



Celebrations, Special Events and Rewards Policy		
	Name	Date
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Governing Body	Curriculum Committee	
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Food provided at birthday, celebrations, parties and special events are not covered by the DfE school food standards but schools should consider the type and amount of food offered at these events. Schools will want to ensure that celebrations support the healthy eating messages taught as well as the school's recognition as a Healthy School. Schools have a responsibility to both teach and model healthy behaviours.

Using foods as a reward, at celebrations and parties will teach children to eat when they're not hungry and therefore encourage overeating. Food will also be linked to mood and special occasions.

Celebrations and parties

Many children grow up believing that anything healthy can't be nice and vice versa. Providing healthier foods at special events can help to dispel this belief. Although we know that food has a role in celebrations and special events, we need to consider which foods are used and at what occasion. Fruits, salads and even vegetables can be seen as attractive and desirable precisely because they are part of such special events.

Schools may want to involve children and young people in planning events and deciding on healthier menu items, taking into account the season and if possible using school grown produce.

Although special event may not be held at school very often, children often are presented with many occasions to eat 'special' foods high in fat, salt and sugar. To support a more balanced diet below are some examples of healthier foods that could be provided at special events and parties and non-food suggestions. It is not an exhaustive list and you may wish to add suggestions from staff, parents / carers and pupils.

- Involve children in food preparation such as fruity couscous or smiley pizza faces (on English muffins), fruit smoothies (children can get to choose their own ingredients) or fruit kebabs (children can build their own). See Islington 'Get Cooking' recipe book for suggestions.
- Provide a list of healthier food options as suggestions for parents on the type of foods they can provide: fruit such as strawberries, grapes, chopped melon or pineapple, corn on the cob, cherry tomatoes, vegetable crudité's, such as carrot, pepper and cucumber sticks, or breadsticks with dips, cut sandwiches and wraps (small items) containing low fat fillings.
- Adapt recipes to make them healthier by for example reducing the sugar or fat content, and adding fruit or vegetables to the recipe (for example banana, beetroot, carrot, courgette or apple can be added to cakes and bakes) or change the cooking



method for example bake spring rolls to celebrate Chinese New Year instead of deep frying.

- Serving cake with no icing, low in sugar / fat and containing fruit or vegetables, such as malt loaf, banana or carrot cake (without icing), upside down cake or Eve's cake (apple sponge pudding), fruit muffins, fruit scones (see Islington's Healthy Schools Get Cooking! recipe book).
- Having savoury options as well as sweet foods on offer to provide a balanced choice and showing that savoury foods can form part of a party as well.
- Change the focus of the party by planning activities such as dancing, games, crafts or singing.

Where schools have changed the food at parties they have found that the events were calmer and children more focussed on games and activities rather than exclusively on the food. Pupils did enjoy the healthier food options provided.

Birthday Celebrations

Food and drink brought into school to celebrate birthdays is not covered by the school food standards but, as the celebration of birthdays may occur frequently, schools should encourage and promote healthier or non-food birthday celebrations.

We recommend discouraging parents/carers from providing cakes or bags of sweets in favour of other ways to make the birthday child feel special in other ways.

- Ask parents to bring in healthy snacks, fruits or vegetables instead of sweets
- Celebrate all birthdays in once month all together. The children whose birthday it was that month can bake a cake together and share with the class.
- Parents to bring age-appropriate non-food items such as pencils, bookmarks or stickers.
- Parents can be invited to give a class gift such as a game, book or craft materials (parents to check with the teacher for suggestions).
- Providing a birthday child with a special birthday outfit e.g. a sash and crown, a hat, or badge to wear on the day.
- Create a special chair for the birthday child to sit on for the day.
- Instead of food, families are asked to purchase a small toy for a gift box. The birthday child gets to pick a gift.
- Special arts and crafts activities or songs and stories maybe chosen by the birthday child.
- Create a 'Celebrate Me' book where classmates draw pictures or write something (as developmentally appropriate) to describe what is special about the birthday child.
- Let the birthday child be the teacher's assistant for the day and help with special tasks like leading the line, starting an activity and choosing a game or story.
- If the school decides to allow birthday cake, you may need to take a number of issues into consideration:
 - Portion sizes: this should be proportionate to the age of the child.
 - Timing: ideally it would be served as part of a balanced meal (instead of pudding. Otherwise give it at the end of the day or given to take home.



- Shop bought: parents should be discouraged from buying cake with coloured icing or confectionery. Shop bought cake tends to be high in sugar.
- Home-made: it might be more difficult to ensure that the cake is made hygienically and that it is free from allergenic foods where this might be an issue for children in the class.

Food based rewards

Giving food as a reward for finishing work or good behaviour will give that food a high value. It will also encourage pupils to eat an extra item of food. It is therefore considered good practice not to give any items of food as a reward (this is the same for chocolate, apple, pizza or having afternoon in the headteacher's office).

However, being awarded the opportunity to have lunch at 'the golden table' or to have lunch at the table with the headteacher can be used as a reward as the food eaten is the food would be eaten as part of lunch and the reward is in the feeling created by this opportunity as being special.

Some schools give class rewards by going out to eat at a restaurant such as a Chinese. If this meal is a replacement of another meal (lunch for example), this would provide the children a learning experience about different foods, behaviour and social interaction without adding extra calories to their diet. However, the school may like to consider varying the outing with non-food activities such as bowling, ice-skating or a trip to the cinema so that children and young people learn to have fun without the event being centred on food.

Suggestions for alternatives to food as a reward

- Recognition:
 - Recognise the pupil's achievement during assembly or with a certificate / sticker
 - Create a photo display board
 - Write a note to the pupil / pupil's parents commending the achievement
- Privileges:
 - Pupil can go first
 - Choose a class activity
 - Help the teacher
 - Carry out special tasks such as making deliveries to the office
 - Choose the book the teacher will read to the class
 - Eat lunch with a teacher / headteacher
- Earn Play money, tokens or point for
 - Gift certificate for a bookstore, sporting goods, music downloads
 - Sports equipment
 - Ticket to an event or movie
 - Magazine subscription
- Rewards for a class:
 - Allow extra break time
 - Provide extra PE, art, music or reading time
 - Dance to music



Prior Weston Primary School and Children's Centre
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- o Play a game