

NAS(AT) Diet, Nutrition, Food and Drink Policy – SO-0149

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This policy incorporates the following former policies: Food and Drink – Schools and Children (SO-0152) and Diet and Nutrition (SO-0148).

EQUALITY STATEMENT

We will regularly review our policies to ensure that we are

- promoting equality of opportunity
- eliminating discrimination and harassment
- valuing diversity and promoting positive relationships
- providing an inclusive education which enables all pupils to develop their full potential
- meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics therein.

QUALITY OF LIFE FRAMEWORK

All NAS schools and Children's services follow our Quality of life (QoL) Framework. In implementing this framework, we listen to pupils, parents and the child's keyworker to understand what is important to them in relation to their quality of life. We then work as a transdisciplinary team to ensure we plan each child's education carefully and cohesively, shaping each pupil's provision around their EHCP and agreed developmental goals in order to develop pupils' knowledge and skills now and for the future.

1. Purpose of this document

Food and drink are important aspects of all people's quality of life. Having choice and understanding how to make healthy choices is crucial. This policy aims to ensure that all children and young people are supported to choose a nutritious diet and enjoy their meals and mealtimes. Schools and Children's Services should comply with relevant guidance and legislation, and aim to achieve high standards regarding provision and promotion of a healthy and nutritious diet for children and young people. Staff should encourage social behaviour at mealtimes as appropriate, and enable children and young people to make choices and enjoy a healthy relationship with food.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all NAS Schools and Children's Services where food and drink are provided.

3. Approach

In offering all children and young people a balanced, nutritious and enjoyable diet that promotes good health and wellbeing, the NAS is responding to the government report [Healthy Lives, Healthy People 2010](#) and to [The school Food Plan 2014](#) report which named better diet as an important lifestyle factors which can contribute to good health. The Food plan additionally identifies that:

- Eating well reduces chances of falling ill
- Children who eat well perform better at school
- There are many hidden benefits to a good food culture including social development

The aim of this policy is to promote a good diet, but does recognise that some food stuffs may be problematic for some individuals with an autism spectrum disorder.

A healthy range of nutritious, varied, balanced and attractively presented food will be offered at every mealtime with opportunities for choice.

Obsessive and restricted patterns of behaviour can focus around food and drink, so staff should encourage balanced healthy choices by providing variety and using different cooking methods in order to help children and young people find food they enjoy.

4. Operational delivery

4.1 Young people and children should be at the centre and fully consulted using their preferred communication about dietary preference and need.

4.2 Where appropriate parents/carers will be consulted about decisions regarding food and drink that may influence their own practice at home. Class and residential staff will

consult to ensure consistency of decisions.

4.3 Mealtimes will be structured in a way that meets individual needs but also encourages acceptable social behaviour. Opportunities should be sought to develop teaching and learning around healthy food choices. Children and young people will be encouraged to communicate preferences, behave in a socially accepted way and to interact with others.

4.4 Where there are concerns over diet, a dietician or doctor may be consulted as appropriate and/or medical advice taken. This will include, where appropriate, consultation with parents/carers at every stage.

4.5 Any specific dietary requirements, including those to meet all outlined cultural needs, will be catered for. These will be established prior to admission to ensure all special requirements can be obtained and will be detailed in the Individual pupil files and / or Educational Health and Care plan (EHCP).

4.6 Meals will be nutritious and balanced, and prepared with adherence to this policy without impacting on personal choice. Where applicable all staff should be given the opportunity to undergo training in understanding what a nutritious and balanced diet entails and support, where needed, to develop their practical skills in preparing and providing such. In addition, Schools and Children's Services should consult current guidance aimed specifically at children, such as that issued by the Caroline Walker Trust and Ofsted.

4.7 Schools and Children's Services should be guided by [The School Food Plan \(2014\)](#) '[School Food Standards: A practical guide for schools, their cooks and caterers](#)'

4.8 [The School Food Standards 2014](#) require that food provided to pupils in school is nutritious and of high quality; to promote good nutritional health in all pupils; protect those who are nutritionally vulnerable and to promote good eating behaviour. Whilst academies and free schools are required to comply with School Food Standards (2014) All NAS independent schools should also aim to do so.

4.9 Schools may still wish to use the Healthy Schools Toolkit, though archived from the Department for Education website it is still available for schools to use themselves at <https://www.healthyschools.org.uk/> The toolkit is designed to help schools to 'plan, do and review' health and wellbeing improvements for their children and young people.

4.10 Food and drink may be used to reward children and young people, but consideration will be given to ensuring that such rewards are of a minimum and that these are at a level commensurate with healthy living. These rewards should be clearly outlined in care plans.

4.11 Meals will under no circumstances be withheld as part of a behaviour management

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The National Autistic Society is here to transform lives, change attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people.

programme.

4.12 If meals are refused by pupils this should be recorded and action taken as appropriate.

4.13 Individual Plans will record personal likes and dislikes of individual children and young people, with strategies to address the impact of food obsessions. Plans will also include objectives for mealtimes and healthy eating, if appropriate.

4.14 Where applicable residential pupils will be offered a range of meals such as picnics, cafes, takeaways, fast food outlets as appropriate, and subject to risk assessment and detailed in Care Plans.

4.15 All children will be offered foods and drinks which, by themselves, would not be considered nutritious and balanced, such as cakes, pastries, sweets, chocolate, biscuits and crisps, with staff having an awareness of how these foods fit into an overall well-balanced diet and lifestyle

4.16 Where possible staff will provide whole grain, minimally refined grains and foods made from grains such as bread, pasta, rice and all baking, with staff having an awareness of the health benefits of doing so.

4.17 Older children and young people will be able to, or will work towards, choosing and preparing a range of food either for themselves, their peers or invited guests, as appropriate and detailed in Care Plans.

4.18 All children and young people will be able to access snacks and drinks at reasonable times. Staff will assist in the preparation of snacks subject to risk assessment. Consideration will be given to encouraging snacks that are at a level commensurate with healthy living and any restrictions will be detailed in Individual Care Plans or Person-Centred Plans.

4.19 Mealtimes will be structured to meet the needs of the children and young people living in the service, but flexible to fit in with programmes of activities and other events. The environment will be homely, relaxed and congenial.

4.20 Staff will provide assistance at mealtimes, as required, ensuring any aids necessary and physical requirements are met.

4.21 Menus should be devised in consultation with children and young people, using preferred communication methods. Support, education and guidance should be given to promote nutritional value and variety. Menus should be reviewed regularly, and then retained for inspection for one year.

4.22 A variety of fresh fruit and vegetables will be available, with an aim to achieve at least 5 portions daily. Staff will be provided with training and resources to understand what constitutes a portion and the importance of incorporating 5-a-day into diets.

4.23 Where possible all food (meals and snacks), should be prepared from whole food ingredients rather than from prepared, packaged and processed food. As far as possible use of such foods should be kept to a minimum. Staff training should be provided, as required, to meet this requirement. When food is provided to the people we support that has a label, staff should be able to extract the relevant information from that label to decide if and how that food fits in to the overall nutritious balance of the diet.

4.24 Where possible children over 11yrs should not consume more than 6 grams (1 teaspoon) per day of salt, and the daily recommended maximum for children is less (1-3 years <2g, 4-6 years <3g, 7-10 years < 5g). Recommended maximum amounts include added salt and salt used in cooking. Staff should be aware that many processed, packaged foods can be high in salt and should minimise use of these foods. Also, staff should understand labels to assess the levels of salt in these foods and be able to advise the children and young people they are supporting.

4.25 Drinks should be offered regularly throughout the day with a strong emphasis being placed on low, or no sugar, water-based drinks whilst also having an awareness of the potential for artificial colours, flavours and sweeteners to have an adverse health effect on some children. Fruit juice should, whenever possible, be diluted to minimise the sugar content and plain water should be freely available at all times and promoted by staff.

4.26 Children and young people should be fully included in shopping, food choices and food preparation whenever possible. Resources, such as those available at www.easyhealth.org.uk, can be used to explain nutritional concepts. Preferred communication will be used to aid understanding and involvement.

4.27 Children and young people should be given the option to eat free range food and animal welfare should be considered. Meat and dairy products that are free range, and meat that is RSPCA approved or has the British Meat Quality Standard mark, should be considered when possible.

4.28 Children and young people should be encouraged to include portions of fish in their diet. [The School Food Plan \(2014\) 'School Food Standards: A practical guide for schools, their cooks and caterers'](#) details that oily fish should be served once or more every 3 weeks. order to encourage consumption, different cooking methods should be tried, and a variety of fish should be offered, including different types of shellfish, white fish and oily fish. Children should avoid eating any shark, swordfish or marlin due to the levels of mercury in these fish. It is recommended that Girls should not have more than 2 portions of oily fish per week ([NHS](#)).

4.29 As per the NAS(AT) Medication policy the school should keep a register of those with an allergy. This is usually detailed on a pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) but schools should also consult with parents to check for recent changes. Schools should make all staff aware of allergies and intolerances and food arrangements and procedures

should ensure individual needs in relation to allergies and tolerances are provided for.

4.30 The service will comply with the NAS(AT) Food Safety Policy

5. Equal Opportunities

Ingredients and menus will take into account cultural, medical and religious requirements, and sensory needs. Preferences, such as vegetarianism, will be respected and accommodated. Meat and dairy products purchased should meet appropriate animal welfare standards.

Services will cater for all sensory, cultural, religious, health and dietary needs such as vegetarian, gluten free, dairy free, food suitable for diabetics, organic food and any other need or preference. Any special diet or change in need will be provided in consultation with a multidisciplinary team.

6. Evaluation of policy

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis for its effectiveness and to ensure it takes account of current legislation.

7. The legal framework

The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014

The Food Safety Act 1990

The Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995 (as amended)

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998

The Products Containing Meat etc. (England) Regulations 2014

DfE (2019) 'School food in England'

The School Food Plan (2014) 'School Food Standards: A practical guide for schools, their cooks and caterers'

HM government (2010) Healthy Lives, Healthy People

School Premises (England) Regulations 2012

8. References and Information

The School Food Plan report (Henry Dimbleby & John Vincent) July 2013
Children's Food Trust (www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk)
NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Goodfood/Pages/Goodfoodhome.aspx)
The British Nutrition Foundation (www.nutrition.org.uk)
The British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (BAPEN) (www.bapen.org.uk)
Easyhealth (www.easyhealth.org.uk)
FSA - Salt information (www.food.gov.uk)
Healthy Schools Toolkit
(www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/pastoralcare/a0075278/healthy-schools)
The Food in Schools Website (www.foodinschools.org)
Eating Well: Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (CWT, 2007)
Nutritional Guidelines for Food Served in Public Institutions (FSA/CWT)
Eating Well at School: Nutritional and Practical Guidelines (The Caroline Walker Trust, 2005)
Nutrient-based Standards for School Food: A Summary of the Standards and Recommendations of the Caroline Walker Trust and the National Heart Forum (The Caroline Walker Trust, 2005)
Eating Well for Looked After Children and Young People: Nutritional and Practical Guidelines (The Caroline Walker Trust, 2001)

9. Related policies

NAS (AT) Medication Procedure
Food Safety Policy HS-0510
Health and Safety Policy HS-0101
Infection Control management standard HS-0411
Individual Care Plans and Education Plan/Programme – Schools Policy SO-0214

10. Definitions

NAS National Autistic Society

NASAT National Autistic Society Academy Trust

NAS (AT) refers to National Autistic Society Independent schools and National Autistic Society Academy Trust free schools.

EHCP – Education, Health and Care plan

NHS: National Health Service

DFE: Department for Education

