

**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL



**Education, Learning & Leisure**

**SUPPORTING CHILDREN  
WITH MEDICALLY PRESCRIBED  
DIETARY REQUIREMENTS**

**MAY 2007**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of the Policy

1. This policy has been written to inform schools of the procedure for managing special dietary requirements in school and to put in place effective management systems to support individual pupils requiring medically prescribed diets.
2. Copies of forms are provided as part of this policy and can be photocopied for use by schools.
3. This policy is not aimed at any particular sector of the Education, Learning & Leisure Service. Its advice will apply equally to local authority pre-five centres, partner provider pre-five centres, primary, secondary, and special schools.
4. This policy does not affect other aspects of food provision controlled by separate policies or legal requirements. The Service recognises these separate duties, and has measures in place to fulfil them.

### Children with medically-prescribed dietary requirements

1. Schools may at any time have a child with a medical condition that requires a Medically-prescribed diet as part of the management of that condition. Medically-prescribed dietary requirements should always be carefully considered as to whether they can be safely provided.
2. Most children with medically-prescribed dietary requirements are able to attend school regularly and, with some support from the school, can take part in most normal school activities.
3. Some schools, e.g. special schools, will have children with very specific and exceptional dietary and feeding needs. Specific requirements may be included in individual health care plans to help identify the necessary safety measures to support pupils. Detailed procedures on how to draw up a health plan are included in the guidance document "Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs" which is in all schools.

### Support for children with medically-prescribed dietary requirements

1. Parents or Guardians/Carers have prime responsibility for their child's health and should provide schools with information about their child's medical condition. This information can be captured using FORM D in the Primary and Secondary School Admissions Procedure. Form D is part of the admissions/enrolment forms that parents/carers complete and is included in this document for information. A school doctor or nurse may be able to provide additional background information for school staff.
2. Children may have had contact with dieticians from NHS Grampian who can provide more specific information provided parents have agreed to this approach being made. Details should be available on FORM D.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Introduction

It is important that the responsibility for children's safety is clearly defined and that each person involved with children with medically prescribed dietary requirements is aware of what is expected of them. Close co-operation between schools, parents, health professionals and other agencies will help provide a suitably supportive environment for children with special dietary requirements.

#### Parents and Guardians/Carers

Parents as defined in Education (Scotland) Act 1980 are a child's main carer.

Parents should provide the Head Teacher with sufficient information about their child's medical condition and requirements while at school. This information can be captured using FORM D in the Admissions Procedure. Parents and the Head Teacher should jointly reach agreement on the school's role in helping meet the needs of the child while at school. The Head Teacher should seek parents' agreement before passing on information to other school staff. Sharing information is important if staff and parents are to ensure the best care for a child.

#### Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeenshire Council is responsible for ensuring that there is provision in place for the delivery of medically prescribed diets. This will usually be through the School Catering Service.

#### The School Catering Service

The School Catering Service is committed to accommodating medically prescribed diets where safely possible. Individually tailored menu plans specific to the needs of the child will be prepared by a State Registered Dietician and made available to the pupil, parents and cook/servery staff.

#### The Head Teacher

For a child with a medically prescribed dietary requirement the Head Teacher must, in conjunction with the School Catering Service (Unit Supervisor or Area Supervisor) agree with the parents exactly what support the Catering Service and school can provide. Where there is concern whether the Catering Service can safely meet children's needs or the parents' expectations appear unreasonable, the Head Teacher seek advice from the school doctor, nurse, dietician, the child's GP or the Catering Manager.

## **Supporting Children with Special Dietary Requirements**

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### **School Staff**

School staff must be made aware that a child has a dietary health need to ensure that classroom activities remain safe for the child concerned e.g. an allergy to eggs may impact on the safety of a baking activity. Staff should be made aware of the side effects of inadvertent consumption of an allergen. Information on this and the steps to be taken will be in the child's health plan.

### **The School Health Service**

The School Health Service can provide advice on health issues. The main contact is usually the School Nurse.

### **The General Practitioner**

Most parents will register their child with a GP. Parents may consent to Catering Management contacting their child's doctor/dietician directly about their child's condition. See FORM D.

### **Other Health Professionals**

Other health professionals may also be involved in the care of children with dietary health care needs in school e.g. Speech and Language Therapists working with a child with swallowing difficulties.

### Procedure for Supporting Children with Medically Prescribed Dietary Requirements

Parents should notify their child's head teacher that their child has a special dietary requirement, whether he/she:

- a) is a child registering for nursery or P1
- b) is a child moving from another school
- c) has a newly diagnosed condition
- d) has an existing condition not previously notified.

This information should be recorded on FORM D and included in the child's school health care plan. Relevant school health personnel will be involved at this stage.

A copy of FORM D should be forwarded to the Area Catering Supervisor who will liaise with the school cook.

A meeting with the parent(s), head teacher and catering representatives may be helpful to ensure that the caterers are advised of the specific nature of the dietary requirements and for the child to be made known to the cook. A photograph of the child subject to parental consent could be displayed on the kitchen side of the service area to inform all servery staff. Where this is not possible a risk assessment should be undertaken to ensure children requiring a special diet are correctly identified.

If it is agreed that the needs of the child can be safely met, a personally tailored menu will be issued to the child/parents and caterer. This will indicate to the child/parents and caterer the food choices suitable for the child and those that must be avoided. Parents should liaise with the Unit Supervisor/senior catering staff member to agree local arrangements for communication regarding those days that the child will attend for lunch. Supporting information on the specific requirement will be provided to the cook.

Subsequent tailored menus will be provided as the base menu changes.

### Common Medically Prescribed Dietary Requirements

This guidance provides some general information but it is beyond its scope to provide more detailed medical advice and it is important that the needs of children are assessed on an individual basis. (FORM D).

#### Diabetes

Diabetes is a condition where the person's normal hormonal mechanisms do not control their blood sugar levels. About one in 2500 school age children has diabetes. Children with diabetes normally need to have daily insulin injections, to monitor their blood sugar and to eat regularly.

Children with diabetes must be allowed to eat regularly during the day. This may include eating snacks during class-time or prior to exercise. Schools may need to make special arrangements for pupils with diabetes if school has staggered lunchtimes. If a meal or snack is missed, or after strenuous exercise, the pupil may experience a hypoglycaemic episode (a hypo) during which his/her blood sugar levels fall to a level which is too low.

Staff in charge of physical education classes or other physical activity sessions should be aware of the need for pupils with diabetes to have glucose tablets or sugary drink to hand. (See Aberdeenshire's guidance *Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs*).

#### Dietary Management

Children will have been taught to assess their insulin requirements to accommodate food consumed at snacks and meals. Meals provided by the school catering service will always contain several forms of starchy carbohydrate e.g. bread, potatoes, rice, pasta, potato wedges etc, as well as fruit. Children can request larger portions of these foods as necessary to meet requirements e.g. prior to a P.E. session.

Foods provided by the School Catering Service are not specifically sugar free. However, parents would be welcome to speak to the cook and see recipes, to support their child in making informed choices. This should be arranged if requested.

No special adaptations have been made to the existing school meals menu, as current medical advice indicates that children should be encouraged to eat a "normal" diet.

#### Coeliac Disease (Gluten Free Diet)

Coeliac Disease is caused by a reaction to the gluten protein found in some cereals including wheat, barley, rye and in some cases oats. If a person with coeliac disease eats foods containing gluten, the lining of the bowel is damaged and

## Supporting Children with Special Dietary Requirements

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malabsorption and growth problems result. The diet is therefore life-long to prevent recurrence of symptoms.

Another condition treated with a gluten-free diet is Dermatitis Herpetiformis.

Gluten is present in a wide range of foods including flour, breakfast cereals, biscuits, pasta and many manufactured foods. Parents sometimes prefer to send their child to school with a packed lunch. However, the School Catering Service can accommodate the requirements of a gluten free diet provided sufficient notice is given.

Should a child inadvertently consume food containing gluten, it is not life threatening. However the pupil may experience a recurrence of the original symptoms.

Pupils requiring a **wheat free diet** can also be accommodated.

### **Milk Free Diet**

Some children cannot digest milk and milk products and require a diet that excludes milk. The problem may be due to intolerance to the milk protein casein or a lack of the enzyme lactase resulting in the inability to digest the milk sugar, lactose. The latter is more likely to be a short-term situation whereas intolerance to milk protein is much longer term.

Children require a diet that excludes all milk, cheese, yoghurt and ice cream as well as many manufactured foods that contain milk products.

The School Catering Service can accommodate a milk free diet provided sufficient notice is given.

### **Egg Free Diet**

Some children cannot tolerate the proteins in egg. To avoid symptoms they require to avoid all egg and egg containing products. Egg is present in a wide range of foods such as pasta, biscuits and cakes; in addition, egg products are used in many manufactured foods.

The School Catering Service can accommodate an egg free diet provided sufficient notice is given.

### **Nut Free Diet**

Peanuts, (sometimes referred to as monkey nuts or ground nuts), and all tree nuts are enjoyed safely by most people. For a small number of people an allergic reaction resulting in anaphylaxis/anaphylactic shock (extreme low blood pressure) means that even minute traces of peanut or any tree nut can cause severe allergic reactions.

## **Supporting Children with Special Dietary Requirements**

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Doctors may use a grading system to categorise the severity of a child's reaction. For children whose allergy is Grade 2 or worse (on a 0-6 scale, with 6 being the highest risk), a packed lunch and snacks from home are recommended.

No peanuts will be used in the production of meals in any Primary, Special or Secondary Aberdeenshire school. However, some recipes may contain tree nuts or derivatives of tree nuts e.g. coconut milk, desiccated coconut, almond essence, unrefined groundnut oil and some products bearing the warnings "May contain a trace of nuts" or "Prepared in a factory that uses nuts" are used and therefore no "nut free" guarantee can be given.

If the school is informed that a child with a potential anaphylactic reaction attends, then these items can be labelled to highlight the specific potential allergen.

In secondary schools manufactured products may be sold which contain nut warnings. Children should be encouraged to read food labels prior to consumption of these food items.

### **Children with High Energy/High Fluid Requirements**

Dietary advice for some conditions such as Cystic Fibrosis or certain renal conditions may require additional calories or fluid to be consumed at meals or snacks or even in the classroom. This may be contrary to much of the healthy eating advice being promoted in school however it should be recognised that diet is part of the long-term treatment for these conditions.

### **Children and Young People with Special Needs**

Children with special needs may have particular problems with food and eating. These could be any of the previously mentioned requirements, could relate to texture modification or be a combination of both.

As far as possible, eating difficulties should not exclude a child from enjoying school meals. Catering staff can provide meals of the necessary consistency or simply provide additional gravy/sauce or custard for a carer to modify food at the table.

### **Special Dietary Products**

While the School Catering Service will endeavour to meet the needs of children, it will not provide special dietary products e.g. gluten-free pasta or soya milk. Parents should provide these as necessary in liaison with a Unit Supervisor/senior catering staff member.

### Request for Special Diet

This form is for parents to complete if your child has a special dietary requirement. The information provided will be used to inform the school and school caterers when providing meals for your child.

#### Section 1: Details of Pupil

Surname: .....

Forenames: .....

Address: .....

..... Postcode: .....

Male/Female: ..... Date of Birth ..... Class/Form .....

Special Dietary Requirement

.....

.....

#### Section 2: Contact Details

Name: ..... Daytime Tel. No.: .....

Relationship to pupil: .....

Address: .....

.....

#### Section 3: Medical Details

*I understand that by providing these details I am happy for School Catering to make contact for further information*

Doctor/Dietician: .....

Address: .....

.....

Contact No: .....

Signed: ..... Date: .....

**SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENT**

SCHOOL NAME	
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The school catering service is committed to making provision for the delivery of medically prescribed diets, appropriate provision for children with special educational needs, children requiring vegetarian options and children with religious or cultural restrictions. The following questions will help inform the service about how your child can best be supported.

Please complete the appropriate sections as necessary

**SECTION A**

Does your child have a **medically prescribed** dietary requirement? YES  NO

If you have ticked YES please answer the following questions. If NO go to section B

1. Which of these apply?

- dairy free  egg free  wheat free   
 gluten free  nut free  diabetes  coeliac disease

2. Any other requirements? Please give details

3. Do you use any special dietary products with your child? YES  NO

Please give details

4. Which of these products are prescribed?

5. Do you have a prescribed diet plan for your child? YES  NO

6. Who provides this for your child? Please provide contact details

.....  
 .....

Written details from a Medical Practitioner/Dietician may be required to ensure that the Catering Service can safely meet the needs of your child?

SECTION B

Does your child have a **special need** that affects their eating? YES  NO

If you have ticked YES please answer the following questions. If NO go to section C

1. Please indicate the need from the list below

Texture modification  Limited food range  Reading menu

Help with eating/drinking  Help with food selection

2. Any other requirements? Please give details

3. What dietary modification do you follow at home? Please give details

Please provide further information that would be helpful



Our Ref:  
Your Ref:

Please ask for:  
Direct Dial:  
E-mail:

Date

Address

Dear Parent/Carer

### **SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS**

Thank you for providing information on the dietary requirement for your child. To ensure that your child's dietary requirement can be safely met through the school meals service it may be helpful for catering staff to contact your dietician/GP/private practitioner for further advice.

I would therefore be grateful if you would complete the attached form to enable this to take place.

Yours sincerely