

Changes to School Food Standards – An Update for Schools and Families

Dear colleagues, parents and carers,

The government has launched a consultation on proposed changes to School Food Standards, intended to raise the nutritional quality of school meals and strengthen their contribution to children's health and wellbeing. As these proposals may affect both schools and families in the coming years, we want to share an overview and outline our perspective.

Why the Consultation Matters

The consultation sets out a package of measures that would introduce new responsibilities for schools, including clearer accountability for food provision, increased transparency around menus and policies, and a stronger link between school meals and approaches to packed lunches.

Although implementation is not expected until 2027, decisions taken now will shape how school food is planned, delivered and funded in the future. We encourage all interested parties to review the proposals carefully and contribute their views, ensuring that the final standards are practical and workable in real school settings.

Schools are also welcome to share feedback with us directly if there are priorities or concerns they would like us to reflect through wider industry discussions.

Our Current Approach to School Meals

Our focus has long been on delivering meals that are nutritionally balanced, enjoyable for pupils and compatible with the realities of the school day. Rather than reacting to trends, we have been steadily evolving our menus to promote healthier choices while protecting meal uptake.

This includes:

- Expanding everyday fruit and vegetable options
- Increasing the variety of plant-based and plant-rich meals
- Gradually reformulating recipes to lower salt, sugar and saturated fat
- Favouring oven-baked and freshly prepared items over heavily processed foods
- Improving balance through fibre-rich ingredients and varied accompaniments

We have also invested time in presenting menus more clearly, using plain language that explains what meals contain and how they are prepared. This helps pupils, parents and schools better understand nutritional value, allergens and dietary suitability, while also helping children become more comfortable with a broader range of ingredients.

Our catering teams continue to receive training so they are well equipped to respond to any future changes introduced through updated standards.

Cost, Choice and Meal Uptake

Any revision to national food standards must strike a careful balance. Improving nutritional outcomes is vital, but this must not come at the expense of affordability or pupil engagement.

There is concern that some of the proposed measures — such as stricter product specifications, monitoring requirements or operational changes — could **increase the cost of delivering school meals**. Without additional government funding, these pressures may result in **increased strain on school budgets and/or increased prices for families**, which could in turn reduce take-up.

If pupils move away from school meals as a result, many may rely more heavily on packed lunches, which can be less consistent in nutritional quality and harder for schools to influence positively.

For these reasons, we believe the success of any new standards will depend not only on ambition, but also on realistic funding, sensible timescales and flexibility in delivery.

Looking Ahead

We will continue to engage with schools and sector partners to support a school food system that is nutritious, popular and financially sustainable. Our priority remains helping schools provide meals that children want to eat, families trust, and schools can afford.

If you would like to talk through the consultation or discuss what the proposals might mean locally, please feel free to contact us.

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-food-policy-team/school-food-standards-updating-the-leg-framework/consultation/intro/>

Lee Ramsay

Head of Catering & Cleaning



E: NYESCatering@northyorks.gov.uk




T: 01609 535324

W: www.nyes.info

E: nyes@northyorks.gov.uk

T: 01609 533222

North Yorkshire Council,
County Hall, Northallerton,
North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD

 SayYesToNyes
 say-yes-to-nyes
 @sayyestonyes