



The Elms Primary School

Executive Headteacher: Mrs S Farrell

Head of School: Mrs C Mitchell

Gloucester Street, Faringdon, Oxon, SN7 7HZ

Tel: 01367 240232

Email: office@tep.faringdonlearningtrust.org

www.theelmsprimary.co.uk



Dear Parents / Carers

Healthy Snacks & Healthy Lunchboxes

I am writing to parents to clarify the school policy on healthy snacks and what should lunchboxes contain, as I have had a number of queries from parents recently.

Generally speaking, if a child has had a nourishing breakfast, a playtime snack should not be necessary if they are having a healthy lunch. Having a healthy balanced lunch has been credited as a contributing factor in the improvement of pupil's concentration, attention, energy levels and ultimately high levels of academic achievement.

However, we are aware that some children will eat very little at breakfast time and may benefit from an opportunity to eat a snack at break time. The school policy on snacks is to ensure that they should be a healthy option. The governors have outlined this in our school prospectus:

If you would like your child to have a mid-morning snack, we encourage them to bring in fresh / dried fruit or vegetables. No sweets please.

The best snack for break time, are foods that they can eat outside and they can eat with their fingers. Chopped up, fruit or raw veggies such as carrots or peppers are ideal. Breadsticks and wholemeal crackers are also great finger foods that can be spread with low-fat soft cheese.

Parents have asked about various shop purchased snacks, such as fruit winders and various breakfast bars etc. we would like to avoid these as they are usually high in sugar.

I have attached the Children's Food Trust guidance on what should be included in a healthy lunchbox.

Finally, we do not wish to stop the break time snacks but we do rely on our parents to make the healthy choices for our pupils and to abide by our school policy. Please do not send snacks that are high in fat or sugar (e.g. chocolate, biscuits, crisps and sweets) as it is upsetting for the children when staff have to remind them about their snack.

Mrs Charlotte Mitchell
Head of School

What should my child's packed lunch include?

Starchy Food item such as bread, pasta, couscous or potato. Wholegrain varieties contain more fibre so choose these where you can. And while sandwiches are often our go-to choice, you can use different types of bread to give kids variety – pitta, wraps, bagels, chapattis or toast fingers with a dip. Some children prefer to make their own sandwich up if you give them the components. And don't forget, leftover pasta, noodles, potatoes or couscous can be the makings of a cold packed lunch salad the next day as long as you cool and store them properly.

Fruit & Veg - we all need to eat more of these, whatever our age! Get veg into packed lunches in all sorts of ways: on their own (e.g. sticks of cucumber, carrot, pepper, celery, cherry tomatoes, baby corn, sugar snap peas, pots of mixed salad), as part of sandwiches or stick pulses like kidney beans and chickpeas in pasta salads. Halved cherry tomatoes in a pot, instead of tomato slices in sandwiches, can help to avoid the soggy sandwich effect. For fruit, children often prefer a pot of chopped fruit rather than whole fruit (especially younger children). Try chopped apple (stop it turning brown by rinsing it in diluted lemon juice), satsuma segments, strawberries, blueberries, halved grapes (longways) or melon slices on their own, or as a mixture. Small pots of canned fruit in juice can work well, or with some yoghurt (remember the spoon!) Raisins, sultanas and dried apricots are another popular choice – and they're cheaper and often healthier than processed fruit snacks, which may contain added sugar and be more damaging to children's teeth.

Pulses, Beans, Fish, Eggs, Meat and other protein - mix it up rather than the failsafe ham sandwich: try strips of chicken, beef, pork, cooked or canned tuna or salmon. Meat alternatives like soya, tofu, Quorn, or cooked egg can also work well in sandwiches or salads. Try houmous or other bean dips with strips of pitta and veg sticks, or as a topping for crispbreads and crackers.

Dairy Foods - Pack milk as a drink (go for semi-skimmed or 1% milk – all the same vitamins, just less fat). If you want to go for flavoured milk, check the label and choose one with lower sugar. You can also put cheese in sandwiches, with crackers or fruit, or as sticks or cubes. Don't forget, cheese can be high in fat and salt so choose stronger-tasting ones (you can use less of it) or reduced-fat varieties cheese, and don't pack cheese every single day. Yoghurt or fromage frais are also great choices – go for the plain varieties or check the labels and choose pots that are lower in sugar. Rice pudding pots or custard with fruit are also good packed lunch puds.

Drink - Plain milk or water are the best choices for children's teeth. If you want to pack fruit juice in your child's lunchbox, stick to a 150ml portion. Better still, dilute it with still or sparkling water to make it more hydrating. It's best to avoid drinks like squash, fruit juice drinks and flavoured water (even if they're labelled as 'sugar-free', 'no added sugar' or 'reduced sugar') – they offer very little nutritional benefit, and some schools ask you not to bring them in.

Don't Forget: Lunchbox food tips:

instead of chocolate bars or cereal bars, pack lower-sugar alternatives like scones, malt loaf, fruit bread, plain popcorn or fruit in sugar-free jelly instead of processed fruit snacks, choose fresh fruit or plain dried fruit instead of crisps, try plain rice cakes, oat cakes or breadsticks with cheese get children involved in choosing and preparing what goes into their lunchbox, to help encourage them to eat it pre-prepared fruit and veg are generally more expensive than doing it yourself, so get some small pots and prep them yourself to cut the cost using leftovers as part of packed lunches is a good way to cut down the prep time, but make sure it's cooled and stored properly make sure that

what you pack is easy for little fingers to open, and to eat children often love a bit of DIY – wraps and pots of fillings can be more exciting if they get to put them together dipping foods rule for many kids, so give breadsticks or toast fingers, veg sticks and a pot of houmous or our fabulous fish pate a try.