



Grange Primary Parent Coffee Morning

Adaeze Ezeji ANutr



School Food Matters

exists to teach children about food and to improve access to nutritious, sustainable food during their time at school.



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What we do

Since 2007, we have worked with over 2,000 schools across England to deliver training, food education, and tailored support to improve the school food environment.

Support
schools & local
authorities to
improve food in
schools

Teach children
about cooking,
growing &
enjoying food

Campaign for a
better school
food system





Why we do it

Children sit down for lunch 2,660 times between joining reception and leaving school. That's 2,660 opportunities to eat, explore, and engage with great food.

School isn't just where children eat, it's where habits are formed, life skills are developed and new experiences are shared. It is the perfect place to nurture a positive relationship to food that lasts a lifetime.



Why is a healthy school food environment important?

- School lunches can be a major source of nutrients to nourish your child (190 days a year!)
- For many children, intakes of saturated fats and sugars are high, and intakes of essential nutrients are often low, compared with reference nutrient intakes
- Children are eating less than half the recommended 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, and 20% of 4-18 year olds surveyed ate no fruit at all in an average week
- Eating a healthy balanced diet from a young age can help prevent lifestyle diseases and set your children up for a healthier, more successful life



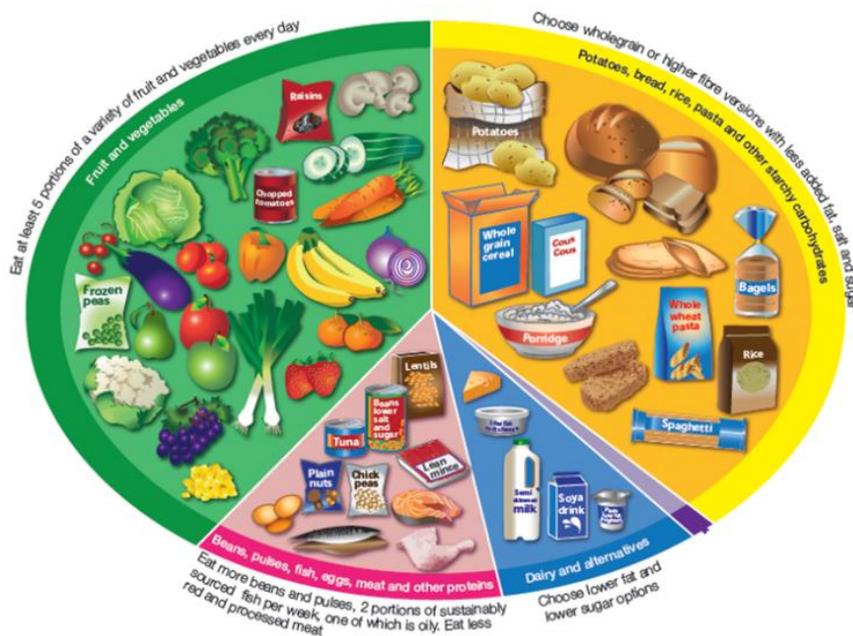
Nourish: A Balanced Approach

- Our approach is all about balance, ensuring children are getting the nutrients they need to be the best version of themselves! (it's all about care)
- Based on the government 'Eat Well Guide'
- Also, a holistic focus on children developing a healthy relationship with food



Healthy relationship with food:

- *Not viewing foods as 'good' or 'bad'*
- *Being exposed to a variety of foods and cuisines*
- *To be curious about and openly discuss food*
- *Being able to listen to their own bodies*
- *No pressure, stress or anxiety around mealtimes. Enjoyment is key!*



Healthy eating doesn't just mean this!



It can also mean this!





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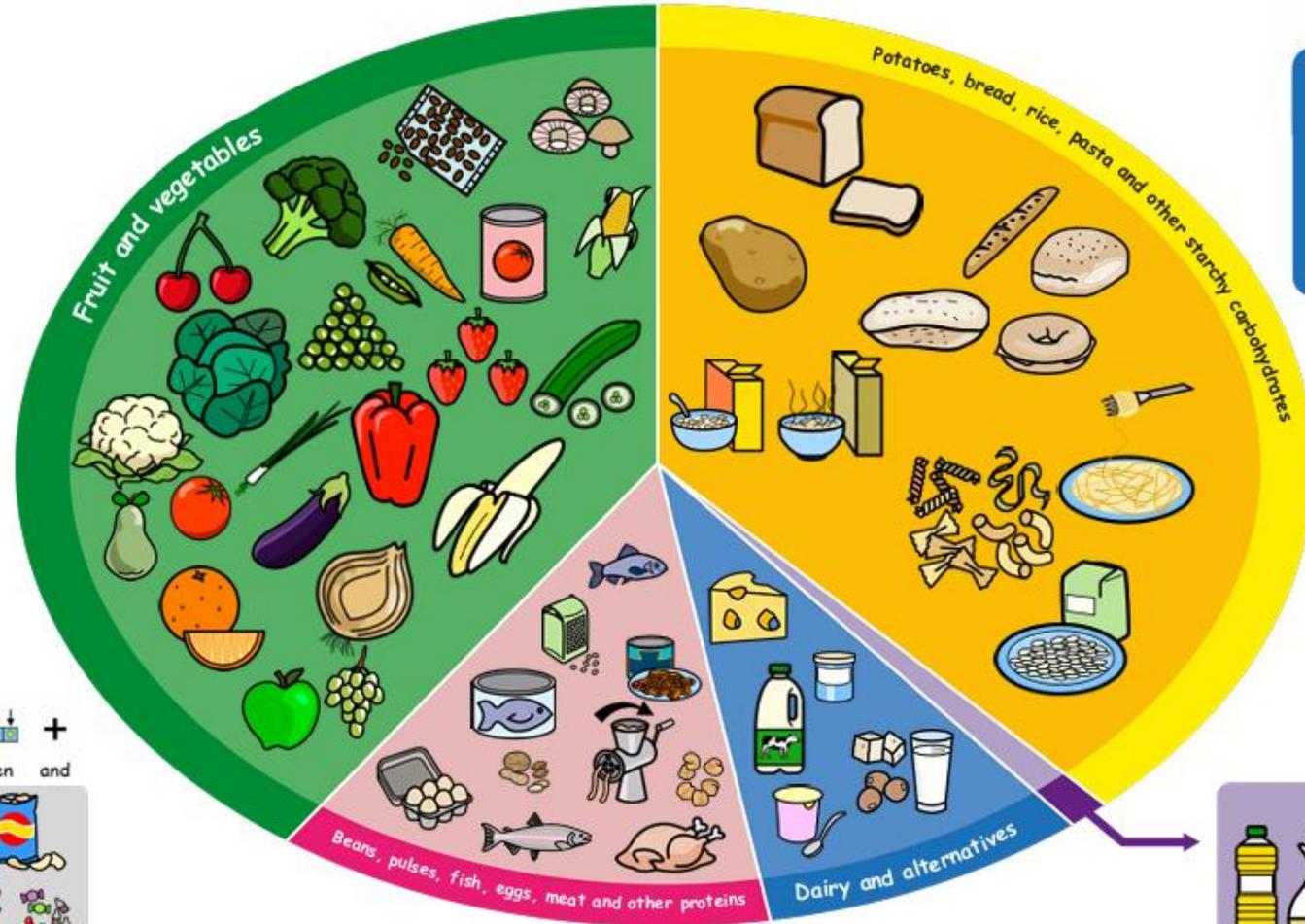
FARM
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PLATE



Eatwell Guide



6-8
a day



Eat less often and +



in small amounts



Oils & spreads



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Best Budget Tips

1. Cut down on meat at mealtimes
2. Try tinned or frozen instead of fresh
3. Cook from scratch where possible
4. Batch cook dinners and use leftovers for lunches
5. Buy own-brand products—they're often just as good
6. Avoid processed snacks—make popcorn or homemade flapjacks

Sample Weekly Meal Plan

Estimated weekly budget:

~£78–£82

(Leaves room for tea, coffee, condiments, or extra treats)



Shop for fruits in season or choose fruits on offer to add variety

Breakfast (Daily Rotation)

- **Oats with milk & fruit** – porridge oats + banana or frozen berries
- **Toast with peanut butter or jam** – sliced bread + spread
- **Scrambled eggs on toast** – eggs + bread + butter/oil
- **Weetabix or Cornflakes with milk** – budget cereals
- **Yogurt with fruit and oats** – 1-2 times per week

Sample Weekly Meal Plan

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~£78–£82

(Leaves room for tea, coffee, condiments, or extra treats)

Lunches (Simple + Portable)

- Tuna mayo sandwiches + carrot sticks
- Cheese or ham sandwiches + fruit
- Pasta salad with veggies & dressing
- Leftover dinner
- Homemade vegetable soup + bread roll
- Egg mayo sandwiches or wraps
- Beans on toast + cucumber slices

Sample Weekly Meal Plan

Estimated weekly budget:

~£78–£82

(Leaves room for tea, coffee, condiments, or extra treats)

Dinners (Warm, Filling, Budget-Friendly)

Day	Dinner
Mon	Spaghetti Bolognese (mince, tinned toms, pasta)
Tue	Jacket potatoes with beans & cheese
Wed	Chicken stir-fry with rice
Thu	Vegetable curry with rice
Fri	Homemade fish fingers, chips & peas
Sat	Homemade pizza (wrap base or dough) + salad
Sun	Roast chicken, roast potatoes & frozen veg



Understanding Why Children Reject Food



Cautious eating

The term refers to students who are hesitant or selective about food due to sensory sensitivities or past negative experiences with food.

This is not a behaviour to fix but an opportunity for education and support.

Cautious eating - what is happening?

There are numerous factors that can influence a child becoming a cautious eater.





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Food neophobia vs. ARFID

Food Neophobia	ARFID – Avoidant Restrictive Intake Disorder
Commonly seen as ‘picky eating’, not linked to medical or sensory issues	May involve physical, psychological, or developmental challenges
Preferences often include specific textures, colours, or flavours	Strong emotional distress when introduced to new foods
Despite selectivity, most children eat over 30 different foods	Extremely limited diet, often fewer than 20 foods, with little reacquisition
Temporary food “burn out” is normal; interest usually returns within 2 weeks	Entire food groups or textures may be refused; new foods require gradual exposure
New foods are gradually accepted through exploration of textures and nutrition groups	Often eat differently from family members and may prefer to eat alone



Everyone perceives food in a different way

- Disgust is more extreme in children with sensory processing challenges
- Foods that children find 'disgusting' can make other foods on the same plate seem less appealing'
- Increased stress and anxiety will increase the disgust response
- Extreme disgust can cause gagging, retching and vomiting.



ARFID

Children and young people might be avoiding and/or restricting their food for a number of different reasons. The main three are:

1. sensory-based avoidance or restriction of intake
2. concern about the consequences of eating
3. low interest in eating





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Everyone perceives food in a different way



Negative food experiences



Ultra Processed Foods



- Children love UPF's because they are consistent – taste same every time
- Fruits and veggies can be unpredictable – some blueberries are sweet and crunchy, some are squishy, some are sour
- Survival instinct – safe foods are chosen because their brains know they have eaten them before and they aren't poisonous



Encouraging children to try new foods

Celebrating the small food wins!



32 STEPS TO EATING

TOLERATES



1. Being in the same room
2. Being at the table with the food on the other side of the table
3. Being at the table with the food ½ way across the table
4. Being at the table with the food just outside of child's space
5. Looks at food when directly in child's space

INTERACTS WITH



6. Assists in preparation/set up with food
7. Uses utensils or a container to stir or pour food/drink for others
8. Uses utensils or container to serve self onto own plate/space
9. Uses utensils/napkin/tool to manipulate food in own space
10. Uses another food to interact with the food

SMELLS



11. Odour in room
12. Odour at table
13. Odour in child's forward space
14. Leans down or picks up to smell

TOUCH



15. One finger tip
16. Fingertips, fingerpads
17. Whole hand
18. Arm, trunk/chest
19. Shoulder, neck
20. Top of head
21. Chin, cheek
22. Nose, underneath nose
23. Lips
24. Teeth
25. Tip of tongue, top of tongue

TASTE



26. Licks lips or teeth, tongue tip taste
27. Full tongue lick
28. Bites off piece & spits out immediately
29. Bites piece, holds in mouth for "x" seconds & spits out
30. Bites piece, chews "x" times & spits out

EATING!



31. Bites & chews, swallows some and spits some
32. Chews and swallows whole bolus independently

Stargold
the
Food
Fairy

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Illustrations by Chris Hamilton



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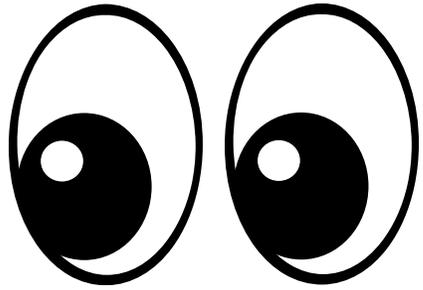
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5 takeaways to try at home



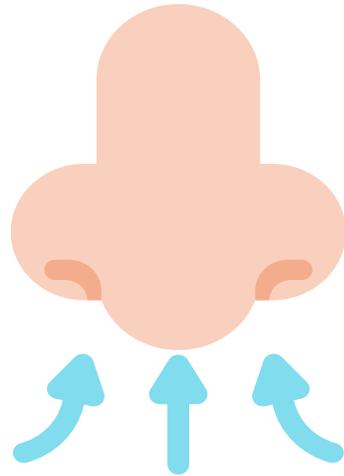
1. Create a positive environment
2. Act as a role model
3. Get them involved in the food prep
4. Don't force or pressure them to try
5. Get them to explore food through their senses (touch, smell, sight, hearing, licking/biting)

What can we do with food instead of tasting?



You can look at food

You can smell food



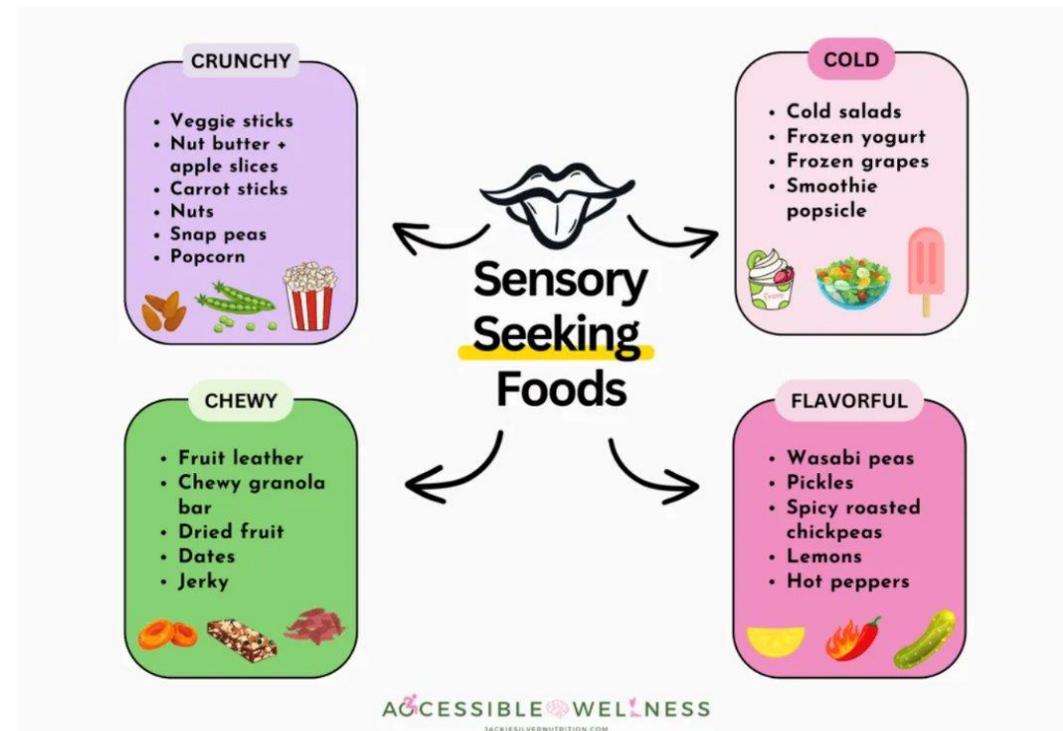
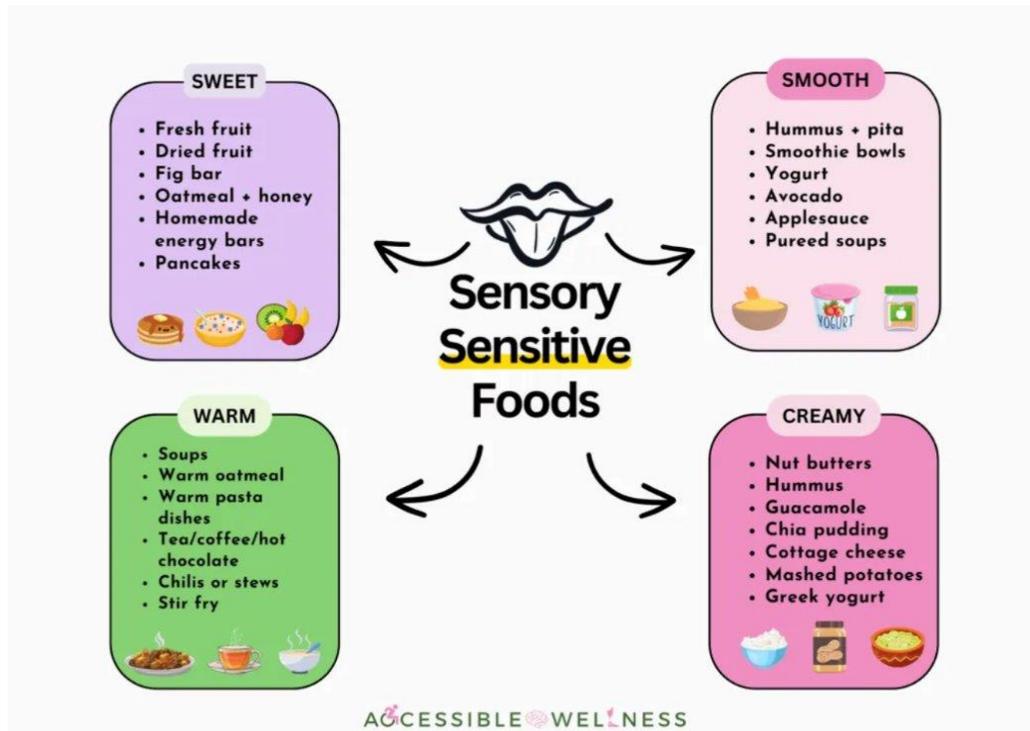
You can hear food



You can touch food

Sensory experience of food

- Some students might be fixated on certain foods because of their texture, smell, colour etc – finding other similar foods might be a gentler way to introduce new foods...



Top tips when talking to children about food

1

Talk about the properties of food and how it can help a student's body and mind.

2

Steer clear of using food as a reward or using the dessert bargain (these treats become more appealing).

3

Ask children what they like and don't like about a food.

4

Try not to pressure a child to eat a specific food, even if your intentions are good.

5

Expose the students to a wide range of foods where possible without pressure, just leave them on the table or try a bite yourself.

6

Do not talk about diets / food avoidance / express hatred for specific foods/ school lunches using words such as 'hate', 'eww', 'disgusting', 'vile'.



Packed Lunch Guidance/Policy

- Improving packed lunches a priority area amongst staff and parents at Lansdowne.
- A new school packed lunch policy can help packed lunches and other food brought in are just as nutritious, filling and similar in quality to the food served at school. *(Also 'School Food Standards' compliant)*

HEALTHY PACKED LUNCHES

YOUR CHILD'S PACKED LUNCH **SHOULD** INCLUDE ONE PORTION OF:

					
FRUIT	VEGETABLES	MEAT, EGG, BEANS OR FISH	STARCHY FOOD E.G. SANDWICH, RICE OR PASTA	MILK, CHEESE OR YOGHURT	BOTTLE OF WATER

YOUR CHILD'S PACKED LUNCH **SHOULD NOT** INCLUDE THESE FOODS:

					
CHIPS & OTHER HIGH FAT SNACKS	CHOCOLATE BARS, SWEETS, CAKES	PASTRY/FRIED FOODS	CEREAL BARS	SOFT DRINKS	

Some children with SEN will have very restrictive diets so any policy put in place will be mindful and inclusive of these students

Discussion/Any questions?

