

**UPDATED**



**Food Hygiene Advice**  
**for**  
**Teachers, Parents, Pupils**  
**and**  
**Classroom Assistants**



## INTRODUCTION

This booklet provides practical guidance and advice on food hygiene and safety for teachers, support staff and parents, who may be handling food as part of a lesson, or assisting with extra curricular activities such as those identified in the Food in Schools Toolkit. This may also include breakfast, after school clubs, tuck shops etc. There are additional requirements for the school meals service which is set out in the Herts Catering Manual.

As well as general guidance this booklet also gives specific advice about water bottles, packed lunches, school events and information on allergies and staff training requirements. There is also additional guidance on food safety in the Key Themes section of the Food in Schools Toolkit.

The guidance is consistent with information and advice provided by the Food Standards Agency and is supported by Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire Environmental Health Officers and the Healthy Schools Programme, The teaching of food technology falls within the remit of BS 4163 which gives more detailed guidance.

It is recommended that you use the signing sheet at the back of this booklet to keep a record of those people who have read and agree to adhere to the guidance outlined.

**Please keep this guidance in your Food in Schools Toolkit**

## GETTING STARTED

There are 3 main areas to remember for good food hygiene. You should think about them whenever you are handling food in the classroom:

1. Preparation
2. Cleaning
3. Storage

You must ensure premises used for the storage and preparation of food must be kept clean and maintained in good repair and condition. ( please refer to HCC 'construction and design' standards) Food should not be prepared if there is any evidence of vermin or insect infestations.

*\*If you run a food business for more than 5 days in any consecutive 5 weeks you must register the business with the Local Authority Environmental Health Dept.*

### 1. Personal Hygiene

- You should not be handling food if you are suffering from any form of tummy upset, nose, throat or skin infection. If you have had Diarrhoea or vomiting you should not handle food for 48 hours after symptoms have ceased.
- Cover any cuts and grazes with a waterproof dressing.
- All adults must follow the schools First Aid Policy.
- Tie back long hair and remove any watches and ornate hand jewellery.
- Do not cough or sneeze over food.
- Your hands can easily spread bacteria onto food and food preparation surfaces. It is important to always wash your hands thoroughly with soap ( 'antibacterial' soap is even more effective) and warm water and then dry them at each of the following times:
  - *Before starting to prepare food*
  - *Between handling raw and cooked foods*
  - *After going to the toilet*
  - *After blowing your nose*
  - *After emptying bins*
  - *After touching pets*
  - *After handling any dirty cloths or cleaning materials*
  - *After looking after a sick pupil or changing dressings*

### 2. Purchasing and Cultivating Foods

- Always buy food from a reputable supplier or shop. Check 'use by' and 'best before' dates and ensure that any foods that are required to be kept cold are placed in a refrigerator as soon as possible.
- Foods such as fruit or vegetables which will be eaten without any cooking or peeling should be washed first in cold running water.
- Vegetables or fruit grown in school grounds should be free of harmful /toxic substances. If these are grown in school grounds a 'risk assessment' should be carried out to determine if there has been any previous activity on the land that may cause contamination. A soil test may need to be carried out if contamination is suspected.



### 3. Cleaning



**Keeping food storage and preparation areas clean is essential to keep food safe, otherwise bacteria can grow and spread**

#### Preparation surfaces/equipment

- Always ensure that all work surfaces or chopping boards are thoroughly cleaned and then disinfected before use. A domestic type antibacterial spray should be sufficient (e.g. the types available for sale in most supermarkets and retail shops).
- If a sink is used for food preparation, i.e. washing of fruit or vegetables, then you should ensure that it has been thoroughly cleaned before use, especially if it has been used for cleaning dirty items of equipment. Only use mains fed water (generally classroom sinks are unsuitable as water comes from a tank). Also they are less likely to be clean enough for hygienic preparation of food.
- Alternatively use a separate food use only washing up bowl.
- Wipe up spilt food straight away.

#### Knives, spoons and other utensils



- Keep knives, wooden spoons, tongs etc clean and make sure they are washed thoroughly after use. Separate utensils should be used for raw and ready to eat foods.

### Cloths

- A dirty cloth can spread bacteria around a classroom. It is therefore important to wash kitchen cloths regularly and leave them to dry before using them again. Ideally a washing machine could be used. (the washing cycle should be 80°C or over)
- Where possible try to keep different coloured cloths for different jobs, e.g., one cloth to wipe work surfaces and boards and another to wash dirty plates. Ideally disposable kitchen cloths could be used.
- Towels used to dry hands should be kept separate from tea towels and other cleaning cloths.



## 4. Storage

**It is important to take care how you store food, to make sure it is safe to eat.**

### Keeping food in the fridge

- High risk foods \* i.e. ready to eat meat, fish, poultry and dairy products will need to be kept in the fridge to help prevent bacteria from growing on them. (Such foods will have a 'use by' date and the label will say 'keep refrigerated'). Always make sure they are within the 'use by date'.
- The fridge should be capable of keeping food at 5°C or below and must not be overloaded.
- Ready to eat foods should be stored on the top shelves and raw foods at the bottom. Whenever possible keep food covered. This will help prevent cross contamination.
- Once opened meats, cheeses and any other high risk foods should be date labelled, placed under refrigeration and used within 2 days.



## General Storage

- Many foods don't need to be kept in a fridge to keep them safe, for example, dry foods such as biscuits and pasta or fresh produce such as fruit (unless the fruit has been cut or peeled). However it is important to take care how these foods are stored.

Here are some useful tips:

- Try to keep foods in sealed bags or containers. This helps to keep them fresh and stops anything falling into the food by accident.
- Always check the 'Best Before' dates. For tuck shops etc. it is advisable to have a proper system for checking stock dates so older foods are used first.
- Do not store food or drinks near cleaning products or other chemicals.
- Do not store food in containers that have been used for other purposes.
- Do not use old food containers to store household chemicals.
- Do not store food on the floor, because this can allow contamination to occur and encourage pests.
- Keep the storage area cool and dry. Avoid storing food in direct sunlight.

## 5. Preparation

It is very important to prepare food safely, to help stop harmful bacteria from spreading and growing. It is important to identify foods that are **'high risk'** in terms of controlling food poisoning.

**\*High risk' foods are those foods that support growth of food poisoning organisms and intended to be eaten without further treatment.eg ready to eat meat, fish, poultry and dairy products.**

Separate surfaces/chopping boards and knives should be used for preparing raw foods and cooked or ready to eat foods. If this is not possible then surfaces and boards should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected both before and between uses.



When preparing food, keep it out of the fridge for the shortest time possible. If you have made a dish and it's not going to be eaten straight away then keep it in the fridge until you're ready to eat it. (The longest period food should be left out of a fridge is 1 hour). It is always best to keep food covered to prevent contamination.

## 6. Cooking

Meats should be piping hot all the way through with no pink or red in the centre and juices should be clear. If practical a temperature probe can be used to measure the core temperature of Food. (All meats should be cooked to 75 °C) unpasteurised milk or egg should not be used in any ready to eat dishes. Raw eggs should bear the 'lion' quality mark and be thoroughly cooked before being eaten. Guidance on eggs can be found on Dept of Health and FSA websites.

## 7. Service/Display

High risk foods should not be displayed for long periods at ambient temperatures as this will allow the growth of food poisoning organisms. The period of display outside of refrigeration should be no longer than 1½ hours.



Ensure there are adequate hand washing facilities with soap and water nearby when handling open food. In temporary premises i.e stalls, marquees etc it may not be possible to provide wash hand basins or even bowls to wash hands in. In which case consideration may be given to the provision of antiseptic wipes/gel dispensers. You should seek the advice of your local Environmental Health Department on this issue.

## 8. Specific Food Safety Matters

### Lunch Boxes



**Keep the lunch box cool, covered and safe**

- Packed lunches can be a breeding ground for food poisoning bacteria if left in a warm place such as a school bag or classroom for a long period of time. If a refrigerator cannot be provided for pupils to store their lunch boxes in, then a cool, dry place should be identified.

#### **Tips for keeping lunch boxes safe and cool:**

- Encourage children not to keep their lunchboxes near radiators or hot pipes.

#### **PARENTS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT:**

- Insulated boxes, small ice packs and mini-cool bags will help.
- A frozen carton of drink can double up as an ice pack.
- It is good practice to chill their child's sandwiches before packing and use ingredients from the fridge where possible.
- Their child's lunchbox / bag should be cleaned out after use.

### Water Bottles

- 'Thermoplastic' (hard plastic) bottles are more suited to constant reuse compared to disposable type bottles. They are generally more robust and the plastic does not break down so easily.
- Water bottles should only be filled with water from a drinking water tap that takes water direct from the rising main and not from a tap that is fed from a water storage tank.
- Any left over water at the end of the school day should be discarded.
- It is recommended that where possible children take their water bottle home at the end of each day so that they can be thoroughly cleaned.
- Water bottles should be washed in warm soapy water on a daily basis, or more often if required.

**There are many benefits of water provision, but it is important to keep bottles clean!**



## Allergies



**Most allergic reactions to food are mild, but sometimes they can be very serious. If someone has a food allergy they can react not only**

**to eating just a tiny amount of the food they are sensitive to, but also from airborne particles or touching the food.**

- Staff should know what to do if a child has a food allergy because sometimes they can be life threatening. There is no cure for food allergy or intolerance, so the only way to prevent a reaction is to be fully aware of foods that pupils may need to avoid.
- All pre-packed foods must give a list of ingredients. Always check the ingredients on a food product to see if it contains the food that any of your pupils need to avoid.
- If you know that a child has a severe allergic reaction to a product or ingredient then you should avoid using that product in the classroom.
- Some pupils may also have special pens for injecting themselves with. These and the child's full contact details etc should be kept together in a safe place. Staff should be updated annually on use of the pen and signs/symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- Your Emergency Plan should have details of what to do in the event of a pupil having a severe allergic reaction. However the following are basic procedures:
  - Do not move them.
  - Ensure someone stays with the child

- Ring 999, and ask for an ambulance with a paramedic straight away.
- Explain that your pupil could have anaphylaxis ('anna-fill-axis').
- send someone outside to wait for the ambulance.



**Training should be related to both the job the individual does and the types of food handled.**

## Training and Supervision

- Parents who handle 'high risk' food such as in cooking classes or breakfast clubs involving cooked foods, will need more training or supervision than those who handle 'lower risk' foods such as fruit or cakes.
- For most parents a basic understanding of the essentials of food hygiene as outlined in this booklet, should be acceptable.
- Any staff including teachers and classroom assistants will need the Level 2 Award in Food Safety in Catering (or equivalent). Managers and supervisors involved in the school meal service will have a higher level of training.



## School Events

**When you are making food for large numbers of people it's especially important to keep food safe.**



Home-made cakes should be safe to eat, as long as the people who make them observe good food hygiene as outlined in this guidance booklet, and the cakes are stored and transported safely. In particular:

- Do not use raw eggs in anything that won't be thoroughly cooked, such as icing or mousse. (eggs should bear the 'lion' quality mark)
- Store and transport cakes in a clean, sealable container, away from raw foods, especially raw meat.
- Make sure that cheesecakes and any cakes or desserts containing cream are out of the fridge for the shortest time possible.
- Avoid handling cakes – use tongs or a cake slicer instead.
- In general, foods that need to be chilled (which include most of the foods people tend to serve on buffets, and most sandwich fillings) should be left out of the fridge for the shortest time possible.
- When you're eating outdoors you should also remember to keep food covered whenever possible. Protect food from insects, birds and pets, which can carry bacteria.
- A risk assessment should be carried out and documented to ensure safe practice.

## BBQs

- Wait until the charcoal is glowing red, with a powdery grey surface, before you start to cook.



- Make sure frozen food is properly thawed before you cook it. Keep meat in the fridge or cool box until needed.
- Cook small portions at a time, turn food regularly and move it around to cook evenly.
- Always ensure food is cooked all the way through, piping hot, any juices run clear and no meat is pink.
- If practical it is a good idea to cook meat (especially chicken) indoors and finish it off on the barbecue for added flavour. Use separate utensils for cooked meat.
- Do not assume that if meat is charred on the outside it is cooked properly on the inside. (Remember, when you reheat food on the barbecue, always make sure it's piping hot all the way through).
- Keep cooked food and salads etc completely separate from raw meat, and use separate utensils.
- Keep all utensils on a clean tray or table. Have separate utensils for raw and cooked foods.
- Have a bowl of warm, soapy water for hand washing. Use gel antiseptic wipes for hand washing.
- Make sure the cook wears an apron and uses clean towels.
- Do not reduce cooking times, even if people are waiting to eat.
- Food hygiene legislation may apply if food is provided to members of the public at a school event, regardless of whether money has been exchanged (e.g. Christmas/Summer fair, firework displays, Summer fetes).
- Barbecues involve handling high risk products e.g. beef burgers and sausages, therefore good food hygiene is very important.
- Seek further advice from local Environmental Health Officer (Contact details are on HCC 'connect')

## **TOP TEN TIPS FOR KEEPING FOOD SAFE**

1. **Always buy food from a clean and reputable seller.**
2. **As soon as you arrive at school place all fresh or frozen foods straight into the fridge or freezer.**
3. **Check that the temperature of your fridge is below 5°C by using a fridge thermometer.**
4. **All foods should be covered or stored in sealed containers.**
5. **Never exceed 'use by' dates.**
6. **Always wash your hands before handling food and wear suitable apron / covering.**
7. **Always store raw foods and cooked/ready to eat foods separately.**
8. **Use different chopping boards/work surfaces/utensils for raw and ready to eat food.**
9. **Clean and where necessary disinfect worktops, knives and other utensils thoroughly before and after use. ( where possible use separate equipment & utensils for raw and ready to eat foods)**
10. **Use disposable cloths or make sure cleaning cloths are regularly cleaned and disinfected.**



*(This page can be copied and displayed in appropriate food areas)*



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For additional information visit  
[www.foodinschools.datacenta.uk.net/](http://www.foodinschools.datacenta.uk.net/)

or visit the FSA website  
[www.eatwell.gov.uk/keepingfoodsafef/](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/keepingfoodsafef/)

or visit the Food in Schools website  
[www.foodinschools.org.uk](http://www.foodinschools.org.uk)

or visit Foodlink  
[www.foodlink.org.uk](http://www.foodlink.org.uk)

or visit the Food Standards Agency website  
[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

For further information about the work of the Healthy Schools programme please contact:

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If you require further guidance regarding food hygiene issues please contact your  
Local Authority Environmental Health Department  
(telephone numbers for the District Councils are available via [www.thegrid.org.uk](http://www.thegrid.org.uk))