**Government packed lunch advice**

The UK government produced packed lunch guidance to support the implementation of new school food standards for school lunches and ensure that all children benefit from eating quality food during the school day.

The guidelines are:

* One portion of fruit and one portion of vegetable or salad every day to be included in packed lunches
* Meat, fish or another source of non-dairy protein should be included every day. Non dairy sources of protein include lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus, peanut butter and falafel
* An oily fish, such as salmon, should be included at least once every three weeks
* A starchy food, such as bread or pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, potatoes or other cereals, should be included every day
* A dairy food, such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais or custard should be included every day
* Free, fresh drinking water should be available at all times
* Include only water, still or sparkling, fruit juice, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, yoghurt or milk drinks and smoothies
* Snacks such as crisps should not be included. Instead, include nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruit (with no added salt, sugar or fat). Savoury crackers or breadsticks served with fruit, vegetables or dairy food are also a good choice
* Confectionery such as chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits and sweets should not be included. Cakes and biscuits are allowed but these should be part of a balanced meal
* Meat products such as sausage rolls, individual pies corned meat and sausages / chipolatas should be included only

In addition to the above Government guidelines, MSM advises that an ice pack be included in packed lunches, particularly on warmer days.  Fresh food prepared and stored at room temperature for a period of between 2 and 4 hours can have greatly increased levels of bacteria in them, which may be harmful to those consuming the food.

MSM also recognises that some students may require special diets that do not allow for the standards to be met exactly.  In these cases, parents and carers are urged to be responsible in ensuring that packed lunches are as healthy as possible.  For the reasons of potential allergic reactions, students are advised not to swap packed lunch items with other students.