

HEALTHY FOOD POLICY

PURPOSE

This policy aims to support a healthy eating environment at Evolve Academy, recognising the vital role that balanced nutrition plays in supporting students' physical and mental wellbeing, supporting a student's positive mood, good energy levels, and concentration for learning throughout the school day.

A well-balanced, freshly prepared lunch is provided for students daily as part of the school's culture and community experience. Students are also encouraged to bring healthy supplementary snacks for morning snack break.

The school recognises that students have different nutritional, medical, dietary and cultural needs. While the school promotes healthy eating and shared meals, arrangements for individual students will be considered reasonably and sensitively to support their particular needs while maintaining dignity, inclusion and a positive lunch environment.

POLICY OVERVIEW

1. Promotion of Nutrient-Dense Foods

The school will:

- Encourage the consumption of whole and minimally processed foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, nuts and seeds.
- Educate students about the benefits of balanced nutrition for physical and mental wellbeing.

2. School Lunch Program

The daily school lunch forms an important part of the Evolve Academy community and provides students with an opportunity to eat together and participate in a shared school experience.

The school will:

- Provide a freshly prepared lunch each school day.
- Aim to offer a varied and balanced menu over the course of each term.
- Communicate menus in advance of each term.
- Encourage students to try a variety of foods without forcing or pressuring them to eat.
- Promote a relaxed, respectful and positive lunch environment.
- Students choose food items to plate and how much.
- Students may choose not to eat a particular meal.

3. Individual Meal Accommodations

Where reasonably possible, the following arrangements may be used for students with identified medical requirements:

- Parents may review the published menu and identify meals that may present particular challenges.
- Where practical, the school may offer a suitable substitution or alternative component to the planned meal.
- Alternatives should, where possible, fit naturally within the overall meal and may be made available to other students to avoid unnecessarily singling out an individual student.
- Meals may be served in a more flexible or deconstructed format, allowing students to select appropriate combinations of protein, vegetables and carbohydrates.
- The kitchen and relevant staff should be informed of agreed substitutions in advance where possible.
- The school recognises that there may be occasions when a parent determines that it is necessary for a student to bring a meal from home. Where this forms part of an agreed individual arrangement:
 - The parent-provided meal should be brought to school in an appropriate container.
 - The meal should be given directly to the designated kitchen or staff member, or stored in the agreed location, with the relevant staff member notified.
 - Where appropriate, the kitchen may plate and serve the meal alongside the normal lunch service to support inclusion and discretion.
 - The school may ask that parent-provided meals align, as far as reasonably possible, with the general style and healthy eating principles of school meals.

The purpose of these arrangements is to provide reasonable support without creating unnecessary attention around an individual student's food choices.

4. Managing Food Intolerances and Allergies

The school will:

- Promote awareness and understanding of food allergies and intolerances.
- Encourage students to understand and manage their own needs appropriately, with support from parents and healthcare professionals.
- Promote a culture of not sharing food where this may create a health risk.
- Maintain reasonable communication with parents regarding known allergies and agreed food arrangements.
- Ensure relevant staff are aware of necessary safety arrangements while respecting student privacy.

5. Inclusion of Nuts and Seeds

- Nuts and seeds are permitted as part of students' packed snacks, subject to any individual allergy arrangements that may be in place.
- Students should be educated about the nutritional benefits of nuts and seeds, including healthy fats, protein, vitamins and minerals.
- Students should be mindful of classmates with allergies and should not share food.

6. Packing Healthy Snacks

Suitable snacks may include:

- Fruit and vegetables;
- Wholegrain wraps or sandwiches;
- Yogurt or appropriate dairy alternatives;
- Nuts and seeds, where appropriate;
- Hummus and vegetable sticks;
- Lean protein options;
- Other nutrient-dense foods appropriate to the student's individual needs.

Students and parents are encouraged to make informed choices about snacks while recognising that individual nutritional requirements may differ.

7. Mindful Eating Practices

The school encourages students to develop a healthy and respectful relationship with food. Students will be encouraged to:

- Pay attention to hunger and fullness cues.
- Eat at an appropriate pace.
- Eat at designated eating times where students can focus on their meals without distractions.
- Enjoy and appreciate food without judgement.

8. Eating Disorder Awareness and Support

The school will:

- Provide education on recognising signs of eating disorders.
- Promote positive body image and a healthy relationship with food.
- Ensure access to resources and support for students who may be struggling with eating disorders, including referral to healthcare professionals.
- Nurture a supportive and non-judgmental school environment where students feel safe discussing their concerns.

9. Waste-Reducing Practices and Recycling

The school will:

- Encourage students to take only what they need and to be mindful of portion sizes to reduce food waste.
- Implement programs to reduce food waste, such as promoting the use of reusable containers and utensils.
- Encourage responsible recycling and disposal of food packaging.
- Educate students about the environmental impact of food waste.
- Set up composting systems for organic waste and integrate recycling bins throughout the school.

10. Educational Initiatives

The school may provide nutrition education through:

- Curriculum activities;
- Cooking and food preparation;
- Workshops and seminars;
- Discussions about meal planning and food labels;
- Education about balanced nutrition, mindful eating and waste reduction.
- Educational initiatives should promote knowledge and informed decision-making without creating judgement around individual students' bodies, food choices or medical needs.

11. Creating a Supportive Environment

The school will:

- Provide access to clean drinking water.
- Provide appropriate facilities for the storage of agreed packed snacks and meals.
- Promote a positive and inclusive attitude towards food.
- Encourage shared meals while respecting individual needs.
- Ensure that reasonable individual arrangements are handled discreetly.
- Support students in developing independence and responsibility appropriate to their age and circumstances.

12. Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy and individual meal arrangements will be monitored through appropriate feedback from students, parents and staff.

Where individual accommodations are in place:

- Arrangements may be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain effective.
- Concerns should be raised discreetly with the relevant senior staff member.
- The school will consider both the individual student's wellbeing and the practical impact on the wider school environment and lunchroom dynamics.
- Adjustments may be made collaboratively where necessary.

IMPLEMENTATION

School Administration

- Oversee the implementation of the healthy food policy and ensure compliance.
- Ensure appropriate communication between parents, relevant staff and the kitchen where individual arrangements are agreed.
- Provide necessary resources and support for nutrition education and related activities.
- Support staff training and awareness relating to healthy eating, eating disorders, allergies and respectful approaches to food.
- Monitor the effectiveness of individual arrangements and the overall lunch environment.

Teachers and Staff

- Reinforce the principles of the policy in classrooms and during school activities.
- Serve as role models by promoting and practicing healthy eating habits.
- Promote a respectful and non-judgemental approach to food.
- Be trained to recognise signs of eating disorders and refer students to appropriate support services.
- Avoid drawing attention to individual students' meals or food choices.
- Raise concerns discreetly with the appropriate senior staff member.
- Respect agreed individual arrangements.
- Avoid acting as decision-makers regarding a student's individual medical or dietary management unless this forms part of a clearly agreed safety or emergency procedure.
- Encourage positive participation in the school community without pressuring students around food.

Kitchen Staff

Kitchen and lunch staff will:

- Prepare and serve meals in accordance with the planned menu and agreed reasonable substitutions.
- Maintain discretion regarding individual student arrangements.
- Make agreed alternative meals available where practical.
- Receive and store parent-provided meals in accordance with agreed arrangements.
- Plate parent-provided meals where appropriate to support a consistent and inclusive lunch experience.
- Refer questions or concerns to the designated senior staff member rather than engaging in unnecessary discussion with students about their medical or dietary needs.

Students

Students are encouraged to:

- Take responsibility for packing their own healthy snacks.
- Practice mindful eating and minimise food waste.
- Avoid sharing food where allergies or individual requirements may create a risk.
- Respect classmates who have different dietary, medical or nutritional needs.
- Avoid commenting on or judging another student's food.
- Make healthy and informed food choices.
- Seek support if struggling with eating concerns or disorders.

Parents

- Support the policy by encouraging and assisting their children in packing healthy snacks.
- Participate in school-organised nutrition education workshops and seminars.
- Encourage and model waste-reducing practices at home.
- Be aware of signs of eating disorders and seek appropriate help if needed.
- Inform the school of relevant dietary, medical or nutritional requirements.
- Work constructively with the school to establish practical arrangements where necessary.

EXAMPLE OF PERMISSABLE SCHOOL SNACKS

Whole grain wrap: Filled with grilled chicken, hummus, spinach, shredded carrots, and sliced bell peppers.

Nutrients: Provides protein, fibre, vitamins (A, C, K), and healthy fats.

Fruit: A small apple, banana or a cup of mixed berries.

Nutrients: Offers vitamins (C, K), antioxidants, and fibre.

Vegetables: Sliced cucumbers and cherry tomatoes.

Nutrients: Adds vitamins (A, C), fibre, and hydration.

Nut and Seed or Trail Mix: A portion of nuts, seeds and dried fruit

Nutrients: Delivers healthy fats, protein, vitamins (E), and minerals (magnesium).

Dairy/Dairy Alternative:

Yogurt: A single-serving container of plain or lightly sweetened Greek yogurt.

Nutrients: Provides protein, calcium, and probiotics for gut health.

DRINK

Water: A reusable water bottle filled with water to stay hydrated.

Mindful Eating Tip:

Encourage students to take their time eating, savour each bite, and pay attention to their hunger and fullness cues.

Waste-Reducing Practices:

Use reusable containers and utensils. Pack fruits and vegetables in compostable or recyclable bags, and encourage students to bring back any uneaten food to assess portion sizes for future meals.