



[SCHOOL MEALS POLICY]

This Policy is a Category 1 Policy (Full Delegation)

This policy is in force until further notice from:	Autumn 2024
This policy must be reviewed by no later than*: <i>*this refers to the term in which the Policy must be reviewed by the appropriate Committee for recommendation to the Board.</i>	Autumn 2026
Policy Author(s):	Head of Business Services
Date policy reviewed by Committee and Minute reference	LTS Committee: 14.10.2024 (Minute Reference 13)
Date Policy approved by the Trust Board and Minute reference	11.12.2024 (Minute Reference 33)
Location of publication of policy:	Governor Hub/ AST Website/ Internal Records and Intranet

[SCHOOL MEALS POLICY]

The School Meals Policy of the Avanti Schools Trust is to:

- a) provide hot, fresh, nutritious vegetarian¹ meals to pupils/students.
- b) unless there are special medical or other circumstances, not to permit packed lunches or other food and drink to be brought to school.

This Policy is derived from the ethos and principles of the Trust: sharing nourishing, healthy school lunches is an integral part of the educational experience at all Avanti schools. Proven scientific evidence demonstrates that a healthy diet gives children and adults the ability to be more focused and even enhance learning retention. Mealtimes are also an opportunity to enhance social interaction and communication skills, ensuring that lunchtimes provide a positive experience for all. School staff often enjoy taking lunch with students, creating a “family” atmosphere.

Our policy applies to all phases of all schools across the Trust (i.e., Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Sixth Form).

The Culture of Food

Food is an important part of the Avanti school culture. Preparation and provision of vegetarian meals is based on principles of compassion, non-violence, and balanced living. Lunches provide nourishment and satisfaction to the body and minds of students and staff, allowing them to feel re-energised for teaching and learning.

Aligned to the ethos and catering to the needs of pupils and staff of all backgrounds, all food provided is vegetarian only: schools meals are ‘nut-free’². Menus and recipes are designed to provide a healthy balance for each meal. Pupils/Students are not permitted to bring food and drink from outside onto the school premises unless exemptions apply as agreed as part of a special diet (see below). Pupils are otherwise required to eat lunches provided by the school.

Menus are regularly updated and developed based on pupil feedback groups to ensure pupils feel nourished and satisfied with their daily lunch provided by the school. All food provided is in line with DfE recommendations.

Special Diets

Each school can cater for a variety of special diets for pupils who have specific (but not necessarily

¹ Vegetarian here is defined as: lacto-vegetarian which is a plant-based diet, except it includes dairy products like milk, cream, yogurt, and cheese. It excludes meat, fish, eggs, and poultry.

² The catering team cannot guarantee that there will be no traces of nuts.

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exclusive to) medical and religious reasons. Packed lunches will not be permitted unless **the lunch provision on offer does not meet the child's needs. If the child has specific dietary requirements recommended by an NHS doctor for medical reasons, the catering team of the school (Govinda's Ltd.) will work with the family and medical professionals to provide a bespoke menu. Only in the scenario where this is not possible will packed lunches be permitted**, with mutual agreement between the school and the parent/carer/guardian. Where, for these exceptional reasons, packed lunches may be permitted, they should be in accordance with Trust ethos and nut-free guidance. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis between the school, pupil and family, and Govinda's.

We encourage parents to arrange a visit with the school, to sample the school lunches and experience the quality of provision. As referenced above, meals can be designed to meet the needs of children with specific allergies.

Paying for school meals: Convenience for Parents

To reduce the hassle of paying for lunch daily, parents can pay for school meals weekly or termly. They can do this online using Parent Pay/Arbor pay (depending on the school). Parents receive details on how to access their Parent Pay / Arbor pay account when their child starts at their school.

If parents find it difficult to afford lunch payments, the Trust encourages them to apply for Free School Meals via their Local Authority. The process is not complicated, and the details are confidential to the local authority and the school. The arrangement also helps the school because Government funding of the school is increased in line with the number of children in receipt of free school meals. Where parents are eligible to claim Free School Meals for their child, they may receive a refund for any payments for meals previously made. Parents requiring further information on how to apply should contact their school office.

This policy applies to all Avanti schools. Avanti Park and Avanti Gardens will implement this policy for EYFS students only, starting from September 2025, and build incrementally through the school, year on year.