Bentley CEVC & Copdock Primary Schools whole school food policy

Approved by: Whole Governing Board	**Date:** September 2026
Consulted with: pupils, parents, teachers and governors	
Last reviewed on:	
Next review due by: Autumn 2027	

At Bentley and Copdock Primary Schools, we are committed to promoting balanced eating habits and ensuring all children enjoy nutritious food. We recognise that children come from diverse home backgrounds, cultures, ethnic and faith groups. Our schools aim to meet the needs of all children and ensure equality of provision whilst taking account of this diversity and difference.

This policy was devised in consultation with children, families, teachers and governors.

Water

It has been recognised that children's concentration and behaviour improve when children drink water throughout the day. Dehydration can give children headaches and make them tired.

All children should bring a clearly labelled, empty water bottle to school each day (unless drinking filtered water). Bottles will be filled with fresh drinking water on arrival and can be refilled throughout the day as needed.

This is not a decision made in isolation by us as a federation. Our policy and practice have to reflect the guidance provided by the UK Government and national health organisations, which recommends that water should be the main drink available to children throughout the school day.

The Department for Education's School Food Standards guidance states that schools must provide free, fresh drinking water at all times and supports healthy eating and drinking habits. In addition, NHS guidance recommends water as the healthiest drink for children, as sugary drinks can contribute to tooth decay, excess calorie intake leading to weight gain and reduced concentration.

By ensuring that all children have access to water throughout the day, we are supporting their health, wellbeing, hydration, and ability to learn effectively while meeting government expectations for promoting healthy lifestyles in schools.

We appreciate that not every child enjoys drinking plain water, particularly if they are used to flavoured drinks. However, experience has shown that children adapt very quickly when water is the consistent option available throughout the school day. Once they become accustomed to drinking water, most children do so happily and remain well hydrated. By introducing this approach consistently across the school, we can support children in developing healthy habits that will benefit them both now and in the future.

Children should bring a clearly labelled empty water bottle which they can fill up and refill in school. Please feel welcome to put fruit in your child's bottle to flavour the water. If a child arrives with a drink that is not water, they will be asked to empty it and replace it with water provided by the school.

Drinks such as a carton of juice or squash can be included as part of a packed lunch. Energy and fizzy drinks are not permitted.

Contents of a balanced pack lunch

We encourage families to include:

- A portion of fruit and/or vegetables (e.g., apple, carrot sticks, or cherry tomatoes).
- A source of protein (e.g., lean meat, eggs, beans, or cheese).
- A starchy carbohydrate (e.g., wholemeal bread, pasta, or rice).
- A dairy or dairy alternative (e.g., yoghurt or milk).
- A drink (e.g., water, milk, or diluted fruit juice).

Foods to Avoid and limit:

To ensure health and safety, the following items should not be included:

- Fizzy or sugary drinks, including energy drinks.
- Confectionery such as chocolate bars or sweets.
- Crisps or fried snacks (baked alternatives are acceptable in moderation). Children could be given crisps on Fridays – 'Crisp Friday'.
- Fruit winder type products
- Chocolate sandwich spread

Sustainability

We encourage the use of reusable containers, cutlery and water bottles to minimise waste. Please avoid single-use plastics wherever possible.

Storage and Hygiene

- Packed lunches should be stored in a suitable lunchbox to keep food fresh.
- We recommend including an ice pack if items need to be kept cool, as refrigeration is not available.

Special Occasions

On special occasions (e.g. birthdays or class celebrations), parents/carers/teachers may provide small treats.
Celebration treats that are sent into school to celebrate birthdays are allowed. Where possible these will be distributed at home time, so parents are able to monitor this.

Monitoring and Feedback

On a daily basis the staff in school see what children have in their lunchboxes whilst supervising in the dining hall. This is an opportunity for them to talk with the children about their lunchboxes and to encourage balanced eating and drinking. However, we may send parents a reminder of this policy if lunchbox contents regularly fall short of the expectations in this policy. It is not our intention to tell parents what and how they should be feeding their children and we will not do so, but we want to work with parents to educate our children about dietary choices so that they can make their own informed choices independently when they are older. This will also be reinforced by learning within the curriculum.
Food that your child has not eaten in their pack lunch will be left and sent home for you to check and monitor.

School Dinners

We encourage all parents to take up the opportunity of school dinners, especially at KS1 because they are free. Daily hot meals are offered alongside a salad and fruit bar as well as a low sugar desert. In addition to this, there are also options for jacket potatoes and sandwiches. Please look at the menu

which is emailed to parents termly and added to the school website Bentley CEVC & Copdock Primary Federation: Meals.
The catering company follow the School Food Standards which sets out the guidelines for eating in school as well as consulting the Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services to help reduce salt, saturated fat and sugar in children's diets. This enables the amount of sugar to be closely monitored across the whole menu. For example-the use of sachets ensures no more than one teaspoon of any condiment. These measures reduce foods high in sugar and prevent deserts from being 'highly sugary'. Sugar is reduced (if not eliminated) from cake recipes but of course, they still need to be palatable and enjoyable for the children.

Special Diets

We understand children may have clinically diagnosed special dietary requirements. Parents are responsible for making the school aware of any such diet. There is a set procedure for requesting a medical diet for a school meal so please contact the office in the first instance to seek advice.

Food Allergies

Bently CEVC & Copdock Primary Federation is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for all pupils, staff, volunteers and visitors affected by allergy.
The federation recognises that allergic reactions can occur unexpectedly and that anaphylaxis is a medical emergency requiring rapid recognition and treatment. The school will therefore take reasonable and proportionate steps to reduce the risk of exposure to known allergens, ensure appropriate emergency arrangements are in place, and ensure that staff understand how to respond to an allergic reaction.
We acknowledge that it is impossible for schools to be completely free of allergens, and many allergens can cause severe reactions; this is not only nuts but can also be milk and eggs for example. Banning food products such as nuts does not represent day to day life and can cause complacency and therefore risks. Accordingly, we will work with families to develop skills and support the management of an allergy; developing a broader awareness.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the Department for Education's statutory guidance Allergy safety in schools, issued in July 2026, and the statutory allergy-safety requirements introduced through Benedict's Law. Please see our Whole School Food Allergy Policy.

Cultural Diversity

We endeavour to ensure that foods meet the cultural needs of all our children. Our Design & Technology curriculum also supports this and provides opportunities for pupils to learn about food from a range of different cultures.

Curriculum

Our curriculum promotes knowledge and life skills for food. Children are taught how to cook and apply the principles of balanced eating through the phases. At Phase 1 / 2, children explore what a healthy diet means. Phase 3 /4 learn about how food affects their minds and bodies. This progresses in Phase 5 /6 to how food makes them feel.
Cooking outside is also included within the Forest School curriculum where children make simple recipes using equipment such as the fire pit, cooking tripod and storm kettle.

After School Clubs

Wherever possible, school will run clubs to promote food knowledge and cooking skills; these may include Christmas Cake club and limited cooking club sessions.

School Snacks

A snack club is run by the children at school and a member of staff purchases the snacks. Decisions about which snacks to provide are informed by the food label traffic light guide and the School Food Standards Practical Guide. Children have the following options for a snack at breaktime:

- Bring a piece of fruit from home which must be kept separately from their lunch box
- Eat fruit provided in school
- Purchase a (10p) snack from the school snack shop; rice/corn cake

Early Years Foundation Stage Snacks

In Reception, snack time is crucial as it provides a valuable opportunity for children to not only refuel their energy but also develop essential social, personal and cognitive skills through tasks such as self-serving, paying (with plastic money), conversation, taking turns and practising hygiene, all while fostering positive relationship with food and eating habits.

Breakfast Club

Children who access breakfast club on a school site will be offered a nutritious meal to start the school day. This will aim to offer products with minimal ingredients and enhance children's concentration and well-being by ensuring they eat before lessons begin. Choice may include cereal, eggs, bagels, toast, porridge, fruit, Greek yoghurt and milk.