





To inspire, enrich and nurture so each individual reaches their full potential

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The HCFS is a company limited by Guarantee Registration number 07648654

School Meals Policy

January 2026

To be reviewed annually in the Autumn Term

Next Review: September 2026

History of Document:

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Issue 5	January 2026	Victoria Hobson	Trust Board	Updated with details for new catering provider (Pabulum) and provision in school

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Hatfield Community Free School understands that establishing a balanced diet in childhood helps to form healthy eating habits for life. Research shows that providing children with a substantial, balanced lunch that includes vegetables, protein and carbohydrates each day significantly improves their learning, as well as benefiting their health and promoting wellbeing.

Our school meals are provided by Pabulum: a professional catering company specialising exclusively in the education sector. Pabulum has over 25 years of experience providing healthy, fresh, and nutritionally balanced meals to children and students across primary, secondary and further education settings. They prepare food on-site using natural, seasonal and locally sourced ingredients, and their menus consistently exceed the Government's School Food Standards. Pabulum focuses on inspiring young people to enjoy mealtimes, make informed food choices, and develop positive lifelong relationships with healthy eating.

Whole School Food Approach

The school's approach is to influence and improve the health of the whole school community by providing children and their families with ways to establish and maintain lifelong healthy eating habits that benefit both themselves and the environment. This is accomplished by providing:

- Good food education through the curriculum;
- High quality school meals and snacks;
- The social experience of eating together and ensuring consistent messages about food and healthy lifestyles throughout the school day.

The school aims to:

- Improve the health of the school community by influencing eating habits through knowledge and awareness of healthy diets and food hygiene;
- Provide children, parents and staff with the information they need to make healthy choices;
- Ensure consistent messages about food and health throughout the school day to promote a healthy diet;
- Ensure that food and drink available throughout the school day is healthy and meets government standards;
- Make school meals and snacks enjoyable, safe and sociable;
- Build the confidence of parents in the meals provided by the school;
- Support the provision of healthy snacks;
- Ensure that the meals and snacks provided by the school reflect the ethical preferences and medical needs of children and staff, catering for religious groups, vegetarians and food-related allergies.

National Guidance

The policy has been developed with reference to key national guidance, including the Food in Schools Toolkit (Department of Health) and Food Policy in Schools – A Strategic Policy Framework for Governing Bodies (National Governors' Council, 2005).

The Dining Experience

The school is committed to providing a pleasant and welcoming eating environment that encourages positive social and cultural interaction between children and adults. The following principles and behaviours are used to ensure a good experience for all:

- Every child in EYFS and KS1 is offered a free cooked meal every day that is prepared from fresh, healthy ingredients (in line with government policy regarding [Universal Infant Free School Meals](#));
- Every child in KS2 has the option to purchase (free for children in receipt of Free School Meals) a cooked meal prepared from fresh, healthy ingredients each day or can bring a packed lunch from home (reinforced by our [Packed Lunch Policy](#));
- Children can choose daily between a school meal or packed lunch;
- Children from across the year group eat and talk together during meal times;
- Children are encouraged to learn good table manners;
- All children are encouraged to eat and enjoy their food;
- Support is provided for children (particularly young children) who find the physical process of school dinners difficult;
- Children are expected to wash their hands before eating;

Please click on the link below for information about the benefits of a hot school meal:

<https://frac.org/programs/national-school-lunch-program/benefits-school-lunch>

Ordering School Meals

School meals need to be pre-ordered by parents via a Parent Pay account. By accessing Parent Pay online, meals can be pre-ordered, recipes, allergens and ingredients can be viewed, and payments can be made.

Payments

Direct Debits can be set up via a ParentPay account; payments can be set up to be debited from your bank account on a monthly or weekly basis.

If payment via Direct Debit is not preferred, the ParentPay accounts must be kept in credit. Accounts can be topped up by:

- Online Card Payment – A card payment can be made online through your ParentPay account.
- Auto Top Up Payment - Auto top-up is an automated service that uses One-click payments to add credit to a child's meal balance when it falls below a certain value. Both the amount topped up, and the minimum amount are configurable. This is a simple and efficient way to always ensure that your child has the balance required to purchase a nutritious school meal. Balances are checked once per day (currently between 18:00 – 19:00 GMT, though times may vary). If your child's meal balance has fallen below the minimum value you set at this time, the service will use the One-click payments service to add the pre-defined amount you have set.

Provision of Other Food and Drink during the School Day

Children are provided with healthy snacks in school, and fresh water is always available. Whenever children work with food in the classrooms they are asked to follow basic hygiene routines including:

- Using clean equipment;
- Always washing hands before and after working with the food;

- Using their own individual utensil when tasting food.

Monitoring

The senior leaders and other staff monitor this policy on a day-to-day basis and take an active role in communicating and working with the catering team in the kitchen and the catering provider.