



## Food and Nutrition Policy

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**Next Review:** 25 March 2027  
**Policy Owner:** Dr. Ethan Hildreth, Superintendent / CEO

### Purpose

To promote the health and the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of all students along with academic performance by providing and encouraging access to nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate food in alignment with the regulatory requirements.

### Scope

This policy applies to:

- All students, staff, and parents/guardians of the schools.
- All canteen operators, food vendors, tuck shops, and event-based food provisions within the school.
- The vending machines in the school and food brought from home.

### Responsibilities

#### 3.1 Principal

- Ensure implementation and enforcement of this policy.
- Shall communicate to the parents of the relevant guidelines shared by ADEK, Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (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.

#### 3.2 Manager School Operations (MSO)

- Ensure to share guidelines with parents regarding healthy and balanced eating practices and the school lunchbox guidelines at the beginning of the academic year and to new students upon admission.

#### 3.3 Health & Safety Officer

- Conduct random checks on school canteen to monitor compliance with this policy in line with ADG2 Guidelines.
- Report non-conformities and ensure corrective actions.

#### 3.4 School Nurse

- Monitor students with dietary restrictions and food allergies.
- Provide Nutrition awareness sessions (support by Slices Nutritionist).
- The school clinic must support monitoring student health and nutrition impacts.



### 3.5 Canteen Operator (Slices)

- Comply with all ADPHC-SEHHI approved food menu, portion size, and prohibited food restrictions.
- Maintain hygiene and food safety documentation.
- Slices Nutritionist will support the Nutrition awareness campaigns in the schools.

### 3.6 Parents and guardians

- Provide healthy packed meals.
- Avoid sending restricted food items.
- Notify the school of food allergies and special needs.
- Consider event food choices in line with this policy.

### 3.7 Staff and teachers

- Teachers and other school staff must reinforce healthy eating practices during school hours and activities.
- Teachers must model good food behavior, recognizing their influential role in shaping students' attitudes toward nutrition and healthy eating.
- Conduct a random lunchbox inspection each day.

### 3.8 Students

- Students should participate in maintaining a healthy eating environment.

## Key Policy Requirements

### 4.1 Approved Foods

- GEMS schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi will ensure that only balanced meals are served/consumed at lunch time.
- The school will promote the sale and provision of:
  - Fresh fruits and vegetables.
  - Whole grains (brown bread, wholegrain pasta, brown rice).
  - Low-fat dairy products.
  - Lean protein sources (eg. grilled chicken, legumes, eggs).
  - Water and low-fat plain milk.
- The school menu will include culturally appropriate and age-appropriate portion sizes.
- Sweets and desserts without excessive sugar/fat that meet the ADG2 requirements may be served only at breakfast (if applicable) or during snack times (not during lunch) and will be limited to a single portion per student per break period.

### 4.2 Restricted Foods

- GEMS schools in Abu Dhabi will prohibit the following foods:
  - Sugar-sweetened beverages (sodas, energy drinks, flavoured juices with added sugar).
  - Deep-fried and high-fat foods (chips, fried chicken, samosas unless baked).
  - Confectionery, chocolates, and high-sugar snacks.
  - Chips and high-salt snacks.
  - Processed meats high in sodium (hot dogs, sausages, nuggets).
  - Food and beverages containing artificial sweeteners, colouring, and excess preservatives, which are not permitted under UAE law.



### 4.3 Beverages

- Water to be the primary beverage provided.
- Fresh juices permitted without added sugar, limited to 200ml per serving.
- Milk-based drinks should be low-fat and unsweetened.

### 4.4 Portion Control

- Follow ADG2 Guidelines for portion sizes to prevent overconsumption.
- Avoid supersizing meals.

### 4.5 Labelling and Display

- All food items must be labelled clearly with ingredients and allergens, and nutritional information.
- Healthy options to be placed at eye level and promoted actively.

### 4.6 Events and Celebrations

- Birthdays and school celebrations should encourage fruit-based options or healthy snacks.
- Non-food celebrations are encouraged (e.g., books, stickers, games).
- Food sharing is discouraged.
- Restrict high-sugar and high-fat foods during school events.
- Parent communications should reinforce healthy food expectations.
- Cultural food days must follow hygiene and nutritional requirements.

### 4.7 Packed Lunch Guidelines and lunchbox compliance

- Parents are encouraged to provide lunchboxes that include:
  - Balanced meals including fruit, vegetables, whole grains, protein.
  - Water or milk instead of sugary beverages.
  - Meals should be stored in clean, temperature-safe containers and provided in appropriate portions.
  - For more information, please refer to the School lunchbox guidelines.
- School staff will conduct daily visual spot checks on a sample of lunchboxes to ensure compliance with the school's nutritional standards. Where restricted or non-compliant food items are identified:
  - The item may be substituted with a healthier, ADEK-compliant alternative available from the school canteen (where feasible).
  - Parents/guardians shall be informed through supportive and educational communication, reinforcing healthy guidelines.

## Monitoring Compliance & Feedback

- Canteen operators will undergo termly inspections by the authority to determine compliance.
- Canteen menus are to be reviewed and approved by the school's Health & Safety Officer and School Clinic.
- The school's Health & Safety Officer will conduct random checks to ensure compliance.
- The school's leadership team will actively engage parents, staff, students, and food service providers in feedback mechanisms to develop a healthy eating culture at the school and ensure ongoing quality enhancement. This may include, for example, food tasting sessions, suggestions for new menu items, age-appropriate surveys.



## Training and Awareness

Slices' staff responsible for food handling will receive internal training by the Slices team on:

- Safe food handling
- Nutrition standards
- Allergen management
- Slices Nutritionist will support the Nutrition awareness sessions in the schools.

The school will ensure to:

- Integrate healthy eating awareness into the curriculum. The curriculum should include minimum topics of healthy and balanced eating, reading food labels, sustainable meal practices and the impact of food marketing on dietary choices.
- Conduct engagement activities like competitions, cooking classes and workshops for students.
- Organize nutrition education sessions (at least once per term) to assist parents with lunchbox planning and ideating healthier alternatives for children's favorite food items.

Teachers and canteen staff participate in the training conducted by the Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (ADPHC) and other relevant entities in relation to healthy eating, allergen identification and emergency response, to enable them to promote healthy eating and guarantee the safety of students, when supervising, participating, and/or interacting with students.

## References

Internal

- School Health and Safety Policy
- GEMS Allergy Management Policy

External

- ADEK School Food and Nutrition Policy
- Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council (QCC) Guideline for Unified School Nutrition and Food Safety (ADG2)