



School food standards (other than lunch)

This briefing is for all English local authority contacts including Chief Executives and Council Leaders and will be of particular interest to catering managers, education and health co-ordinators and councillors with health and education port folios. It is provided to Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland authorities for information.

Key issues

Interim food based standards for school lunches applied to English local authorities from September 2006

Nutrient-based standards and new food based standards for school lunches will apply from September 2008 for primary schools and September 2009 at the latest for secondary schools.

Food based standards for school food other than lunch will apply from September 2007 but schools and caterers are recommended to adopt these standards for school food other than lunch as soon as possible.

This briefing concentrates on the new food-based standards for school food other than lunch introduced in guidance from the School Food Trust (SFT)

1. Public policy and all food in schools

Across the UK all administrations have been concentrating hard on achieving healthier school meals. However, with a number of policy initiatives in place, such as 'Extended Schools' and healthy schools initiatives, the emphasis in public policy has moved towards a goal of ensuring that all food served in schools is compliant with food-based standards. The new standards reduce the volume of fat, salt and sugar consumed as part of the daily diet of children and young people. Local authority caterers offer a vast array

of school food other than lunches including vending facilities, snack or tuck shop services, and breakfast clubs and after school food services in extended schools.

As a result of the new standards applying to school lunches the School Food Trust (SFT) has now introduced new guidance on all food served in schools. The aim of the guidance, on all school food, is to promote a reduction in child obesity, diseases such as type 2 diabetes and longer term better cardiovascular health. The new standards are also designed to promote healthier teeth in children.

2. Scope of the new standards

There is some cross-over between the standards that apply to school lunches and the standards for food served in school **other than** school lunches. There will be further revision of the school lunch standards which will be nutrient based standards from September 2008 for primary and 2009 for secondary. The new standards for food other than lunches are **food based standards** and apply to:-

- All local authority maintained primary, secondary, special schools and pupil referral units in England.
- Sixth forms on secondary school premises
- Academies (though independent schools are not specifically covered they are expected to comply)
- All food and drink provided by local authorities or school governing bodies to pupils off school premises during a school day up to 6 PM for example as school trips where food is provided. Food provided on a residential school trip where the provider of the accommodation provides food rather than the school will not be covered.

The food-based standards will apply to school food other than lunch to:-

- breakfast clubs
- mid morning snacks
- vending
- tuck shops
- after school snacks and meals

3. Restricted or no longer allowed food products

The standards have a degree of cross-over between those foods that are restricted but may be served in limited quantities across the whole offering of food in schools (including schools lunches) and those products that are not permitted at all.

No longer allowed foods are confectionary products such as:-

- chocolate bars
- sweets
- chocolate coated or flavored biscuits
- cereal bars / processed fruit bars
- crisps and similar snack products
- salted nuts
- breadsticks.

Restricted foods includes

- Salt and other condiments. Salt must not be provided at all at service counters or tables. Condiments such as ketchup or mayonnaise must only be available in sachets or individual portions of 10g or 1 teaspoonful
- Cakes and biscuits must not be provided but are permitted in accordance with lunch standards to be served at lunchtimes
- Two deep fried products per week are allowed at lunch **and all other** food services (as a total of all food served)
- Starchy foods cooked in fat or oil must not be used in the cooking process more than three times a week across lunch **and all other** food served

Meat products are permitted on a restricted basis, either manufactured or home made. Meat products that reach the minimum standards for meat content (and do not contain any prohibited offal) are permitted on the basis of one product from each of the following groups once per fortnight:-

Group 1 meat products burger, hamburger, chopped meat, corned meat

Group 2 meat products sausage, sausage meat, link, chipolata, luncheon meat,

Group 3 meat products individual meat pie, meat pudding, Melton Mowbray pie, game pie, Scottish (or Scotch) pie, pasty or pastie, bridie, sausage roll

Group 4 meat products any other shaped or coated meat product

4. Restricted or no longer allowed drinks

The standards prescribe the permitted and restricted drinks allowed across food served in schools whether through vending outlets or service counters or other.

Drinks not meeting the new standards include:-

- Flavoured water
- Squash / cordial
- Soft drinks including fizzy drinks that contain less than 50% fruit or vegetable juice
- Hot chocolate containing more than 20 calories per 100ml
- Flavoured milk unless it contains fruit juice or cocoa

Drinks that do meet the new standard include:-

- Water still or carbonated (but not flavoured water that contains less than 50% fruit and or vegetable juice with no added sugar and may contain vitamins and minerals)
- Semi-skimmed or skimmed milk (though whole milk is permitted for service to pupils in the school year in which they would reach the age of five)
- Fruit juices (unsweetened not fortified 100% fruit juice and fruit juice form concentrate)
- Vegetable juice (unsweetened 100% vegetable juice or vegetable juice from concentrates)
- Combination drinks of water and fruit or vegetable juice where the fruit or vegetable content is at least 50% and no added sugar though may contain

vitamins or minerals and combinations of milk (semi-skimmed or skimmed) or plain yoghurt, water, fruit or vegetable juice providing that 50% is milk or yoghurts and that less than 5% of sugar or honey is added to the milk or yoghurt components

- Combinations of soya rice or oat drinks, water or fruit or vegetable juice combinations are permitted providing as with milk drinks the component of soya, rice or oats is at least 50%. Less than 5% sugar or honey may be added to the soya oat or rice component.

Hot drinks that meet the new standards include:-

- Tea
- Coffee
- Low calorie hot chocolate containing no more than 20 calories per 1000 millimetres

5. What will caterers be permitted to serve?

With the wide-range of products either restricted or not permitted the guidance sets out a list of products that may be served within breakfast clubs, snack or tuck shops. Part 6 below deals with vending.

Fruit and vegetables items are not restricted and include whole pieces of fruit, fruit pots (sliced or chopped fresh fruit), canned fruit in natural juices, dried fruits without added sugar, salad posts, crudités with dips and vegetable accompaniments such as raw carrots.

Snacks such as nuts, seeds, fruit or vegetables with no added salt or sugar are permitted

Cold items include breakfast cereals (but not chocolate coated), yoghurt, fromage frais (plain or fruit) English muffins, plain currant or raisin bread, sandwiches, bagels with fillings, filled pitta bread or rolls, baguettes, wraps, pasta salads, fillings / toppings such as cheese, hard boiled eggs, peanut butter, meat, humous, sliced meat, bacon, meat and fish paste and tinned fish, combinations of nuts and seeds without added fat, sugar or salt.

Cold items that are restricted throughout the school day. Products such as biscuits, cakes, flapjacks, tray bake products, Danish pastries, croissants, jam and bakewell tarts individual fruit pies and so forth form part of an extensive list of cold products that will not meet the new standards for food services other than lunch and certain meat products may be permissible but subject to restrictions on how often they can be served across lunch or other food services.

Hot items include porridge, toast (no chocolate spread) or bread with jam, marmalade, peanut butter, toasted bagels and crumpets, toasted sandwiches, bacon sandwiches, warm pita with filling, paninis, tortillas, fajita etc, toast with baked beans, cheese and boiled eggs scrambled or poached, omelette, vegetable pasties, fishcakes, soups, slices of quiche, bowls of noodles with vegetables and or meat and jacket potatoes.

Hot items that are restricted include certain meat products, starchy food cooked in oil or fat and deep fried products such as potato wedges and spring rolls. This includes

products that are flash fried by manufacturers even if subsequently oven baked covered under the definition of deep fried foods

6 School vending

Vending machines whether provided by a catering provider or directly by a school are covered under the new standards for all food served in schools. Therefore caterers or schools need to make transitional arrangements now to ensure products are compliant before the implementation date of September 2007.

Confectionary, snack products such as crisp and crisp like products, cereal bars and processed fruit bars will need to be replaced with compliant products such as fresh fruit, water or fruit juice drinks and snacks such as unsalted seeds or nuts.

7. Enforcement

Enforcement of the new standards will be through Ofsted who will monitor school food served outside of lunch. It is anticipated further guidance will be made available in Autumn 2007.

8. Issues for council catering services and impact assessment

Clearly the new standards are designed to ensure compliance with food standards across the school day. This was an issue raised by APSE member authorities who despite rapid implementation of new food based standards for school lunches in September 2006 found that the healthy eating message, and indeed take up of school meals, was being hampered by the availability of high sugar, salt and fat products on other school food services such as breakfast or after school clubs run by volunteers or school vending machines outside of the catering providers control.

The consistency of the approach is therefore to be welcomed. However there are a number of concerns.

Cost of transition and impact on contract viability

Many in-house catering services recognise that in order to maintain good value for parents the school lunchtime service will operate on a very tight budget with the service being cross-subsidised by more profitable sales. For example in the secondary sector the sale of tray bake products at snack times. The rapid reduction in product lines available for sale may drive away customers from the service and lead to pupils bringing in their own unhealthy snacks to compensate for the loss of staple favorites such as mid-morning carrot cake or flapjacks.

For caterers reliant upon income streams from ancillary sales this could lead to a very immediate reduction in income and a strain on the financial viability of the contract.

It will be important for caterers to diversify now in order to allow a transition to meet the new standards, in advance of the September deadline. This should give pupils the opportunity to try new product lines and for caterers to respond with innovative and attractive ways of offering tasty alternative items, such as fruit pots or toasted sandwiches, as part of all school food services other than lunch.

Local sustainable procurement and supplier initiatives

The new standards, whilst containing many challenges for local authority caterers, could be a worth while opportunity to explore other policy issues within catering services. For example local fruit and vegetable suppliers may be willing to discuss preparation and pre-packaging of fresh fruit and vegetables in a way that is attractive to children and young people. Vending providers have also adopted a range of machines to carry fresh fruit and healthy unsalted snack products and drinks. As changes to suppliers may become inevitable as a result of the new standards this would be an ideal time for looking at localised supply chains, and allowing for local capacity to be built up during the transitional period to September 2007.

Contract expansion

The changes may also produce opportunities for local authority caterers to bring into their service remit, on a paid basis, food services operating outside of the core lunch time contract. This could provide clients with a solution to ensure that they as a school are compliant with the new standards and for caterers create opportunities for service expansion, realising economies of scale in purchasing arrangement, staff time and a more holistic approach to menu planning in the delivery of food services. This is particularly the case where food provision in schools is currently fragmented.

9. APSE Conclusions

Local authority catering services need to ensure they are prepared for the new food standards for food other than lunches. This will include a need to :-

- Communicate the changes across the service to all members of staff
- Communicate the changes to school heads and governors so that they understand why caterers need to provide a different service for breakfast clubs, snacks and tuck shop sales and any after school provisions
- Ensure that any cost barriers are identified and ameliorated as quickly as possible including if necessary discussions with clients about the financial impact of the changes
- Develop new and innovative product lines to ensure that alternative provisions are in place by September 2007 but ideally on a transitional basis so that products can be trialled and suppliers identified
- Ensure all vending operations are compliant with the new standards and any assessment on contract costs and / or operating arrangements are assessed in advance of the September 2007 deadline

APSE will be discussing this issue and the development of ideas with member authorities at the next catering advisory groups which will be held on Friday 22 June at Manchester Town Hall. Further copies of this briefing can be downloaded at www.apse.org.uk Member authorities are encouraged to attend with a view to developing any lobbying position on behalf of APSE members.

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