

School Food Strategy Statement

We understand that what students eat and drink at school is important. We aim to teach students about food and nutrition through the curriculum and reflect these principles in the school's food menu and cooking provisions.

We acknowledge the important connection between a healthy diet and a student's ability to learn effectively and achieve high standards in school. We also acknowledge that we can play a key role in supporting the wider community to adopt a positive attitude to a healthy lifestyle.

It is the statutory responsibility of the governing body and trustees to ensure the [School Food Standards](#) are being met and play a key role in creating a positive food culture in our schools. A good school food offer also forms an important part of the board's wider statutory responsibilities to ensure the general health and wellbeing of students.

MARK Education Trust and Chartwells

MARK Education Trust use the ESCC Services to Schools Service catering contract provided by Chartwells.

<https://www.services2schools.co.uk/Services/5894>

<https://www.chartwells.co.uk/>

Chartwells are therefore responsible for the day-to-day provision of school meals at our schools, providing comprehensive support and advice, ensuring our schools meet their legal requirements and offer a nutritious and balanced approach to healthy eating.

Chartwells are also responsible for ensuring the nutritional standards are being met, kitchen safety is being followed, and hygiene processes and requirements are fulfilled. Routine Environmental Health visits are facilitated by the Chartwells kitchen team. Read more about the Chartwells Approach to Nutrition [The Chartwells Approach to Nutrition | Chartwells](#)

How we work together

Our trust works closely with Chartwells to ensure the catering provision and processes within our schools meet the needs of our school community and adapts as needed. We meet with the Chartwells Management Teams twice termly to address any issues and discuss initiatives and strategic development. Chartwells work with the school to respond promptly to any complaints, queries and requests for advice from both school and parents.

Menus

Chartwells provide varied menus that are responsive to the seasons, with an autumn/winter menu and a spring/summer menu.

Alongside the hot main meal options, which include classic choices, street food options and spicier items and provides the best value for money, there is a variety of cold food options, such as sandwiches /baguettes/wraps.

In addition to this, all of our secondary sites benefit from a large salad bar. In colder months, items such as soup is available and in warmer months, items such as ice lollies are available.

Pop up days and theme days are regularly offered, such as Festive Feast, Lunar New Year and Pancake Day, when dedicated menus are created for the day/week, allowing students to the opportunity to explore food from other cultures, while also offering familiar dishes.

A range of filling and nutritious vegan and vegetarian options are also available to reflect the move towards more people choosing to reduce or eliminate animal products from their diet as well as gluten free items.

Access to free water is always available in the canteen areas and at drinking fountains around the school.

Allergens

Read more about Chartwells No Nonsense Approach to Allergies [The Chartwells Approach to Allergies | Chartwells](#)

For young people affected by an allergy, intolerance or other medical dietary requirement, it is vitally important that they develop the skills they need to make safe food choices in all environments, whether at home, in school or other out-of-home settings. Chartwells believe it is important that young people recognise their responsibility to manage their dietary requirements as soon as they are able to and for many students, the progression into secondary education provides a welcome opportunity for this development. The catering staff are happy to support any students enquiring about allergens and have information available about the 14 legal allergens in every dish on their menus.

Students are made aware of the allergy process during transition and via tutor sessions and assemblies.

Chartwells do not prepare managed medical diet menus for secondary age students, instead, their focus is on providing a broad mix of balanced meal options that will enable all students to choose a nutritious school lunch, regardless of their dietary requirements or preferences.

Chartwells meet the requirements of Natasha's Law and they never use any product containing nuts as an ingredient within our school offering but will, on occasion, use products with a 'may contain nuts' declaration – providing there are no nuts present in the ingredients list.

The catering system does not automatically update allergy information that the school holds to their system. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure their child's welfare details are up to date with the school and the students' responsibility to ensure they are checking the ingredients of any items they wish to purchase. Allergy sheets are available for students to view to check the ingredients in the food available.

Student and Staff voice

Our trust works with Chartwells to regularly speak to our students and staff to obtain their feedback on the items available both in terms of variety and quality, the wider dining experience and to consider and adapt to their changing preferences, including taking inspiration from the high street and other food trends. Chartwells identify and seize opportunities to improve their appeal to students, reduce their carbon footprint, and enhance their nutritional profiles.

Signage and promotion

Chartwells menus and price lists are available to view in the canteen and on the schools' websites and are shared with parents, carers and students via the Newsletter, Student Bulletin and Edulink Noticeboard. Our schools also promote any theme days within the canteen and via our social platforms and there are digital stands in each canteen that has a rolling display including the menu for the day.

Waste reduction and sustainability

Chartwells ensure that they are providing nutritionally balanced recipes that have been sustainably sourced, prepared and served and have pledged to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Our trust works closely with Chartwells to continuously review how we can further reduce waste as part of the dining experience, including reducing the number of single use items, using eco-friendly cutlery and providing recycling points around the dining areas. Chartwells also link in with our Trust Climate Working Party as part of the DfE Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy for Education.

Healthy eating education

The “Beyond the Chartwells Kitchen” approach is a dedicated health education initiative that equips students with the skills and resources they need to thrive based on five key themes: nutrition and health, cooking and food, mental wellbeing, sports and exercise, and sustainability.

They support our students to take the next steps in learning about food and supporting themselves with a healthy diet in the future, via resources and spotlight sessions, supporting our PSHE and wellbeing curriculum.

They use stickers to identify items that are ‘healthy choices’ so students and staff can make educated choices.

Our trust ensures that our staff delivering health and wellbeing education have good knowledge of the role good food plays as part of school life and how to support students to make healthy and nutritionally balanced food choices that are also environmentally responsible, now and in the future. This includes understanding the importance of critically evaluating marketing messages and nutritional claims, budgeting and helping develop the ability to make informed decisions in a complex food landscape.

Education about food and nutrition is delivered through a variety of school activity, including Personal Development, Food Technology, Science and PE lessons.

Beacon Academy and Uplands Academy have both been awarded Healthy School Status, with the approach focusing on improving both educational and health outcomes by evaluating and embedding good practice across four core themes: PSHE education, healthy eating, physical activity and social, emotional and mental health.

Costs and payment process

Chartwells main meal options provides our students with the best value for money.

Our trust operates a cashless system for catering using a PIN number payment system for students and staff. Student and staff account balances can be topped electronically up via ParentPay and balances can be checked via ParentPay or by using one of the conveniently located balance checker machines. We work with Chartwells to agree the daily spending limit based on their menu prices; however, we allow our parents to request a reduced limit if they wish to.

Free School Meals (FSM) eligible students are treated with discretion and sensitivity by Chartwells, and our trust ensures that they have access to a nutritious, balanced lunch without cost being a barrier. Our schools communicate with FSM parents intermittently after enrolment to ensure those that may have become eligible for FSM at a later date are aware of their entitlement and to encourage those that are not currently accessing FSM to do so.

Supply and demand

Alongside the regular meetings with Chartwells and the student and staff voice opportunities, we are provided with sales data from all of our sites that allows us to identify any key trends and review ways in which we can

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increase school meal uptake. We work with Chartwells to identify where this data might suggest we need to increase the provision of certain items in a particular area, for a particular year group or in general due to popularity.

Dining environment and experience

Our trust works with the kitchen team to review the overall dining experience of the students and considers way in which this can be adapted as needed, such as queue systems, signage, clear pricing and menus, allergy awareness, waste disposal points as well as the seating spaces. Wherever possible we work with East Sussex to look at ways we can provide a choice of outlets to ensure the queue time is reduced and food and drink is easily accessible, such as the addition of outdoor shacks and additional dining outlets elsewhere in the school.

Packed lunches

The school food standards do not apply to food provided by parents or students as packed lunches. However, we encourage parents and students to avoid providing fizzy or high sugar drinks and snacks and food items high in salt and / or sugar, such as crisps, sweets and chocolate.

As recommended by Allergy UK, our trust feels that to 'ban' certain items (such as nuts) from the school premises creates a false sense of security and does not safely prepare children for environments where nuts may be present. It is not possible to guarantee and enforce a nut free zone, as staff cannot monitor all packed lunches and snacks brought in from home. Instead, we prioritise having procedures in place to minimise risk of reaction via cross contamination. All staff and students are encouraged to be considerate of those around them and where possible avoid bringing in items containing nuts.

Students who have a packed lunch, eat their food in the same areas as students accessing the canteen. They are encouraged to dispose of their waste appropriately using the recycling stations where relevant or taking their waste home with them.

Packed lunches are available for FSM students when they are attending a trip that would mean they cannot access the catering provision on that day.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

Our trust engages with the East Sussex County Council Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme and signposts our families to the eligibility criteria and the activities available.

HUGGG Voucher Scheme

ESCC provide our academes with a list of students eligible to receive HUGG vouchers over the school holiday periods. The vouchers are then distributed by our finance teams to parents ahead of the school holiday to use in supermarkets.