tomatoes, carrot, celery, cucumber, peppers, sugar snap peas.



TOP TIP
Adding a small pot of reduced-fat hummus or other dip can help children to eat vegetables.

FRUIT TO REFRESH YOU

Satsumas, apple slices, pineapple, halved grapes, berries, melon.



TOP TIP
Add a squeeze of lemon juice to stop sliced fruit going brown.

TREATS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Malt loaf, teacakes and fruit bread.



TOP TIP
Try to choose low plastic items, reusable items, or recyclable packaging.

DRINKS TO HYDRATE YOU

Water and milk.



TOP TIP
Flavour water with fresh slices of fruit. You can also use a frozen water bottle to keep food cool and as a refreshing drink later in the day!