

A vibrant, close-up photograph of various fresh fruits and vegetables, including tomatoes, carrots, broccoli, and leafy greens, arranged in a dense, overlapping pattern. The image is slightly faded to serve as a background for the text.

# **APSE Roundtable School Food Standards: Updating the legislative framework**

# Why This Consultation Matters

- School Food Standards: Updating the Legislative Framework (2026 Consultation)
- The government is modernising the 2014 School Food Standards to reflect current nutritional guidance.
- Evidence shows children consume twice the recommended free sugars and over 90% consume too little fibre.
- The aim: healthier, more consistent food across the whole school day, with clearer expectations and stronger accountability.
- Changes affect breakfast clubs, lunch service, grab-and-go, snacks, drinks, and meal deals.
- Implementation planned from September 2027, with phased changes for secondary schools into 2028.

# Headline changes at a glance



# Reducing Sugar

- Removal of fruit juice and juice-based drinks.
- Limits on sweetened baked goods (phased for secondary).
- No honey, syrups, or added sugars.
- Stricter yoghurt sugar limits.



# Reducing Foods High in Fat, Sugar and Salt

- No deep frying.
- Limits on processed meats, pastry items, cheese-based mains.
- Only fruit, veg, crackers, breadsticks as snacks.



# Breakfast Standards

## Clearer rules:

high-fibre breads, low-sugar cereals, no pastries, no processed meat.



# Protein

- Pulses allowed as a main protein source; required weekly across menus.
- Limits on meat alternatives.



# Practical and Governance Changes

## Implementation and Compliance

- Schools need more than 12 months to adapt menus and recipes.
- Secondary schools get phased timelines for drinks, desserts, cheese limits, and pulses.
- Requirement for a lead governor for school food.
- Schools must publish food policies and menus online.

# Nursery Provision

Maintained nursery schools and nursery units will follow EYFS nutrition guidance only, removing Schedule 5.



# DISCUSSION POINTS

# Breakfast Standards

- Are the proposed breakfast rules workable?
- Should processed meat be allowed at breakfast?
- Is removing honey and syrups realistic operationally?
- Will separate breakfast standards help clarity?

# Increasing Fibre

- Can you reliably source higher-fibre breads and 50% wholegrain pasta/rice?
- How easily can we incorporate pulses weekly across all menu options?
- What challenges do we foresee adding veg/salad to all grab-and-go items?

# Fruit and Vegetables

- Is a fruit-only dessert day manageable in primary schools?
- How will we ensure fruit/veg availability at all service points?
- What operational changes are needed for grab-and-go compliance?

# Drinks Standards

- Are the proposed primary school drink rules workable?
- Should secondary schools have the same drinks list as primaries?
- What challenges arise from removing fruit juice entirely?
- How will phased changes to secondary drinks affect procurement?

# Dairy and Plant-Based Options

- Can you meet the sugar limits for yoghurts and plant-based yoghurts?
- Are fortified plant-based drinks accessible and affordable?
- How will cheese limits affect menu planning?

# **Foods High in Fat, Sugar and Salt**

- How will removing deep-fried foods impact menus and equipment use?
- Are the limits on processed meats and pastry items achievable?
- What alternatives can we offer for snacks?

# Desserts

- Can we reduce sweetened baked goods to once per week?
- What dessert alternatives will appeal to pupils?
- How will phased changes for secondary schools affect planning?

# Protein and Pulses

- Are you ready to use pulses as a main protein source three days a week for vegetarian options?
- How will adding pulses to all menu options once a week work in practice?
- Are limits on meat alternatives manageable?

# Nurseries and EYFS

- What changes are needed for nursery units moving to EYFS-only guidance?
- Will this simplify or complicate provision?

# Implementation Challenges

- What are the biggest operational barriers (staffing, equipment, supply chain)?
- How much lead-in time do we realistically need?
- What support or training would help?

# Compliance and Governance

- Would a lead governor for food improve compliance?
- How can we make food policies meaningful rather than administrative?
- What practical methods help ensure standards are met?

# Equality, Culture and Diversity

- Do any proposals risk disadvantaging pupils with cultural, religious, or medical dietary needs?
- How do we ensure inclusivity while meeting stricter standards?

# Environmental Considerations

- Could the new standards reduce waste or increase it?
- Will sourcing higher-fibre and plant-based items affect sustainability?
- Are there environmental upsides (e.g., less processed meat)?

# Final Reflections

- Will these changes improve nutritional quality?
- What opportunities do they create for menu innovation?
- What do you think will be the impact on uptakes
- Are there lessons that can be learnt from Scotland and Wales
- Cost impact!
- Can the supply chain deliver?
- Does the monitoring and compliance go far enough?
- Are the timescales proposed workable?



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