Packed Lunch Policy 2026 to 2027

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School

Introduction

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School is dedicated to providing an environment that ensures the healthy choice, is the easy choice for all children. We promote healthy eating and enable children to make informed choices about the food and drink they consume. Through effective leadership and a strong school ethos, we take a whole school approach by bringing all elements of the school day together to support the health and wellbeing of all children. We recognise that we are invaluable role models to children and their families regarding food and drink choices and healthy living.

Policy Aim

Our packed lunch policy aims to ensure that all packed lunches brought from home and consumed in school (or on school trips) provide children with nutritious food that is similar in quality to food served in schools, and is compliant with the national School Food Standards.

The objectives of our packed lunch policy are to:

- Provide guidance to parents/carers on what constitutes a healthy and nutritious packed lunch for children at school.
- Clearly outline which foods are/are not allowed to be brought into school.
- Outline where exceptions to this packed lunch policy are permitted.

Packed Lunches

Packed lunches include those brought from home as well as those provided by the school or by parents for trips.

What should a packed lunch consist of?

Lunch Box Policy

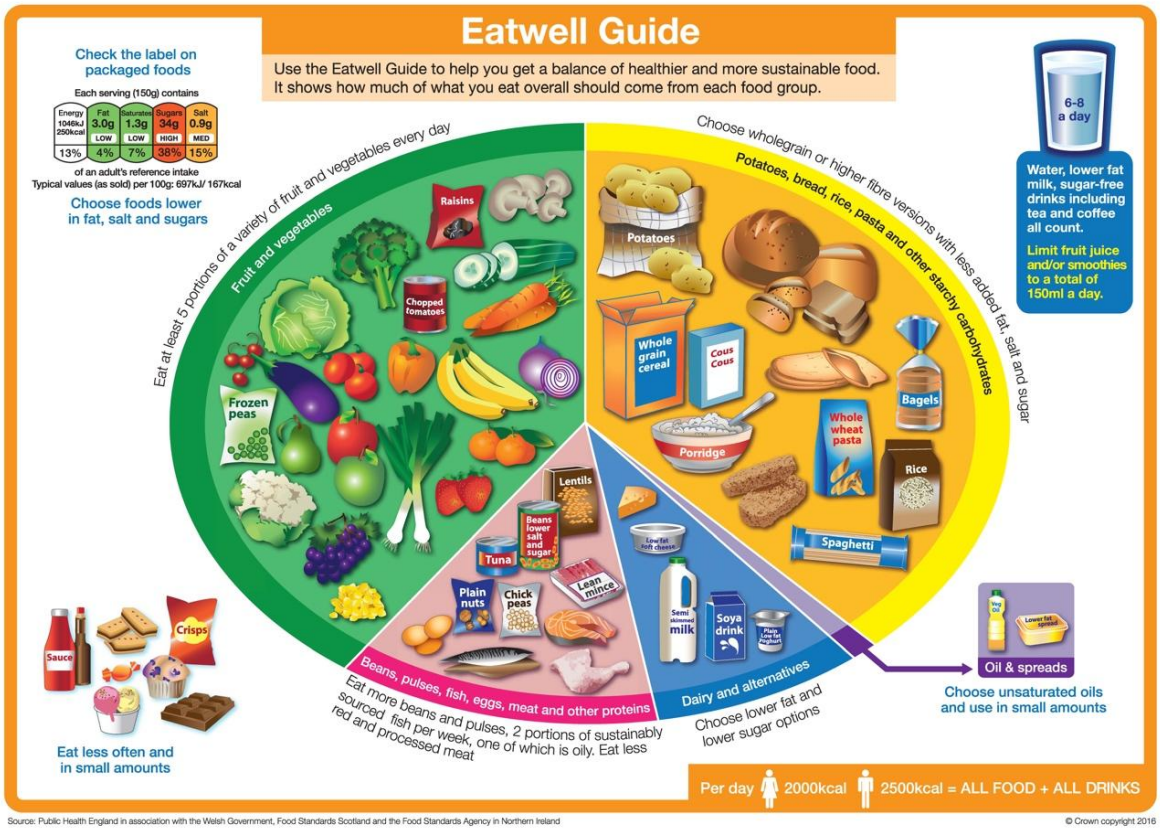
Never allowed in Lunch Boxes ❌
• Sugary soft drinks including squash, juice and fizzy drinks (we are a '**water only**' school – see further details below). • Confectionery such as chocolate bars or sweets. Cakes, biscuits or cereal bars **containing or coated in chocolate.** • Crisps • Hot food/drinks, items of food on skewer sticks and meat on bones e.g. chicken drumsticks (due to health and safety reasons) • Nuts (including Nutella chocolate spread) • Fruit Winders • Prawns/shellfish

Grapes: Please cut in half length-ways due to the risk of choking

Parents are discouraged from including the following items.
Alternatives are indicated in the right column

Item	As an alternative please include
Snacks such as crisps	Instead, include vegetables and fruit (with no added sugar, salt or fat). Savoury crackers or breadsticks served with fruit, vegetables or dairy food are also a good choice, e.g. cheese spread and crackers.
Confectionary, such as chocolate-coated biscuits and cakes.	Cakes and biscuits (without chocolate) are allowed but encourage your child to eat these as part of a balanced meal. Healthier alternatives include a small tub of rice pudding, malt loaf, scone or current bun.
Meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies, corned meat and sausages/chipolatas.	Choose non-processed alternatives such as chicken pieces, pasta salad or mixed salad, or ham and pineapple pizza slice.

See the Eatwell Guide Below, for government guidance on what a balanced diet looks like:



What happens if a child's packed lunch does not meet our school's policy?

The School Food Standards are government guidelines outlining which foods can and cannot be served at schools in the UK (see Appendix 1). Here at St. Mary's, all food served throughout the school day (including our hot lunch service) is compliant with the School Food Standards. To ensure all children at St. Mary's are eating a nutritious and balanced diet whilst at school, we encourage all packed lunches brought in to reflect these school food standards. This means including certain food groups in packed lunches every day, limiting the amount other food groups are included, and also prohibiting certain food items from being brought in entirely.

Our midday supervisors informally check packed lunches daily. Should a child's lunch box contain an item that does not adhere to this policy then the child will be asked to keep the food item in their lunch box and to bring it back home at the end of the school day. Where necessary, staff will supplement the lunch with food from our school canteen to ensure students have access to a nutritious meal. Should a child be sent into school with such items repeatedly, the teacher may then speak to parents directly after school.

Water only policy

We are a 'water only' school. Being water only means making sure that water (and plain semi skimmed or skimmed milk, lactose free or soya milk) is the only drink in school. We ask that pupils only bring in water to school in a refillable 'sports style' water bottle. Pupils can drink from these water bottles throughout the day including lunchtimes. They can be refilled using the drinking water taps in classrooms. We also have jugs of water available on the lunch tables in our school hall. Pupils may also bring in plain semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, lactose free or soya milk in their lunch boxes.

Food Brought In

Food brought in covers many different times within the school food environment and covers anything brought in by children, as well as provided by parents or staff. We strive to ensure that food brought into the school complies with the school food standards (see Appendix 1). Pupils in Early Years and Years 1 and 2 are entitled to a free piece of fruit at break times. Pupils in Key Stage 2 (Years 3 to 6) can bring in a single piece of fruit from home to eat during their morning break. Pupils are not allowed to eat any other snacks at break times.
This policy also applies to packed lunches sent into school for trips.

Allergies & Special Diets

When talking about allergies and special diets, we are inclusive of all allergies, intolerances, cultural and religious diets as well as medical requirements such as diabetes or blended diets.

Due to the high number of pupils in our school with nut allergies, we are a **nut free** school. Please do not send any nuts (or products containing nuts) into school including Nutella chocolate spread.

Our Senior Management Team will consider exceptions to this packed lunch policy for those with special diets on medical grounds. If this is the case, parents can contact our school office team to discuss this in more detail:
office@stmarysuxbridge.org.uk

Monitoring & Evaluation

At each review point, we will identify any areas of improvement to ensure that we maintain a balanced and wholesome approach to food & drink in our school. We will consider take up of school food, children/parent feedback and our ever-changing school population during each review.

We will review this policy annually.

USEFUL LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Home - Food for Life
- School food standards: resources for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Lunchbox ideas and recipes – Healthier Families - NHS (www.nhs.uk)
- The Eatwell Guide

Appendix

Appendix 1:

The revised standards for school food came into force on 1 January 2015 and are set out here:

School food standards practical guide - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)