



Effective From	AY 2024/25 (Fall term)
Compliance From	AY 2025/26 (Fall term)

SCHOOL POLICY

on

HEALTHY EATING AND FOOD SAFETY



Introduction

A safe and healthy diet is key to physical and mental health and is therefore an important factor in maintaining overall wellbeing. In fostering the wellbeing of the school community, schools have a duty to create a safe and healthy food environment and to actively promote healthy food choices. In addition, schools have a responsibility to ensure that their food provision supports their efforts to improve the environmental sustainability of their operations. This policy sets out the basic requirements for schools in providing healthy and sustainable food environments.

Purpose

- Ensure that the school food environment and services including canteens comply with the *Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food in the Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi* (QCC, 2022), and any other relevant guidelines by concerned authority, in relation to the healthy and safe provision of food services.
- Improve the nutritional awareness and meal practices of school community by increasing their understanding of healthy and sustainable food habits and fostering school environments that are conducive to such habits.

Definitions

Canteen	A place equipped for the preparation, distribution, and sale of healthy, permitted food for students and staff in a school.
Carbon Footprint	The amount of greenhouse gases released as the result of a particular activity.
Food Label	Any tag, brand, pictorial, or other descriptive matter marked on or attached to a food container or product, which provides information related to the food, including its ingredients, quality, and nutritional value (FAO and WHO, 2018).
Food Services	Arrangements made by schools for students and staff to obtain food during the school day, during extracurricular activities, and during any events organized by the school.
Healthy Eating	Consuming a variety of foods to ensure the intake of nutrients (carbohydrates, healthy fats, proteins, vitamins, and minerals) and fluids in appropriate proportions and quantities to support the energetic and physiological needs of the individual and maintain overall health. Healthy eating includes sustainable practices that consider the health of the planet (Cena & Calder, 2020).
Nutritional Value	The measure of the healthiness of a food item based on the quantity of nutrients contained in it.
Sustainable Meal Practices	Meal practices with low environmental impacts, including low carbon footprint, and which are accessible, affordable, and healthy, while optimizing natural and human resources (FAO, 2010).
Waste Management	Processes and actions required to manage waste from its inception to its final disposal (Ebeid & Zakaria, 2021).



Policy

1. School Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy

- 1.1 Policy Requirements: Schools shall develop and implement a Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy, in line with this policy. The policy shall:
1. Set out the school's commitment to the provision of healthy food choices and the encouragement of healthy and sustainable meal practices, and the steps to be taken in relation to this, including:
 - a. Measures to foster an environment conducive to healthy eating in line with [Section 2. Promotion of Healthy and Sustainable Eating](#).
 - b. Adherence to the nutritional standards prescribed in the *Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food in Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi*, if the school offers food service.
 - c. Measures to actively supervise students during snack/mealtimes to:
 - 1) Ensure that students are consuming acceptable foods (e.g., not bringing allergens that may harm other students, etc.).
 - 2) Ensure all students have access to a meal every day (unless fasting).
 - 3) To be vigilant about concerning food-related behavior (eating disorders, food-related bullying, etc.).
 - d. Measures to improve the sustainability of food consumption practices, in line with the school's sustainability strategy (see [Section 5. Sustainability](#)).
 2. Set out the school's commitment to adhere to the hygiene and food safety standards prescribed in the *Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food in Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi* in relation to food preparation, packaging, transportation, and handling.
 3. Set out measures for shared events by the school to ensure certain food items (e.g., alcohol, carbonated drinks, pork, and allergens) are prohibited. Schools are authorized to commit to further stringent measures for shared events, to ensure stricter healthy eating guidelines and/or sustainable practices.
 4. Set out measures taken by the school to promote the inclusion of minority groups and the safety of students with allergies and food intolerances (see [Section 4. Special Considerations](#)).
 5. Be published on the school website and made accessible to staff, students, vendors, and parents.

2. Promotion of Healthy Eating

- 2.1 Healthy Food Promotion: Schools shall create a healthy food culture that encourages a healthy eating environment of nutrition-rich foods for all members of the school community.
1. Unsafe food items such as those containing allergens (e.g., nuts) are prohibited for personal consumption or distribution on school premises.

2.2 Healthy Food Services: Schools offering food services shall provide students and staff with healthy, nutrient-rich food in line with the requirements of the *Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food in Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi*.

1. Schools shall obtain the necessary valid licenses and maintain inspection records and notices.

2.3 Nutrition Education: Schools shall deliver nutrition education to students through the formal curriculum and other engagement strategies (e.g., competitions, and workshops) to enable them to make active and informed choices. Schools shall ensure that the curriculum covers the following topics, at a minimum:

1. Healthy and balanced eating.
2. Reading of food labels.
3. Sustainable meal practices.

2.4 Staff Awareness: Schools shall ensure teachers and canteen staff attend training conducted by the Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (ADPHC) and other relevant entities in relation to healthy eating, to enable them to promote healthy eating when supervising and/or interacting with students.

2.5 Parent Engagement:

1. Schools shall share guidelines with parents regarding healthy and balanced eating. These guidelines shall include food restrictions (e.g., allergens like nuts, and caffeinated beverages) as mandated by the Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council (QCC) and “unhealthy” food that the school recommends parents avoid packing (e.g., fried food) that could lead to long-term health issues such as obesity, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, etc. Schools shall make a reference to the guidelines in the school-parent agreement, as per the [ADEK School Parent Engagement Policy](#).
2. Schools shall share with parents any relevant guidelines shared by ADEK, ADPHC, QCC, Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA), or the Department of Health (DoH) in relation to children’s health, nutrition, and allergies.
3. For events where food sharing has been authorized by ADEK, schools shall communicate to parents that any food brought in shall adhere to the *Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food in Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi*.
4. Schools shall communicate all food-related concerns (all instances included in [Section 1.1.c](#)) to parents on the same day as the concern was noticed.

3. Food Services

3.1 Quality Check and Compliance: Schools shall adhere to the *Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food in Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi* and Federal Law No. (10) of 2015 on Food Safety in the provision of food services.

3.2 Food Delivery Services: Schools shall not permit students to use external food delivery services (e.g., Talabat) during school hours.

3.3 Student Feedback: Schools shall engage the student body in planning and improving school food services (e.g., through feedback forms).

4. Special Considerations

4.1 Consideration for Minority Groups: Schools shall take into consideration the religious, cultural, and ethical needs of minority groups, and shall involve these groups in decision-making related to food services and the use of food labels.

4.2 Consideration for Students with Food Allergies and Intolerances:

1. Schools shall undertake the following measures to support students with allergies, in line with the requirements of the *Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food in Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi*:
 - a. Maintaining records of students' food allergies and intolerances and keeping a copy of the records in the school canteen.
 - b. Ensuring that food labels provide warnings regarding allergens in food provided through the school's food services.
2. Additionally, schools shall:
 - a. Consider students' allergies and intolerances when planning school activities and meals to ensure the basic food offering suits as many students as possible as it is or with minor modifications.
 - b. Require parents to notify the school immediately if their child develops an allergy and provide the relevant medicines to the school.
 - c. Share food allergy records of students with relevant staff members and respective parents and students to minimize the risk of accidental exposure to allergenic food substances.
 - d. Conduct risk assessments related to student allergies and implement appropriate risk mitigation measures.
 - e. Have procedures to effectively manage allergic reactions of students, including clear procedures to deal with severe allergic reactions.
 - f. Appropriately label and store medicines required to manage student allergies.

5. Sustainability

5.1 Sustainable Meal Practices: Schools shall develop and implement a strategy to improve the sustainability of their food services and promote sustainable meal practices, in line with the [ADEK School Sustainability Policy](#). This may include initiatives in relation to the following:

1. Sustainable practices in the delivery of food services:
 - a. Provision of sustainable meals and food products (e.g., plant-based meals, locally produced and low carbon footprint products).

- b. Waste reduction and management (e.g., prevention of overstocking, portion control, waste recycling), including reduction and management of packaging.
2. Promotion of sustainable practices amongst staff, students, and parents (e.g., reduction of food waste, recycling, avoidance of single-use containers).

6. Compliance

- 6.1 This policy shall be effective as of the start of the Academic Year 2024/25 (Fall term). Schools are expected to be fully compliant with this policy by the start of the Academic Year 2025/26 (Fall term).
- 6.2 Failure to comply with this policy shall be subject to legal accountability and the penalties stipulated in accordance with the ADEK's regulations, policies, and requirements, notwithstanding any other penalties imposed by Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments or any other relevant law. ADEK reserves the right to intervene if the school is found to be in violation of its obligations.



References

- Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council (QCC). (2022). *Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food in the Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi* (ADG 2, 3rd ed.).
- Cena, H. & Calder, P. 2020. Defining a Healthy Diet: Evidence for the Role of Contemporary Dietary Patterns in Health and Disease. *Nutrients*, 12(2): 334.
- Ebeid, E. Z. M. & Zakaria, M. B. (2021). Thermal analysis in recycling and waste management. In Ebeid, E. Z. M. & Zakaria, M. B. (Eds)., *Thermal Analysis: From Introductory Fundamentals to Advanced Applications* (pp. 247-300).
- Federal Decree Law No. (10) of 2015 on Food Safety
- Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and its amendments
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2010. *Sustainable Diets and Biodiversity*.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO). (2018). *International Food Standards*.

Publication

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Department of Knowledge and Education (ADEK)

This policy applies to Private and Charter Schools in Abu Dhabi. However, any circular issued prior to this policy or issued specifically for Charter Schools thereafter supersedes the requirements of this policy.

Past version:

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