



LOCATION: CURRICULUM HANDBOOK, DOCUMENT 9

LUNCHTIME ORGANISATION POLICY

Date policy first adopted: January 1997

Date reviewed: March 2025

Reviewed By: SMT

Date ratified by Governing Body: n/a

Date of next review: Spring 2027

“This policy should be read as part of a collection of policies that together form the overall Safeguarding Policy and procedure for Abbey Court School.”

At Abbey Court School, we regard lunchtimes as an integral part of the learning process, and they make a valuable contribution to the all-round development of our pupils. Lunchtime contributes to a teacher's directed hours.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the Abbey Court School Dysphagia policy (School Handbook, Section 3, Document 4).

Educational Aims:

- To enable all children to take part in school lunchtimes in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.
- To enable children to learn positively from the experience.
- To develop individual eating, communication and social skills in accordance with the pupil's feeding programme.
- To ensure that pupils have opportunities to consolidate their learning, e.g. PECs, TEACCH, and use of communication aids.

(Each pupil either has a Dysphagia Risk Assessment or an individual eating plan to target their specific needs and guidelines for developing and monitoring these are included in the Dysphagia policy)

Management Aims:

- To provide the necessary staffing levels to make lunchtimes a valuable and worthwhile learning experience for all pupils.
- To oversee that lunch times run smoothly and are productive both educationally and socially
- To be available to oversee and assist with any issues/difficulties which may arise, particularly with regard to the Dysphagia policy (A member of SMT is on-site and available every lunchtime)
- To monitor and evaluate the lunchtime organisation and procedure on a regular basis.

Rationale:

In both the Primary and Secondary Departments, lunchtime runs from 12 noon until 1.15 pm. During this time, the children are able to prepare e.g. handwashing, eat their lunch and enjoy a time of indoor or outdoor play, or attend a range of clubs, e.g. Art, music, gardening, drama etc, before afternoon teaching begins at 1.15 pm.

Lunchtime organisation needs to be flexible in order to provide for the wide-ranging needs of the children, who range from independent to very dependent feeders who need extensive adult support and supervision.

Lunchtimes are regarded as opportunities for pupils to develop social skills and independent skills whenever possible. This includes giving pupils a range of worthwhile play activities. At all Key Stages, pupils are provided with a selection of stimulating equipment, which ranges from bats and balls to climbing frames and go-carts. Through these activities, pupils are given the opportunities to develop their physical skills in addition to their social skills such as learning to cooperate, take turns etc. A rotational program of clubs or planned outdoor/indoor accessed activities is offered to all pupils. Pupils with PMLD are provided with a range of sensory activities, both indoors and outdoors. During play activities, pupils are supervised by Teachers, HLTAs and Teaching Assistants. Where possible, pupils are encouraged to have some outdoor time, but during bad weather, pupils remain indoors using the hall or other allocated classrooms and can enjoy a range of stimulating indoor activities.

Organisational Guidelines:

The dining areas on each school site are organised as follows:

- Pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 eat together.
- Pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 eat together
- In order to maintain consistency for the pupils as far as possible, they are supported by the same member of staff every day.
- Students on placements in school also assist with lunchtime if appropriate
- Pupil groupings usually remain constant and are organised in order to take account of the various needs of the pupils.
- Throughout the lunchtime sessions, pupils are given every opportunity to take responsibility and develop their independence.

FE Students

- Students in the FE Department eat their lunch in the main hall at the Rede Court Road site.
They are responsible for setting up the hall in a cafeteria style for their lunch, taking ownership of putting up the tables, setting out the chairs and laying out the appropriate cutlery.
- Pupils serve themselves their vegetables and carbohydrates, with the kitchen staff serving their main portion.
- They then have the responsibility for tidying away the hall, disposing of their crockery and cutlery, and supporting the kitchen staff to clean the tables and floor, and put away the tables and chairs appropriately.
- Once each week, every student in the Department has the opportunity to contribute towards cooking their own lunch. This involves prior work within the classroom. Students are able to choose the recipe that they would like to cook and then work on a budget plan. They then shop weekly, using shopping lists that are written or in symbols for the more able students or by the use of objects of reference for those who require more specific input into their learning. Students then cook and eat their meals once each week

in the food technology room. The students who have PMLD needs have the opportunity to participate in a sensory cookery session once each week to prepare dishes that are designed to exploit the senses such as textured foods that have potent smells. This is an opportunity for those students who are nil by mouth to explore and engage in a more meaningful way in a cookery session that is appropriate to the level of their needs.

- After lunch, they have a choice of activities in one of the playgrounds or an indoor activity, e.g. music, computers, reading, relaxation and/or yoga.

Pupils are arranged in a variety of ways according to their level of ability and level of need. Some pupils sit in class groups whilst the cafeteria systems consist of pupils across classes and Key Stages.

For all students, a cafeteria system operates within the department, where pupils who are less able have the opportunity to spend time and socialise with a cross-section of their peers, developing social skills further and encouraging an inclusive environment. Some students are expected to serve their own lunch, insofar as possible and have oversight from staff if they should require support. At the end of dinner time, students are expected to clear away their plates and further support the kitchen team to tidy away the tables and chairs in the hall, ensuring that the hall is returned back to its original state.

Lunchtimes are important at Abbey Court School and are regarded as an important learning experience. As part of their 1265 working hours, teaching staff are required to undertake lunch-time duties. When appropriate, external agencies are involved in lunchtimes to ensure appropriate provision for certain pupils, eg, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists and School Health. Specialist funding clinics are held termly and are attended by the groups of people listed above.

Alternative Dining Arrangements:

As an extension of their class work, some class groups regularly cook their own lunches. When this occurs, the pupils will eat in the food technology rooms under the supervision of the class teacher and teaching assistant staff.

It is important that when teachers need to change their class lunchtime arrangements for any reason, they consult with a Deputy Headteacher or Key Stage Leader. It is also important that any relevant visit forms are completed and the school caterers are informed.

Health and Safety

In line with all school activities, lunchtimes must be carried out in accordance with Abbey Court's Health and Safety Policy. When necessary, appropriate health and safety risk assessments are undertaken and regularly reviewed termly. All pupils have either an individual eating plan or dysphagia risk assessment – please see the Dysphagia policy (School Handbook, Section 3, Document 4).

Evaluation

Lunchtime Organisation is reviewed termly with lead responsibility held by the Deputy Headteacher. External consultants are employed to provide an outside view of lunchtime arrangements/opportunities and activities. Senior staff, in consultation with teachers, review seating arrangements termly or earlier if necessary. Seating plans and staff allocations are reviewed annually in order to give all staff the opportunity to develop their skills in feeding a range of children. On occasions when an allocated feeder's pupil is absent, the member of staff will be reallocated to another pupil by the Key Stage Leader.

Parents

Parents are provided with a school menu regularly, so they are able to see the choice of food options available. As appropriate, parents are also informed of what their child has eaten via a food diary or the contact book. Parents are on occasion invited to join in a school lunch and/or to discuss appropriate feeding techniques with class teams. From time to time, information on school meals forms the basis of a Parent Workshop.

Healthy Schools

Abbey Court School is a Healthy School, and we are committed to providing all pupils with a healthy and balanced diet. School meals are carefully planned by our school caterers, who are able to provide for the wide range of dietary needs of our pupils. Menus are produced in line with Government good practice for healthy eating. The Headteacher liaises with the school-employed Catering Department to ensure that menus etc conform to Government guidelines with regard to nutritional standards.

Rotas

Lunchtime rotas are produced termly, and lunchtime organisation is kept under constant review by SMT, Key Stage Leaders, teachers and where appropriate Teaching Assistants. It is the joint responsibility of all staff to see that all pupils benefit from the learning opportunities which the lunchtime offers.