



SECKFORD FOUNDATION FREE SCHOOLS TRUST

"Providing a foundation for life"

FAQs - The Trust Approach to Eating at Our Schools



"There is a direct correlation between the number of students who eat healthier school lunches and a higher number of students achieving five or more GCSEs at A-C."*

Dr Michael Nelson, Director Public Health Nutrition Research Ltd

Q: Why are school meals compulsory in our Free Schools?

A: At the Seckford Foundation Free Schools Trust we believe that healthy eating plays a central role in supporting the attainment, learning and progress of our students. We expect all our students to eat with us for a number of reasons:

- Good food provides students with the ability to concentrate on learning in the classroom, particularly after lunchtime;
- A greater appreciation for cultural, fresh and seasonal ingredients; and
- Learning the enjoyment of dining over a meal.

All the schools in the Seckford Foundation Free Schools Trust have an extended school day as standard. Eating nutritiously helps keep our students feeling healthy, alert and energised throughout the day. Many studies have shown that hunger affects concentration and that well-nourished children fare better at school. Good food provisions in school have been shown to lead not only to healthier children but to improve attainment. All our food is

freshly prepared within the Seckford Foundation under the leadership of our Executive Chef. It is our aim for all students to develop the confidence, knowledge and understanding to make appropriate food choices in their future lives.

In order to ensure that our students have enough fuel to keep them learning during our extended school day, we have three food sittings. Information on the three sittings can be found under the relevant question later on in this FAQ document.

Our schools see our food provision holistically. This means that we don't just feed our students, but see the opportunities for education about food too. We introduce students to foods they may never have tried and through events such as 'Kitchens of the Globe' throughout the year we intend for students to learn the cultural influences on food from around the world.

In our schools, we call what is traditionally known as the 'school canteen' or 'dining hall', 'the restaurant'. All our staff are expected to eat with students and it is expected to be a social, dining experience. By eating together, we believe that the relationships between all members of our community will be strengthened and there will be benefits to behaviour, achievement, learning and progress.



"Students from all backgrounds socialise well together during break and lunch periods. All have lunch with their teachers in the Restaurant and several said that this helps make the school community feel like 'a big family'"

Saxmundham Free School Ofsted Report after inspection in May 2014

Q: When is food served at your Free Schools every day?

A: Each of our schools provide three healthy eating opportunities throughout the day:

breakfast (8-8.30am); mid-morning breaktime (10.30-10.55am); and lunchtime (12.50-13.55pm). The breakfast and mid-morning breaktime sittings are both freely available to students. Students who are in receipt of Free School Meals eat free at lunchtime.

Q: My child has special dietary needs. Can you accommodate them?

A: The Chef Managers on each school site are more than happy to have a conversation with any parent / carer or a student about their dietary needs. We are more than used to dealing with students who are diabetic, have food requirements related to their religion or are allergic to various foodstuffs. We will ensure that we are able to offer your child a menu that suits his needs. Vegetarian options are always available.

Q: My child is a fussy eater, what if (s)he doesn't like what is on offer?

A: There is always a wide range of food on offer from which the students can choose. For example, there is always a salad bar with a variety of cold meats, rolls, plain pasta and often baked potatoes are available too. There is something to suit every child, every sitting, every day. Should there be a specific issue with this, then our Chef Managers are very happy to work with parents / carers and students to work through eating issues.



"[the aim is to] create a generation of children who enjoy food that makes them healthier, more successful and most importantly, happier"

School Food Plan, Children's Food Trust (www.schoolfoodplan.com)

Q: Can my child bring in their own snacks / packed lunches / drinks?

A: It is not necessary for students to bring in any food or drink. Our schools provide three healthy eating opportunities throughout the day with a free offer at breakfast and mid-morning breaktime and some items that can be purchased. Parents / carers can set a limit on how much money they wish their child to spend in the day if they should so wish and can do so by contacting the School Administration Manager at the relevant school.

Many parents / carers mistakenly imagine that a packed lunch is the healthiest option. In fact, it is far easier to get the necessary nutrients into a cooked meal. Only 1% of packed lunches meet the nutritional standards that currently apply to school food. All of our food

is cooked from scratch on the premises using local produce, free-range eggs and organic meats.

Water is available at every sitting and throughout the day so there is no need for your child to bring in a drink.

Q: How do I pay for food for my child?

A: We operate a cashless catering system in all our schools via ParentPay. You will be issued with login details or you can have a top up card if you prefer. ParentPay is automatically charged every day against the attendance register, so you won't pay for food if your son / daughter is not at school and you can track your balance online at any time. We believe that by having a cashless system, as well as students not having to carry around money, everyone is treated the same when in the restaurant, and any stigma felt by those students in receipt of Free School Meals is removed.

Our meals are priced in line with school meals at other schools in the county.

Q: I cannot afford to pay for school meals. Is there any help available?

A: Any student entitled to Free School Meals will be provided with a free lunch. Free options are available at breakfast and mid-morning breaktime. For those parents / carers whose children are not entitled to Free School Meals, the Trust does provide subsidies for those who can provide evidence of financial hardship. Simply write to the Trust and provide the relevant evidence to see whether you qualify.

"This country faces a serious health crisis caused by bad diet. Almost 20% of children are already obese by the time they leave primary school at 11. Diet-related illnesses are putting a huge strain on the nation's coffers, costing the NHS £10 billion every year. We need to tackle the problem now, before the cost becomes too heavy to bear"

School Food Plan, Children's Food Trust (www.schoolfoodplan.com)



If you have any further questions on the Trust's approach to eating at our Free Schools, then please contact us via the contact details on our website at <http://www.sffst.org.uk>.