

What can my child eat at school?

A school in Bradford has banned "unhealthy" foods such as sausage rolls in pupils' lunchboxes - a move which has divided opinion among parents.

So what can your child eat at school, whether in a packed lunch or for a school dinner?

Packed lunches

It's pretty straightforward - there are no official rules as it's down to individual schools in England, the Department for Education says, to decide what their policy is on food brought in from home.

So while some schools might take a strict line on inspecting lunchboxes and banning certain foods, others may take a more hands-off approach.

But when it comes to school meals, the rules are a lot stricter.

Carrot sticks not crisps

For parents making up packed lunches, the Children's Food Trust recommends they include a piece of food from each of the following categories:

- starchy foods like bread, pasta or potatoes
- fruit and veg, so sticks of cucumber, celery or carrot, alongside a piece of fruit
- meat, fish, eggs and beans - strips of chicken or bean dips, it suggests
- dairy food such as cheese in a sandwich or a yoghurt or fromage frais
- a drink - milk or water are the best choices for children's teeth, the trust says, and if you want to pack fruit juice, stick to a 150ml portion

But foods and drinks high in saturated fat, sugar and/or salt, like crisps and chocolate biscuits, should be avoided, the trust says.

Where have all the chips gone?

While there are guidelines for packed lunches, there are rules for school dinners.

New regulations say that **school dinners in England have to be healthy** too, so that children have nutritious, balanced diets.

School caterers must provide:

- high-quality meat, poultry or oily fish
- fruit
- vegetables
- bread, other cereals and potatoes

They aren't allowed to serve up more than two portions of deep-fried (yes, that's aimed at chips!), battered or breaded food a week.

What are parents saying?

Head teacher Heather Lacey, who introduced the unhealthy food ban at Shirley Manor Primary Academy, says most parents supported the move.

But Steve Fryer, whose son's sausage roll was confiscated, insists parents were "up in arms" over the new policy - and some people debating the story online tended to agree.

Milly Jo Winship deemed the policy "ridiculous", writing on **Facebook**: "So many children are picky eaters".

Isabel Howell said a ban "wouldn't stop" her from packing a sausage roll in her daughter's lunchbox.

"Sandwiches every day are boring, what's wrong with swapping in a sausage roll or pork pie," she wrote.

"My daughter sometimes asks for it as a change."

But others sympathised with the school, saying that children need to learn to make healthy choices.

Alison Quemby said: "The occasional sausage roll with some carrot sticks and an apple; fine. But what if it's a huge Greggs sausage roll and a packet of crisps every day?"

"If the parents aren't going to teach their children to make healthy choices regularly, then school has to," she added.

Did you know?

Schools in England must provide drinking water - free of charge - at all times on school premises.

And they can't sell drinks with added sugar, crisps, chocolate or sweets in vending machines.

Schools are obliged to give packed lunch pupils, free of charge, somewhere to eat their food and "these facilities should include accommodation, furniture and supervision", the DfE says.

However, everyone is off the leash when...

The usual regulations can be tossed aside:

- for parties or celebrations for special occasions,
- at fund-raising events
- and as rewards for achievement, good behaviour or effort

So that's why no-one minds when your child's "star of the week" and the teacher gives him or her a chocolate bar - just in case you were wondering.

What do you pack in your children's lunch boxes?

- Evgenia Teplechuk from Edinburgh said her son's lunch box contained a sandwich made with brown or rye bread, with cheddar cheese, tomato/cucumber/lettuce and either chicken, ham or egg, water or a fruit smoothie, a piece of fruit or carrot sticks and sometimes a fruit stick for a treat. She said a lack of facilities to reheat food at school limited what she could make for her child.
- "Today my child took an apple, small bag of cookies, small amount of crisps a mini cheese and a cheese sandwich with water," said Mark Hood from Gateshead. He said he found it "concerning" when children who will only eat certain foods are forced to eat what's given to them or go hungry.
- Daniela Thake, in Cambridge, packed her seven-year-old's lunch box with a brown bread and smoked salmon sandwich, a pear, natural yogurt pot ,a small pack of crisps and water bottle.

What did you put in your children's packed lunch today? Share what's in their lunch boxes by emailing haveyoursay@bbc.co.uk.

