



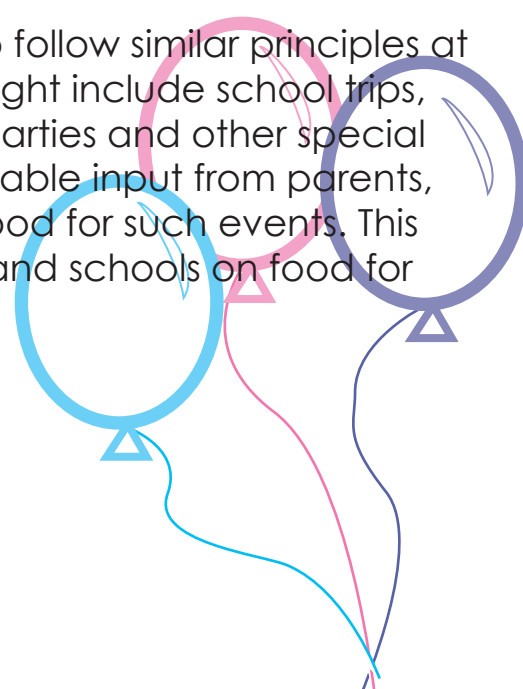
Guidance for celebrations, special events, school trips and rewards

Highland Health Promoting Schools Sgoiltean Fallain na Gàidhealtachd

Food in schools has changed in recent years. The foods available at mid-morning break and at lunchtime must now meet national nutritional standards.

An Act recently passed by the Scottish Government will make it a legal requirement to meet these nutritional standards.

The Act also encourages schools to follow similar principles at social and cultural events. These might include school trips, discos, summer fetes, sports days, parties and other special events. These may involve considerable input from parents, teachers and pupils who provide food for such events. This leaflet provides guidance for Highland schools on food for special events.



Food for special events

Most of these events are enjoyable informal activities that take place once a year or once a term. These are important social events for the school community. Food can help make the event fun and enjoyable for everyone. Children's favourite foods are often provided at these events including many things we remember from our own childhood. Such foods are often cheap, convenient, easy to sell and often profitable.

Some of them, like crisps and chocolate have even become everyday foods for some children. Many people feel that, as these are occasional events, we should have a relaxed attitude to food and give children what we think they want rather than what is "good for them". Anything is OK in "moderation". Any of these foods can take their place in a healthy balanced diet. The problem however, is that providing **only** foods that are high in fat and sugar, is **not moderation**.

The value of occasional foods

These events are, socially and culturally significant. It means that the food and drink that we consume at them acquire considerable value, because of the context in which it is eaten. The foods are "special" because they are served at special events. Because of the "special" status of these events, they represent a real opportunity for introducing children to **healthier** "special" foods along side or instead of less healthy ones.

Food can be healthy and nice

Many children grow up believing that anything healthy can't be nice and anything nice can't be healthy. Providing healthier foods at these events helps to tackle these misconceptions. Fruits, salads and even vegetables can be seen as fun and desirable precisely because they are part of such special events.

Remember that how you present and position food is an important part of tempting children and young people into making healthier choices. Few people would choose something just because it is healthy.

Why not involve pupils in planning the event and deciding what kinds of healthier foods they think would be popular. Think about the season and the weather too. **You might be able to think of something that is available locally and is in season.** If it's a cold time of year, you might be thinking more of soup than salad!



Some examples of healthier foods that could be provided at school events

- Fruit smoothies (children can get to choose their own ingredients)
- Strawberries
- Grapes
- Melon
- Fruit kebabs (children can build their own)
- Corn on the cob
- Soup – Leek and potato, lentil or scotch broth (Don't serve too hot!)
- Dried fruit, nuts and seeds
- Frozen yoghurts, sorbets and fruit puree
- Chicken curry with mini naan bread
- Cherry tomatoes
- Carrot, pepper and cucumber sticks with dips
- Healthier home baking (see separate guidance)
- Sandwiches or wraps including low fat fillings and some non white bread, oatcakes and breadsticks

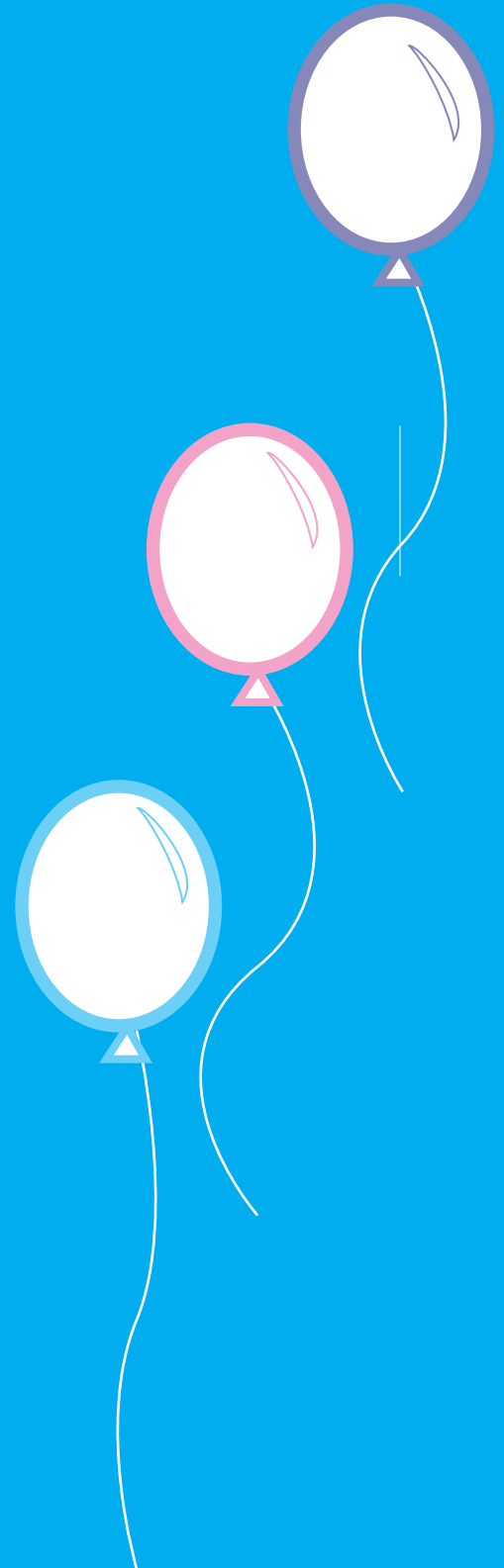
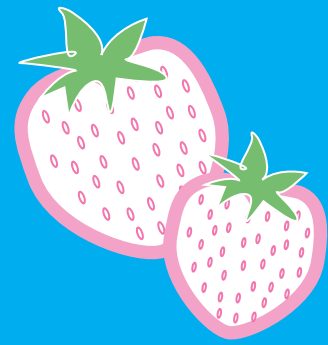
These ideas are all appropriate for an informal event (rather than a sit down meal) and most can be eaten while standing up and moving around. The above is not an exhaustive list and you may wish to come up with some of your own ideas. The point is that we should not provide **only** fatty, salty or sugary foods.

As a rough guide, at least one third of the food available should be fruit, salad or vegetable based. This is because most children and adults in Scotland do not take enough food from this group and would benefit from doubling their intake.

Food as a reward

It is instinctive for many of us to provide something that someone likes as a reward. Often sweets, ice-cream and chocolate are the first things that come to mind. This is because they are already valued by most children.

Sometimes healthier foods can be provided. It is possible to use "special high value fruit" like strawberries or a whole pineapple as a reward or prize. Healthier foods do tend to be more perishable and having them available requires more planning. Therefore one alternative would be to provide non-food rewards. Pupils could be involved in deciding what non-food rewards are valuable to them. Examples include stickers, pens, balloons, vouchers or tokens.



School trips

Many school trips involve pupils bringing a packed lunch. However, on some trips schools plan stops at particular cafés or restaurants. There are two things to consider here:

- Firstly, does the café have an image or reputation for healthy food? If the answer is no, it may be better to choose somewhere else. Cafés chosen for a school trip acquire a special status precisely because they are not everyday events.
- Secondly, can the café efficiently provide a healthy, popular and affordable meal for the pupils? It may be that prior warning and guidance to the café from the school would enable them to provide something appropriate. Some cafés might be happy to provide a healthy “meal deal” which includes fruit, vegetables or salad in the price.

A suitable café would provide:

- Vegetable based soups
- Wholemeal bread and scones
- A good choice of fruit
- Attractive salads
- A choice of vegetables
- Sandwiches with low fat fillings
- Suitable drinks such as water, milk, pure fruit juice or smoothies
- Starchy foods other than chips, such as potatoes, rice, pasta, wraps and wholemeal bread

Also, if pupils are making their own choices from a menu or a self service hatch, it is important that chips, crisps, sugary drinks, chocolate and other confectionery are less prominent than other, healthier choices.

Meals eaten at cafés during school trips also allow pupils to learn and practice the social conventions of eating out. Such rules and conventions can be daunting but learning them from your friends or teachers is a useful social skill. Certain types of café or restaurant lend themselves better than others to the acquisition of such skills. Self-service fast food restaurants serving food without cutlery provide the least opportunity for this.

Summary:

The main message is to show that healthy foods can be part of special occasions and celebrations. In doing so, we can build a positive association between the event and the food. We can promote healthier eating as something that can be enjoyed rather than simply endured. Whether it is a school fete, disco, trip or reward scheme, parents, pupils, caterers and teachers can all play their part in ensuring that food reflects the ethos of a Health Promoting School.

Contact Details

David Rex, Child Health Lead
Dietitian: David.Rex2@nhs.net
Tel: 07747 638 305

Louise Jones, Health Promoting Schools Manager,
louise.jones@highland.gov.uk Tel: 01463 702066

Acknowledgements

This resource has been developed by David Rex, Child Health Lead Dietitian; Fiona Clarke, Senior Health Promotion Specialist; Louise Jones, Health Promoting Schools Manager; Sharon Cameron, Food Services Co-ordinator; Sue Neild, Catering Manager; Nanette Wallace, Graphics Officer.

©The Highland Council. The Highland Council are copyright holder and the Reuse of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005 (SI 2005/1515) as amended applies to this information.

Any application to reuse the enclosed material for example for commercial purposes should be made to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, The Highland Council Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX