



Lunchbox and Healthy Snacks Policy

Healthy, safe and inclusive food choices

Policy owner	Headteacher
Approval body	Full Governing Body
Approval date	Autumn Term 2026
Review date	Autumn Term 2029
Status	School policy and family guidance

At a glance

The school encourages balanced lunchboxes and fruit or vegetables at morning break. Safety, allergy management, dignity and reasonable adjustments come first. Staff will work supportively with families where changes may help.

This policy applies to family-provided and school-provided packed food eaten during the school day, including educational visits.

1. Purpose and status

Great Leighs Primary School aims to support every pupil to eat safely, enjoy food and develop healthy habits. This policy gives families and staff clear, practical expectations for morning snacks and packed lunches while recognising individual needs, family circumstances and cultural food traditions.

The statutory School Food Standards apply to food provided by maintained schools. They do not directly regulate a lunch packed at home. The school nevertheless uses the standards and the NHS Eatwell Guide as a proportionate framework for its own provision and for the advice in this policy.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- morning break snacks brought from home;
- packed lunches brought from home and eaten on the school site;
- packed food taken on educational visits during the school day; and
- packed lunches or snacks supplied by the school or its catering provider.

It should be read alongside the school's allergy, medical, safeguarding, equality, SEND, first-aid, health and safety and educational-visit arrangements.

3. Our principles

- Children need sufficient food and drink to sustain concentration, wellbeing and participation.
- Food expectations will be applied calmly, consistently and without public criticism, shame or comparison.
- No pupil will have their lunch withheld as a sanction or be left without suitable food.
- The school will make reasonable adjustments and agree individual arrangements where disability, SEND, medical, sensory, religious or cultural needs require them.
- Families remain responsible for the safety, suitability and preparation of food sent from home; the school is responsible for safe supervision, storage arrangements and its own food provision.

4. Morning break snacks

Reception and Key Stage 1 pupils are offered fruit or vegetables through the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme when available. Families may send an additional portion of fresh fruit or vegetables. Key Stage 2 pupils may bring fruit or vegetables for morning break.

Fruit and vegetables should be washed and prepared so that they are safe for the child's age and needs. They should be in a named container where appropriate.

Friday treat arrangement

On Friday, families may choose to provide one small treat-sized snack for morning break, provided it complies with the school's allergy restrictions. This is optional. Families will be informed if this school arrangement changes.

5. Building a balanced lunchbox

There is no single required menu. Across the week, families are encouraged to choose suitable portions from the following groups, taking account of their child's appetite and needs.

Include	Examples	Why it helps
Starchy food	Bread, wraps, rice, pasta, couscous, potatoes, chapatti or roti	Energy for learning and play
Fruit and vegetables	Fresh, frozen, tinned in juice or dried fruit in a suitable portion	Vitamins, minerals and fibre
Protein food	Egg, fish, lean meat, beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu or hummus	Growth and repair
Dairy or alternative	Cheese, yoghurt, plain milk or an unsweetened calcium-fortified alternative	Calcium and protein
A drink	Plain water is the usual choice	Hydration and dental health

6. Foods and drinks to limit or avoid

To support health, dental health and a calm learning day, lunchboxes should not contain:

- sweets or confectionery, including full-size chocolate bars;
- fizzy drinks, energy drinks or drinks containing caffeine;
- large sharing bags of crisps, biscuits or cakes; or
- products prohibited under the school's current allergy controls (see section 7).

A small cake, biscuit or packet of crisps may be included occasionally as part of an otherwise balanced lunch. The school will not inspect food against a rigid "perfect lunchbox" checklist.

7. Allergies and individual dietary needs

Important

Great Leighs manages allergens carefully but cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment. Families must tell the school promptly about any diagnosed or suspected allergy and provide current medical advice and prescribed emergency medication.

Because of the school's current allergy risk assessment, families must not send nuts, peanuts, sesame, or products that list these as ingredients. This includes nut butters, many chocolate spreads, sesame seeds, tahini and some cereal or snack bars. Families should check labels each time because ingredients can change. The school may amend restrictions when its risk assessment or pupil needs change and will notify families.

Pupils must not share or swap food. Staff will follow individual healthcare and allergy plans and the school's emergency procedures. Dietary requirements arising from allergy, coeliac disease, diabetes, disability, sensory needs, religion or culture will be agreed with the family; suitable alternatives will not be treated as non-compliance.

8. Food safety and choking prevention

Families should:

- use a clean, secure and clearly named lunchbox and drinks bottle;
- keep perishable food cool in an insulated lunch bag with a frozen ice pack, unless the school has confirmed refrigeration;
- wash hands and preparation surfaces, keep raw and ready-to-eat food separate and observe use-by dates;
- prepare food in an age-appropriate way—for example, cut grapes and cherry tomatoes lengthways into quarters and avoid hard, round foods that may obstruct the airway;
- send only food intended for that school day and discard food that has not been kept safely; and
- tell staff if a lunch needs a specific safe-storage arrangement because of a medical need.

Pupils will eat seated and under appropriate supervision. Staff will promote handwashing and respond to choking, allergy or other medical emergencies in accordance with their training and school procedures.

9. Drinks

Fresh drinking water is available throughout the day and is the preferred drink. Plain milk or an unsweetened calcium-fortified alternative may be suitable if it can be kept safely chilled. If fruit juice or a smoothie is provided, it should be limited to 150 ml, taken with lunch and not supplied as a breaktime drink. Fizzy, sugary, diet, energy and caffeinated drinks are not permitted.

10. Containers, storage and waste

- Lunchboxes will be kept in the school's designated storage area. This may not be refrigerated.
- Reusable containers are encouraged where they are safe, practical and affordable. Sustainability expectations will never prevent a child from eating.
- Uneaten food and packaging will usually be returned home so families can see what has been consumed. Staff may dispose of food where hygiene or safety requires it.
- Glass containers, sharp implements and hot liquids must not be sent unless a specific arrangement has been agreed with the school.

11. School-provided packed food

Food supplied by the school or its caterer will comply with the applicable School Food Standards, food hygiene and allergen-information requirements. Where the school prepares and packages food for direct sale or supply in circumstances covered by prepacked-for-direct-sale rules, it will provide the required ingredient and allergen information. Educational-visit food will be planned with safe transport, temperature control and individual medical needs in mind.

12. Lunchtime experience

Pupils eating packed lunches and school meals will have equitable access to suitable seating, drinking water, supervision and time to eat. Staff will encourage children to eat enough, notice wellbeing concerns and support independence without forcing a child to finish food.

13. How the school will respond to concerns

The purpose of monitoring is education and safety, not enforcement against children. If staff have a concern, they will:

1. make sure the child has enough safe food to eat that day;
2. speak to the child discreetly and avoid removing food in front of peers;
3. contact the family privately if there is a repeated health, allergy, safety or sufficiency concern;
4. consider financial hardship, food insecurity, SEND, sensory needs, medical needs and cultural factors;
5. offer practical guidance or signpost support, including free school meal information where relevant; and
6. escalate a safeguarding concern in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy where a child is repeatedly without sufficient food or there are other indicators of neglect.

A child will not be punished because of the contents of a lunchbox. Any immediate allergy or safety risk will be managed proportionately and a suitable alternative arranged wherever possible.

14. Roles and responsibilities

Who	Responsibility
Headteacher	Implement the policy, ensure staff understand it and keep allergy and food-safety arrangements under review.
Governing body	Approve and monitor the policy and seek assurance that statutory duties are met.
Staff	Model respectful practice, supervise safely, follow individual plans and raise concerns proportionately.
Families	Provide safe, sufficient and suitable food, follow notified allergen controls and keep medical information current.
Pupils	Wash hands, eat seated, follow adult instructions and never share or swap food.

15. Equality, affordability and inclusion

The school will apply this policy in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and its duties towards pupils with SEND and medical conditions. It will not prescribe expensive branded foods or penalise families because preferred items are unavailable. Families who need support are encouraged to contact the school office or Headteacher in confidence.

16. Monitoring, communication and review

The Headteacher will review implementation through staff feedback, pupil and family voice, relevant incident records and catering or allergy reviews. Guidance will be shared through induction, newsletters and direct communication where needed. The policy will be reviewed at least every three years and sooner following a material change in law, guidance, the school's allergy profile or an incident.

Appendix 1 — Family quick guide

Aim for variety across the week

A practical lunchbox usually contains a starchy food, a protein food, fruit and/or vegetables, a dairy food or alternative, and water. Portions should suit your child; uneaten food helps you see what works.

Helpful choices	Please remember
• Wholegrain or higher-fibre bread, wraps, pasta or rice where accepted	• No nuts, peanuts or sesame under the current school risk assessment
• Fruit or vegetables prepared safely	• Check labels—ingredients can change
• Egg, fish, lean meat, beans, lentils, tofu or another protein	• No sharing or swapping food
• Yoghurt, cheese or a suitable calcium-fortified alternative	• Use an insulated bag and ice pack for chilled food
• Plain water	• Cut small round foods safely and name the container

Appendix 2 — Linked documents and current guidance

Document or source	Relevance
Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 (as amended)	Statutory standards for food provided by the school.
DfE: School food standards — resources for schools	Implementation guidance and practical resources.
NHS: The Eatwell Guide	Current healthy-eating framework; replaces the former Eatwell Plate.
Food Standards Agency: allergen guidance for institutional caterers	Allergen management for schools and other institutional catering.
Food Standards Agency: PPDS allergen labelling guidance for schools	Ingredient and allergen labelling where Natasha's Law applies.
School policies	Allergy and Allergen Safety; Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions; First Aid; Health and Safety; SEND and Inclusion; Equality; Child Protection and Safeguarding; Educational Visits.

Operational note

Before approval, leaders should confirm that the Friday treat arrangement remains current and that the listed nut, peanut and sesame controls reflect the school's current allergy risk assessment. Any family-facing summary should be updated if those arrangements change.