BURBAGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Whole-School Food Policy

Updated November 2026

Building confidence; inspiring achievement

Original policy	April 2022	**Current review**	November 2026
Review reason	Full statutory and guidance review	**Review cycle**	Annual check; full review at least every 3 years
Policy lead	Headteacher	**Lead governor**	Sarah Melchionno
Approved by	Full Governing Board	**Approval date**	18.11.26
Next review	Autumn 2027 or earlier following statutory change		

1. Purpose and scope

Burbage Primary School is committed to safe, nutritious, inclusive and enjoyable food provision that supports pupils' health, wellbeing, readiness to learn and long-term relationship with food. This policy applies to food and drink provided or promoted by the school during the school day, including breakfast and after-school provision, breaks, lunches, curriculum activities, trips, clubs, rewards, celebrations, fundraising and events.

The policy applies to pupils, staff, visitors, volunteers, contractors and catering providers. It complements, but does not replace, the school's statutory Allergy Safety Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, safeguarding procedures, health and safety arrangements and catering provider food-safety systems.

Catering services for both Breakfast Club and school lunches are provided by Aspens under a central catering contract commissioned and managed by the Embark Federation. As an academy within the Federation, Burbage Primary School is responsible for monitoring day-to-day delivery at school level, safeguarding pupils, communicating individual dietary and allergy requirements, and escalating service or contractual concerns through the Federation's agreed arrangements. Embark Federation, as the academy trust and contracting authority, is responsible for procurement, central contract management and trust-level value for money.

2. Statutory framework

The Embark Federation, the governing board and the headteacher will discharge their respective responsibilities, in line with the Trust's scheme of delegation, to secure compliance with all current legal requirements, including:

- Education Act 1996 provisions relating to school meals and free school meals;
- Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 and current DfE School Food Standards guidance;
- section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and statutory guidance on supporting pupils with medical conditions;
- section 34 of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, statutory Allergy Safety in Schools guidance and the requirement for a separate published allergy safety policy;
- Food Safety Act 1990, Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013, Food Information Regulations 2014 and allergen-information requirements, including prepacked for direct sale food;
- Equality Act 2010, including reasonable adjustments and avoidance of discrimination;
- EYFS statutory framework requirements for food, drink, allergies and safer eating where applicable;
- current free school meal and Universal Infant Free School Meal entitlements and grant conditions.

The school will distinguish clearly between current legal requirements and proposed future standards. Preparatory work for the September 2027 standards will not weaken compliance with the regulations currently in force.

3. Aims and principles

- provide safe, appealing and nutritionally balanced food and ready access to drinking water;
- meet the School Food Standards across the whole school day wherever the regulations apply;
- create positive, unhurried and inclusive social eating experiences;
- protect pupils with allergies, coeliac disease, food intolerance, medical conditions, swallowing difficulties or other dietary needs;
- respect religious, ethical and cultural diets and make reasonable adjustments for disability and SEND;
- ensure eligible pupils can access free meals discreetly and without stigma;
- develop food knowledge, practical cooking skills, sustainability awareness and healthy habits through the curriculum;
- listen to pupils and families and use feedback, uptake, waste and compliance information to improve provision;
- avoid shame, moral judgement, weight stigma or the use of food deprivation as a behaviour sanction.

4. Leadership, governance and responsibilities

The Embark Federation

- acts as the academy trust and contracting authority for the central catering service;
- is responsible for procurement, supplier appointment, the service specification, central contract management and trust-level value for money;
- seeks assurance that the contracted service complies with applicable school food, food-safety, equality and allergen requirements;
- monitors supplier performance across the Federation and leads formal contractual escalation or remedial action when required;
- sets out delegated responsibilities and reporting arrangements for the school and governing board through the Trust's scheme of delegation and associated procedures.

The governing board

- maintains strategic oversight of the quality, compliance, inclusiveness and effectiveness of food provision at Burbage Primary School, within the responsibilities delegated to it by the Embark Federation;
- receives assurance that menus and food provided at the school meet legal standards, pupils' needs and the requirements of the central catering contract;
- monitors pupils' and families' experience, including food quality, inclusion, accessibility, uptake and complaints, and challenges school leaders where improvement is needed;
- escalates unresolved, repeated or contractual concerns to the Embark Federation and receives assurance about the action taken;
- reviews local evidence relevant to value for money and provides challenge and feedback to the Embark Federation, while recognising that procurement and trust-level value-for-money accountability sit with the Trust as contracting authority;
- ensures that a named senior leader has responsibility for allergy safety and that the separate Allergy Safety Policy is published and reviewed at least annually;
- will prepare to appoint a lead governor for school food from September 2027, subject to final legislation and guidance;
- will prepare for publication of this food policy and current menus on the school website from September 2027, while making information available to families now.

Headteacher

- maintain regular operational communication with Aspens, monitor delivery at school level and escalate contractual, staffing, quality or persistent service concerns through the Embark Federation's contract-management arrangements;
- ensure menus, substitutions, breakfast, snacks, clubs, trips and events are covered by appropriate standards and safety controls;
- coordinate allergy safety, medical needs, staff training, incident review and emergency arrangements;
- monitor uptake, food quality, pupil experience, waste, equality of access and complaints;
- report material concerns, non-compliance and improvement actions to governors.

Catering provider and food handlers

- operate a documented food-safety management system based on HACCP principles;
- maintain food-hygiene registration, training, temperature, cleaning, traceability and allergen controls;
- provide accurate menus, ingredient and allergen information and notify the school before substitutions;
- prevent cross-contamination and follow individual dietary instructions;

- cooperate with school monitoring, audits, feedback and incident investigations.

At Burbage Primary School, Aspens is the catering provider for Breakfast Club and school lunches under the central contract held by the Embark Federation. Aspens must meet the contractual, food-safety, nutritional, allergen and special-diet requirements set by the Federation and applicable law. The school will work directly with Aspens on day-to-day operational matters and will escalate unresolved, recurring or contractual concerns to the Embark Federation.

All staff

Staff follow this policy, model balanced and respectful attitudes to food, know how to access dietary and allergy information, supervise safely, do not improvise food substitutions, and report concerns, incidents and near misses promptly.

5. School meals and menu standards

Meals and other regulated food and drink must comply with the current School Food Standards. Menus will offer variety and appropriate portions, provide fruit and vegetables, promote higher-fibre starchy foods, include suitable protein choices, restrict foods high in fat, salt and sugar, and permit only drinks allowed by the standards. Deep-fried, fried and pastry-based items and meat products will be limited in line with the applicable standards.

Current menus and allergen information will be communicated clearly. Planned menus may be changed because of supply, safety or operational circumstances, but substitutions must continue to meet pupils' special dietary needs and allergen controls. The school and caterer will review proposed September 2027 requirements, including revised breakfast standards, increased fibre, fruit and vegetables and reduced sugar and high-fat, salt and sugar foods.

Pupils will have adequate time to eat. Seating, queuing and supervision will support calm, dignified and sociable meals. Staff will encourage pupils to explore unfamiliar foods without pressure, coercion or withholding other food.

6. Free school meals and equality of access

Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils are offered a Universal Infant Free School Meal. Benefits-based free school meals are provided in line with current national eligibility, including the expanded entitlement introduced from September 2026. The school will encourage eligible families to register where this also attracts additional school funding or support.

Eligibility is handled sensitively and confidentially. Payment and service arrangements must not visibly identify pupils receiving free meals. Pupils with SEND, sensory needs, medical conditions or accessibility needs will receive reasonable adjustments so that they can participate safely and with dignity.

7. Allergy safety and special diets

The school maintains and publishes a separate Allergy Safety Policy. This food policy summarises the food-service controls but does not replace the full statutory arrangements.

- A named senior leader coordinates allergy safety and works with the catering provider, families, staff and healthcare professionals.
- All staff present when pupils are on site, including catering, club, temporary, supply and relevant volunteer staff, receive allergy-awareness and emergency-response training at least annually; new staff receive induction before taking responsibility.
- Pupils requiring an Individual Healthcare Plan have an up-to-date plan that identifies allergens, symptoms, medication, emergency action, reasonable adjustments and responsibilities.
- Emergency medication, including prescribed adrenaline auto-injectors, is accessible and not locked away. Any spare adrenaline auto-injectors are held and used under the applicable statutory arrangements and parental consent.

- Menus and recipes identify the 14 regulated allergens. Ingredient labels are checked at every delivery and before use; substitutions are not made without checking and communicating allergen implications.
- Cross-contamination risks are controlled through storage, preparation, utensils, cleaning, service and supervision. Blanket "allergen-free school" claims are avoided because absence of risk cannot be guaranteed.
- Staff know the signs of an allergic reaction and anaphylaxis, administer emergency medication without delay in accordance with training and the pupil's plan, call 999, inform parents and record the incident.
- Serious incidents and near misses are reviewed, lessons are recorded and policies, risk assessments and training are updated.

Medical, faith, cultural, vegetarian and vegan diets are considered through an agreed request process. Medical diets may require evidence from an appropriate healthcare professional where necessary to create a safe plan. The school and caterer will not offer a meal unless they can confirm it is safe and suitable for the individual pupil.

8. Breakfast club, after-school provision and snacks

Food provided through breakfast club, after-school clubs or other school-run provision follows this policy, current standards and the same allergen and food-safety controls as lunchtime provision. Third-party providers must demonstrate equivalent arrangements through their agreement with the school.

Breakfast Club catering is provided by Aspens via the Embark Federation, as is the school lunch service. School staff remain responsible for safe supervision and for communicating relevant dietary, medical and allergy information through the agreed procedures.

At morning break, the school normally permits fruit and vegetables and provides or promotes water and milk. Confectionery, crisps, fizzy drinks and high-caffeine or energy drinks are not permitted for routine pupil consumption. Any exception for a medical need is agreed through the pupil's healthcare arrangements.

Breakfast provision will be reviewed against proposed September 2027 standards. Planning will include compliant cereals and breads, fruit or vegetables, allowed drinks, allergen safety, staffing and accessibility.

9. Packed lunches

Families providing packed lunches will receive practical, non-judgemental guidance promoting a balanced meal, for example a starchy food, protein source, fruit or vegetables, dairy or a suitable alternative and water. Food brought from home is not generally subject to the School Food Standards, but remains subject to school safety rules.

The school may restrict particular items where this is a proportionate control identified through an individual risk assessment or the Allergy Safety Policy. Packed lunches are not routinely inspected or used to shame pupils. Where staff have sustained concerns about nutrition, quantity, safety or welfare, the school will communicate privately with the family and offer support.

10. Water, milk and drinks

Free, fresh drinking water is readily available throughout the school day. Pupils may bring clearly named water bottles and refill them. Access may be managed temporarily for safety during practical activities, but children will not be denied reasonable access to water.

Milk is offered where applicable through national arrangements. Drinks provided by the school comply with the School Food Standards. Energy drinks and high-caffeine drinks are prohibited for pupils.

11. Curriculum, cooking and food education

Food education is taught through design and technology, science, PSHE, geography and other relevant subjects. Pupils learn about a varied and balanced diet, food origins and production, seasonality, sustainability, budgeting, marketing, hygiene, safe preparation and the cultural and social importance of food.

Practical cooking is appropriately risk assessed and supervised. Staff check allergy and dietary information before activities, ingredients and equipment are suitable, hand hygiene and cross-contamination controls are taught, and families receive advance information where necessary. Food grown on site is used only when safe harvesting, washing, storage and preparation can be assured.

12. Celebrations, rewards, fundraising, trips and visitors

Celebrations and community events may include food, but frequency, portion size, safety and inclusion are considered. Food is not the routine reward for achievement or behaviour and is never withheld as a punishment. Families should not distribute birthday food directly to pupils; any shared food must be agreed in advance so that allergens, dietary needs, labelling and supervision can be managed safely.

Food supplied on visits, residentials and events follows the same allergy, medical, cultural and food-safety arrangements. Trip leaders carry required emergency medication and relevant healthcare information. Visitors and contractors offering food must obtain prior approval and provide ingredient and allergen information.

13. Food safety, hygiene and sustainability

Only authorised and appropriately trained people prepare or serve food. Staff and contractors follow handwashing, protective clothing, cleaning, temperature control, chilling, reheating, storage, date marking, pest control, waste disposal and contamination-prevention procedures. Relevant records are retained and concerns are escalated immediately.

The school aims to reduce avoidable food waste through appropriate portions, pupil feedback and local monitoring. The Embark Federation's procurement and contract-management arrangements will consider quality, value for money, seasonal produce, environmental impact and ethical sourcing, without compromising nutrition, safety, equality or affordability. The school will provide local evidence and feedback to support this oversight.

14. Monitoring, complaints and review

School-level monitoring will include menu and standards checks, operational meetings with Aspens, food-hygiene information, allergen controls, training records, pupil and parent feedback, uptake, waste, incidents, near misses and complaints. Pupil feedback will be gathered respectfully, including from pupils with SEND and dietary needs. Evidence about supplier performance will be shared with the Embark Federation to support central contract monitoring and trust-level assurance.

Concerns should normally be raised with the school office or headteacher. The school will address day-to-day operational matters with Aspens and escalate unresolved, repeated or contractual concerns to the Embark Federation. Formal complaints follow the school's Complaints Policy and, where applicable, the Federation's contractual escalation arrangements. Food-safety incidents are referred to Aspens, the Embark Federation, the local authority environmental health service, the Food Standards Agency or another relevant body as required. Safeguarding and medical concerns are managed under the relevant school policy.

This policy receives an annual compliance check and a full review at least every three years. It will be reviewed earlier following legislation, serious incidents, significant near misses, catering contract changes or material changes to school provision. A further review will take place when regulations implementing the September 2027 School Food Standards are confirmed.

15. Linked policies and records

- Allergy Safety Policy and Individual Healthcare Plans
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and Administration of Medicines
- First Aid and Emergency Procedures
- Child Protection and Safeguarding

- Health and Safety and Risk Assessment
- EYFS Policy
- Equality Information and Objectives and Accessibility Plan
- Educational Visits
- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Embark Federation catering contract and scheme of delegation; Aspens menus, allergen matrix and food-safety records

Official references checked

School food standards collection: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-food-standards

School food in England: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england/school-food-in-england

Allergy safety in schools: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allergy-safety-in-schools

School food standards: allergy guide: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-allergy-guide/school-food-standards-allergy-guide

Universal infant free school meals 2026 to 2027: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-infant-free-school-meals-uifsm-2026-to-2027