London Borough Of Havering

Policy for the Provision of Special Diets and Management of Allergens

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1. Introduction

HES Catering is committed to satisfying the needs of our customers and stakeholders and shall endeavour to meet their expectations.

In order to meet our commitments it is our policy to provide a school meal for all pupils, including those with medical diets.

With the introduction of the DfE's statutory guidance entitled 'Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions' which was updated in December 2015, it sets out the arrangements that governing bodies are expected to make in order to meet their legal responsibilities under Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014 in respect of the duty to support pupils with medical conditions.

The Food Information Regulations 2014 require all food businesses, including school caterers, to provide information on 14 specified allergens (Appendix 1) for the food and drink they serve, and to handle and manage food allergens sufficiently during preparation. This legislation exists to enable easy identification at the point of service of allergens present in foods and drinks and to minimise risk of cross-contamination of allergens into other foods. For pre-packed foods it includes labelling allergens on the packaging, and for loose foods requires providing allergen information in a manner that is easily accessible to consumers e.g. on menus.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline our procedures for handling the service of special diets and the communication of allergen information to schools and other stakeholders and thereby **reduce the risk** of exposure to allergens by customers within our schools who have food allergies.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all schools and settings catered for by HES Catering.

1.3 Aims, objectives and outcomes

This policy will provide:

- Provide **clear guidance** to all catering staff on their responsibilities for the provision of food to anyone using the catering facilities who may have a food allergy, food intolerance or coeliac disease.
- Ensure that relevant **food allergy training** and food hygiene training are provided to and undertaken by all permanent catering staff.
- Ensure appropriate **information and support** is available for catering staff and customers.
- Ensure that a member of staff, at each of the schools where catering is provided, is **named as the main contact**. This member of staff will be responsible for coordinating allergy management with the catering staff.
- Ensure that catering staff **maintain up-to-date information from food suppliers** on ingredients.
- Encourage a **'whole school awareness of allergies'** ensuring teachers, pupils and all other staff are aware of what allergies are, the importance of preventing exposure of pupils with allergies to relevant allergens, the procedures in place to minimise risk (e.g. food labelling or nut-free environments), the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction.

2. The Policy

2.1 FOOD HYPERSENSITIVITY

Food hypersensitivity includes food allergy, intolerance and coeliac disease[1]. These are described as follows:

Food allergies affect the body's **immune system**. The body reacts to certain allergens in food by producing antibodies or other cells in the immune system which can cause a range of symptoms either immediately or with a few hours of eating the food. These symptoms include:

- **Gut reactions:** Abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea
- **Skin reactions:** Itching and swelling (rash or nettle rash)
- **Respiratory reactions:** Runny nose, sneezing, wheeze, cough

In extreme cases, difficulties in breathing and a severe fall in blood pressure (anaphylactic shock) can prove fatal.

Food intolerance does not involve the immune system in the same way and is not usually as severe as a food allergy. Symptoms usually **take longer to appear** and may include headaches, fatigue and digestive problems. Food intolerance is harder to diagnose than a food allergy.

Coeliac disease is a lifelong autoimmune disease caused by a reaction to gluten. 1 in 100 people have the condition, and once diagnosed, it is treated by following a gluten free diet for life. Symptoms of coeliac include:

- **Gut symptoms:** diarrhoea, bloating, wind, stomach aches, indigestion, constipation
- **General symptoms:** tiredness, unintentional weight loss, an itchy rash, infertility, nerve damage, disorders that affect co-ordination, balance and speech

Anybody can develop a food allergy or intolerance at any time in their life, irrespective of whether they have consumed the food previously. A person with an allergy is at risk **even if they consume a small amount** of the food allergen.

Food allergies and intolerances affect around 8% of children and 2% of adults in the UK. In December 2014, the law on how allergen information is provided by food businesses changed to make it easier for consumers to identify their presence when buying food or eating out.

COMMON FOOD ALLERGENS

14 allergens have been identified in food law as the most potent and prevalent allergens. Although people may report allergies/intolerances to foods other than these 14, the most common in the UK being kiwi, peas, legumes (beans etc.), other seeds and fruits/vegetables. However, these are not subject to the same legislation on information and labelling. If people have oral allergy syndrome it may mean they only need to avoid foods they are allergic to when raw but can have them when cooked.

Special Diets

Special diets are diets for pupils with a medically diagnosed requirement; not just a dislike of certain foods or food groups. It is our policy to provide a menu for those pupils with medically diagnosed food allergies, food intolerances or a medical condition which affects eating requirements. HES Catering understands that some people have particular sensitivities to certain foods that non – sufferers would

[1] Food hypersensitivity | Food Standards Agency

find harmless. When someone has a food allergy, their immune system reacts to a particular food or food groups.

We recognise that severe allergies can cause life threatening reactions and that food intolerances do not involve the immune system and are not generally life threatening, but can make the customer feel poorly.

It is our policy to safely provide special diets by operating a rigorous food safety management system as part of our central HACCP system, which identifies the appropriate controls and working instructions required for the provision of special diets.

2.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

HES CATERING

HES Catering is responsible for ensuring all food it provides in schools has the **relevant allergy information available** to school staff, pupils, other customers and parents.

- To provide planned menus for:
- Gluten intolerance – a gluten free menu is available using specific gluten free products such as flour and pasta.
- Lactose intolerance – a dairy free menu is available and soya milk available to drink if applicable.
- Vegetarian – Each day a vegetarian option will be made available as part of our standard menu.
- Nut allergies – Standard school menus do not contain nuts as an ingredient in the recipe.
- To collate and provide allergen information relating to recipes and planned menus and communicate to catering staff and schools.
- To agree any product substitutions made to kitchens prior to delivery.
- To provide nutritional data if requested.
- To provide appropriate signage to advise customers on where to access allergen information.
- To ensure ingredient specifications for all products included in our menus are checked to ensure they meet the dietary requirements of our customers.
- To monitor the provision of special diets, communication of allergens and compliance with this policy.
- Any meal that has an ingredient labelled with 'may contain' allergen warning will be considered as containing that allergen and will not be permitted for that child to consume
- HES Catering **will not serve a meal** to a pupil who wishes to order an item for which they have been listed by the school as “not suitable”

SCHOOLS

- The school is responsible for ensuring that all allergen information held on their pupils is updated on the Cashless system.
- To ensure Catering staff (kitchen and if applicable, the dining centre) are made aware of any relevant information that will assist in the provision of a suitable menu.
- Any food intolerance outside of the 14 EU allergens and seven additional indicators as declared by HES Catering (outlined in Appendix 1 and above) will need to be added by the school as a warning on the cashless system(e.g ParentPay) and allocated to the individual child.

- Food Intolerances added by schools to an childs record should be clear and definitive so that HES kitchen staff can understand and ensure the child only consumes a meal that is safe for them to eat. For example, a child with dairy intolerance should not also be marked as being able to eat cheese products. The clarity and non-ambiguity of this critical information will prevent any miss-interpretation that may lead to a child receiving a meal that they should be prohibited to have.

- The school is responsible for keeping a record of children with known allergies under their statutory duty to support pupils with medical conditions at school. Further advice and awareness training for school staff is available through the Havering School Nursing Service.

- For new intakes whom can sometimes take up to 48 hours to appear on both the schools MIS systems and the cashless system it is recommended that the child brings in a packed lunch whilst the systems are updated with all the necessary information for that child to safely consume a meal.

- For pupils entitled to Free School Meal who cannot have a packed lunch, the school will need to ensure that the kitchen staff have been made aware of any allergens or intolerances for the child prior to 9.30am on the morning of service to unable the kitchen to safely prepare their meal.

- Pupils that require a special diet or have a specialist care plan in place, the school will need to ensure that the kitchen has been provided with all the information to safely provide a meal to the child.

Parent/Guardian

- To inform school of their child's allergy or intolerance and provide supporting medical evidence relating to their child's condition. This can be provided as a letter from their GP or a consultant paediatrician, together with any information received from their dietician.
- To seek medical or dietetic advice if they consider their child to have a medical condition that affects eating requirements.
- To provide as much information as possible to their child's school to assist in the provision of a suitable menu.
- To discuss the menu with their child and/or dietician to assist in making suitable choices.
- If necessary to meet with the school and catering supervisor to discuss the menu provision

2.3 KAFOODLE – Our Allergen Management System

HES Catering makes allergen information available to our customers via the Kafoodle mobile application. This is accessible via QR code or web-link. Allergy information will be visible on all menus published and on the HES website. A web-link will be provided for schools to include on their own website for children and parents.

Alongside the 14 allergens, seven additional indicators listed below will be provided to highlight whether a meal contains a certain ingredient or whether the dish is suitable for certain diets:

- Pork
- Beef
- Chicken
- Halal
- Vegetarian
- Vegan
- Pescatarian

Providing the above indicators help enable pupils to have a school lunch regardless of religious and/or lifestyle choices.

Once notified of additional warnings for allergens that fall outside of the 14 Allergens specified under the Food Information Regulations 2014 and the seven additional indicators listed above, HES Catering will update the recipes within 48 hours to prohibit children from ordering a meal at the point of registration that they are not allowed to consume. During this period whilst the recipes are update the child should bring a packed lunch into school or the school should speak to the kitchen supervisor daily to check what menus for meals the child can consume safely.

The allergen information on Kafoodle will **not** reflect warnings outside of the 14, but full composite ingredients for every meal is available and the cashless system will also prohibit a meal being selected if a child has a warning attached to their records.

2.4 STAFF TRAINING

HES Catering will provide all **necessary training and instruction** to Catering management and frontline staff and monitor its effectiveness. The provision of special diets will be regularly audited and if applicable corrective measures put in place.

All **permanent HES Catering Staff** are required to attend the following mandatory courses:

- Level 2 Food Safety & Hygiene
- A recognised training course on food allergy awareness (refreshed annually)

All **training records** will be maintained by the Training and Development Manager and stored centrally.

Casual staff will be required to complete an online allergen awareness course, prior to working in any of our kitchens.

2.5 KITCHEN – FOOD PURCHASING AND PREPARATION

All dishes that are produced in house will be made with **standard ingredients from approved suppliers**. Any ingredient changes/supplier changes affecting standard ingredients will be detailed.

Where allergenic ingredients are packaged openly/loosely, they are **stored separately** to reduce the risk of contamination.

Equipment/utensils used in the preparation of food for people with a food allergy are **cleaned according to standard procedures** which under normal circumstances should be sufficient. A copy of the manual is available at all school kitchens. All dishes that are produced for special diets are prepared in an area which is **sanitised and free from crosscontamination**. Separate colour coded chopping boards and equipment are used for this purpose.

When preparing dishes for people with a food allergy or intolerance, this **is prepared before** any other dishes to avoid cross contamination. The area is thoroughly cleaned before preparation of the dish, before and after use. After preparation, the dishes are stored, covered with cling film and labelled as required.

2.6 FOOD SERVICE

Our school kitchen staff will be **made aware** of any dishes which contain allergens, and will be able to provide the information if a pupil/staff member has requested further information on the presence of allergens. If there is any doubt, these must be checked with the Kitchen Supervisor.

Separate utensils will be used during service to avoid cross-contamination of allergens.

3. More Information

For more information please contact HES Catering Service on
Tel no: 01708 431 561 or email: schoolcatering@havering.gov.uk

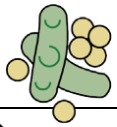
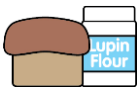
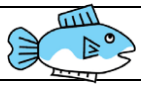
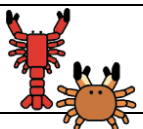
4. Ownership and effective date

Policy Owner:	Havering Education Services HES Catering Service
Approver:	Assistant Director, Education Services
Date Approved:	
Effective date:	February 2025
Review date:	February 2026 or as required by any future changes in law
Version:	3

5. Related documents

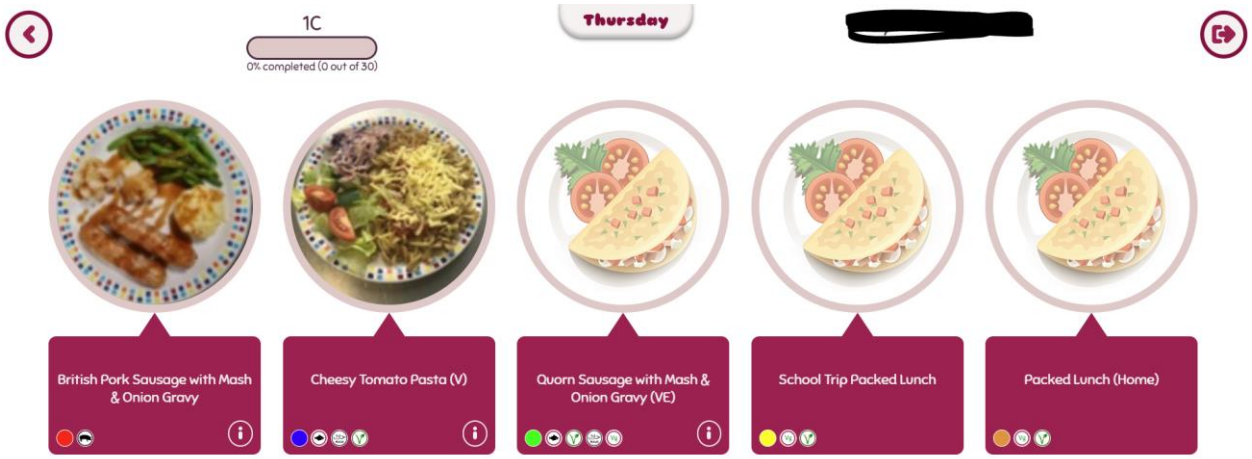
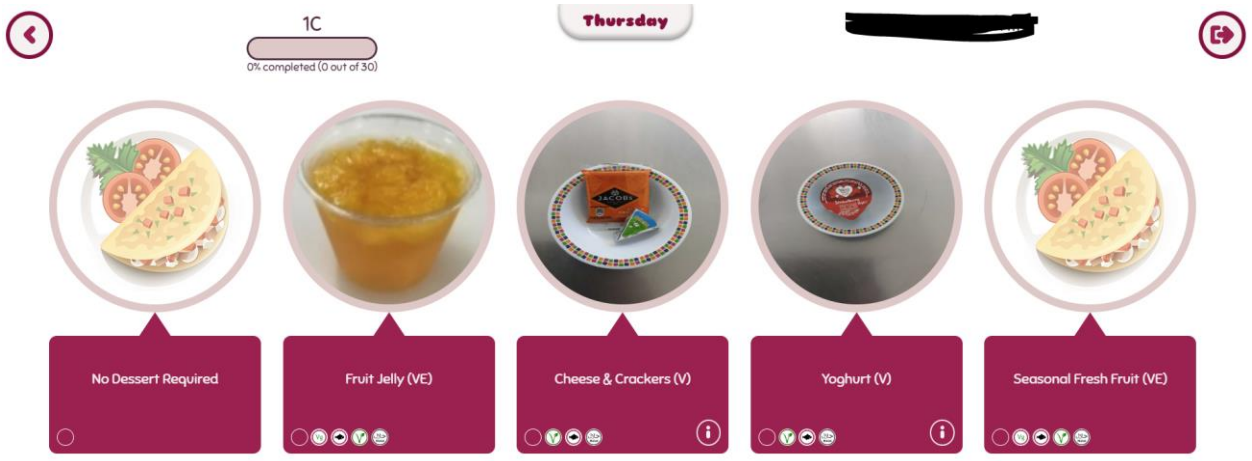
Operations Manual
Health & Safety Manual

Appendix 1: 14 Food Allergen list

Allergen	Includes
Sulphur dioxide (sometimes known as sulphites)	This is an ingredient often used in dried fruit such as raisins, dried apricots and prunes. You might also find it in meat products, soft drinks, vegetables as well as in wine and beer. If you have asthma, you have a higher risk of developing a reaction to sulphur dioxide.
Soya 	Often found in bean curd, edamame beans, miso paste, textured soya protein, soya flour or tofu, soya is a staple ingredient in oriental food. It can also be found in desserts, ice cream, meat products, sauces and vegetarian products.
Sesame	These seeds can often be found in bread (sprinkled on hamburger buns as an example), breadsticks, hummus, sesame oil and tahini. They are sometimes toasted and used in salads.
Peanuts	Peanuts are actually a legume and grow underground, which is why it's sometimes called a groundnut. Peanuts are often used as an ingredient in biscuits, cakes, curries, desserts, sauces (such as satay sauce), as well as in groundnut oil and peanut flour.
Nuts	Not to be mistaken with peanuts (which are actually a legume and grow underground), this ingredient refers to nuts which grow on trees, like cashew nuts, almonds and hazelnuts. You can find nuts in breads, biscuits, crackers, desserts, nut powders (often used in Asian curries), stir-fried dishes, ice cream, marzipan (almond paste), nut oils and sauces. Also includes Walnuts, Pecan, Brazil, Macadamia, pistachios – this includes all tree nuts
Mustard	Liquid mustard, mustard powder and mustard seeds fall into this category. This ingredient can also be found in breads, curries, marinades, meat products, salad dressings, sauces and soups.
Molluscs	These include mussels, land snails, squid and whelks, but can also be commonly found in oyster sauce or as an ingredient in fish stews Mussels, cockles, clams, oysters, Scallops, Whelks, squid, snails
Milk	Milk is a common ingredient in butter, cheese, cream, milk powders, Ice Cream and yoghurt. It can also be found in foods brushed or glazed with milk, and in powdered soups and sauces. Any Lactose intolerance can also be included within milk allergen
Lupin 	Lupin can be found in a wide range of food products including baked goods (such as bread, pastries, pies), pasta or noodles, sauces, beverages and meat based products (such as burgers and sausages). Foods free of gluten, soy or genetically modified ingredients may contain Lupin.
Fish 	All fish cooked and raw. You will find this in some fish sauces, pizzas, relishes, salad dressings, stock cubes and Worcestershire sauce.
Eggs	Cooked and raw eggs. Eggs are often found in cakes, some meat products, mayonnaise, mousses, pasta, quiche, sauces and pastries or foods brushed or glazed with egg.
Crustaceans 	Crabs, lobster, prawns and scampi are crustaceans. Shrimp paste, often used in Thai and south-east Asian curries or salads, is an ingredient to look out for Shellfish - Crab, Lobster, prawns, shrimps
Cereals	Wheat (such as spelt and Khorasan wheat/Kamut), rye, barley and oats is often found in foods containing flour, such as some types of baking powder, batter, breadcrumbs, bread, cakes, couscous, meat products, pasta, pastry, sauces, soups and fried foods which are dusted with flour Also includes Wheat, Barley, Rye, Oats, Gluten, Celiac, flour
Celery	Fresh and dried This includes celery stalks, leaves, seeds and the root called celeriac. You can find celery in celery salt, salads, some meat products, soups and stock cubes.

Appendix 2: Example of meal Selector layout

Main Meal Options screen



Dessert Options screen