



## School Food policy

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GOAL: ARTS Education firmly acknowledges the vital role that healthy eating, oral hygiene, and its education, play in fostering their overall well-being and development.

## **1. Introduction**

ARTS Education is committed to providing a healthy and enjoyable food environment for all our students. Accounting for the specific needs of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) where students may have specific dietary needs due to sensory sensitivities, limited food preferences, or other related challenges.

We recognise the unique dietary needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and strive to offer a variety of meal options with different textures, tastes, and smells. Students and their families are encouraged to discuss specific dietary needs with the school leadership team on enrolment into the school, in circumstances where the required needs are more complex than what the school can facilitate for, we would suggest in bringing in a packed lunch.

This policy outlines the principles that guide our approach to food provision in the school, ensuring it aligns with the [School Food Standards](#) set by the Department for Education.

## **2. Food and Drink Provision Throughout the day**

ARTS Education believes that every child has a right to a hot meal in school and so the cost of all food and drinks provided to students throughout the school day is covered by the school, ensuring affordability and accessibility for all students.

We recognise that some students with ASD may require additional support and encouragement to meet their nutritional needs. Our staff are mindful of individual eating habits and utilise positive reinforcement strategies to gently encourage students to try new foods, take breaks for snacks, and stay hydrated throughout the day. This support is offered in a sensitive and respectful manner, prioritising the student's comfort and well-being.

## **Breakfast**

Students will have access to a selection of the following on arrival into school

- White and brown toast.
- A selection of cereals including low sugar, low salt, high fibre alternatives.
- Fresh fruit.
- Drink of their choosing, cordial, water, milk.

## **Lunch Time**

We ensure that the quality of the ingredients and that the choice of meals are appealing by conducting regular checks and asking the pupils and staff for feedback. We try to cater to each student's dietary requirements and sensory needs, the students make suggestions regularly, ensuring that the meals reflect the needs of the students.

## **Snacks**

We understand that snacks can play an important part of the diet of young people and can contribute positively towards a balanced diet. Therefore we offer snacks throughout the day or when asked for by students. Sensory preferences and dietary needs can vary greatly among individuals with ASD. Offering a generic list might not be relevant for everyone and could even contradict a student's specific needs.

## **Drinks**

Students with ASD are encouraged to access water freely throughout the day whenever they feel thirsty. We believe in fostering healthy hydration habits, and our staff team utilises positive reinforcement strategies to gently remind students to drink water at regular intervals. This ensures that students stay hydrated without feeling pressured or overwhelmed.

Students have access to a communal fridge where fresh cool water and juice is situated to ingrain habits and allow them the freedom to obtain a drink when they feel necessary. Milk is also available to students.

## **Packed Lunches**

Parents are encouraged to provide healthy well balanced packed lunches that also satisfies the students dietary requirements and ASD sensory needs.

ARTS Education would suggest when preparing a balanced lunchbox, to include:

- Starchy foods – these are bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and others.
- Protein foods – including meat, fish, eggs, beans and others.
- A dairy item – this could be cheese or a yoghurt.
- Vegetables or salad and a portion of fruit.
- A healthy drink such as water, milk or 100% fruit juice.

For more information: [www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk](http://www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk)

### **School events**

Pupils are provided with a nutritious packed lunch if not on the school site for lunch, for instance on a school trip or off-site school event.

### **3. Food allergy and intolerance**

Please see our Allergy Policy for further information

Parents/carers of students with food allergies or intolerances are encouraged to inform the school as soon as possible, providing a medical management plan from a healthcare professional outlining the specific allergies/intolerances and required actions in case of a reaction.

When a student is identified with any such allergies ARTS Education will ensure that the specific ingredient/food group (such as nuts) will be omitted from the school lunch menu.

ARTS Education will also communicate home to parents for those students on packed lunches to inform them of the food allergy as to reduce the chance of the student coming into contact with the allergen during school lunch times.

### **4. Vegetarian options**

ARTS Education offers a choice of vegetarian options through school provided lunches.

## **5. Dining Experience**

In recognition of students with ASD who may experience sensory sensitivities related to food smells or social interaction, we offer flexible lunchtime seating arrangements.

Students who enjoy a social atmosphere are welcome to have their packed lunches or school meals at designated communal tables. This fosters interaction and a sense of belonging.

For students who may find food smells overwhelming or prefer a quieter environment, we provide access to two designated quiet rooms during lunchtime. These rooms offer a calm and controlled space for students to enjoy their meals without additional sensory stimulation.

Staff on duty during lunch times will delegate themselves to ensure that each designated eating area is covered at all times and to instil a family style setting.

## **6. Specialist provision for learners who require specialist feeding regimens such as NG (Nasogastric) tube feeding and enhanced diets.**

Where students require support with feeding, we will ensure staff are fully trained and confident to support them. Any learners who require NG tube feeding support will have an individualised consent form and feeding plan. (See Nasogastric Feeding Policy)

Any learners who require additional nutrition during the school day will be enabled to do so when agreed with parents and medical professionals. Consent forms will be completed and a feeding plan in each case.

## **7. Food Safety**

ARTS Education has adequate facilities, suitable equipment, our chef is appropriately trained and all possible hazards have been identified. The kitchen is occupied only by the chef throughout the day and remains locked at all times to students.

## **8. Monitoring and Evaluation**

We review the effectiveness of our policy and practices yearly through student feedback, parent feedback and staff reflection.

## **9. Conclusion**

ARTS Education is committed to fostering a holistic and inclusive approach to supporting students with ASD and their unique dietary needs. This policy outlines the framework for creating a safe, supportive, and enjoyable food environment that caters to individual preferences and addresses specific challenges. Through collaboration with families, healthcare professionals, and dedicated staff, we continuously strive to ensure that all students, regardless of their dietary needs, have access to nutritious and appealing meal options while experiencing a positive and enriching school environment.

We welcome ongoing feedback and actively seek opportunities to refine our approach, ensuring that our food policy remains responsive and effective in meeting the evolving needs of our diverse student population.