April 2026

SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

All About Eating

Welcome to this term's safeguarding newsletter.

This term, we're focusing on the importance of healthy eating habits and positive food routines at home, for example, a good breakfast is especially important, helping children start the day feeling nourished, balanced and ready to learn. **Providing a consistent, nutritious breakfast each morning, alongside regular meals and snacks throughout the day, can have a significant impact on children's energy levels, emotional wellbeing, behaviour and concentration in school.**

Supporting Healthy Eating and Daily Food Routines

Good nutrition is essential for children's wellbeing, behaviour and learning. **Research consistently shows that children who eat a balanced diet and have regular meals are better able to concentrate, manage their emotions and engage positively with school life.** However, maintaining healthy eating habits can be challenging, and children's preferences and appetites often change as they grow and develop.

Why food matters!

Food plays a vital role in children's physical growth, brain development and emotional regulation. A balanced diet helps to provide steady energy and supports how children think, feel and behave. Poor or inconsistent nutrition can affect:

- attention and memory
- mood and behaviour
- energy levels throughout the day
- readiness to learn

Organisations such as NHS and Public Health England highlight healthy eating as a key protective factor for children's physical health, mental wellbeing and overall development.

Breakfast: The “Brain Starter”

After a night’s sleep, children’s brains need energy. Breakfast helps to “switch on” thinking and focus.

Research shows that children who eat breakfast:

- Have **better memory and attention**
- Perform better in **reading, maths, and problem-solving**
- Show improved **concentration and behaviour in class**

Breakfast also helps regulate appetite—children who skip it are more likely to overeat or choose less healthy snacks later in the day.



Healthy Lunchbox Snacks: What to Include (and What to Limit)

Snacks play an important role in keeping children energised and focused throughout the school day. A well-balanced lunchbox can help maintain steady energy levels, support concentration, and prevent the mid-morning or afternoon "slump".

What makes a healthy snack?
Healthy snacks provide a balance of nutrients to keep children fuller for longer and support brain function. Good options include:



- Fresh fruit (e.g. apples, bananas, berries)
- Vegetable sticks (e.g. carrots, cucumber, peppers)
- Plain yogurt or cheese
- Wholegrain crackers or breadsticks
- Nuts or seeds
- Boiled eggs or hummus

Why are some snacks less healthy?
Many popular lunchbox snacks are highly processed and contain high levels of sugar, salt and unhealthy fats. These can include:



- Crisps
- Chocolate bars
- Sweets
- Sugary cereal bars
- Fizzy or high-sugar drinks

While these foods may be convenient, they can:

- Cause **quick energy spikes followed by crashes**
- Lead to **poor concentration and tiredness**
- Affect **mood and behaviour**
- Leave children feeling hungry again soon after eating

Over time, regularly eating these foods can also impact children's overall health and eating habits.

Top tips for parents
- Try to include at least **one fresh or whole food snack** each day
- Swap sugary items for **naturally sweet options** like fruit
- Choose **wholegrain versions** where possible
- Keep treats occasional rather than everyday
- Involve children in choosing and preparing their lunchbox

Sugar, Snacks & Behaviour

Not all snacks are equal.

Highly processed, sugary foods can:

- Cause **energy spikes and crashes**
- Lead to **irritability and poor concentration**
- Increase cravings and overeating

Diets high in ultra-processed foods have been linked to **poorer cognitive outcomes and brain health** over time.

In contrast, balanced snacks help maintain **steady energy and calmer behaviour**.

What Makes a "Brain-Friendly" Breakfast or Snack?

Aim for a mix of:

✓ Slow-release energy (keeps children full and focused)
Whole grains (porridge oats, wholegrain toast)

✓ Protein (supports attention & steady energy)
Eggs, yogurt, milk, beans, nut butters

✓ Healthy fats (support brain development)
Nuts, seeds, oily fish

✓ Vitamins & minerals (protect and support brain cells)
Fruit and vegetables (especially berries and leafy greens)

Some evidence suggests foods like nuts (rich in omega-3) and eggs (rich in choline) may support memory and brain function.



Why water is important!

What children drink throughout the day can have a big impact on their health, energy levels and ability to concentrate. While squash and other flavoured drinks are popular, water is the best choice for keeping children hydrated and ready to learn.

Water is essential for the body and brain. Even mild dehydration can affect how children feel and perform at school. Drinking enough water helps to:

- Maintain focus and concentration
- Support memory and thinking skills
- Regulate body temperature and energy levels
- Prevent tiredness and headaches

Children who drink water regularly are more likely to feel alert, comfortable and ready to learn throughout the day.

What about squash?

Although squash may seem like a healthier option, many varieties contain:



- Added sugars (even in small amounts)
- Artificial sweeteners
- Acids that can affect dental health

Frequent consumption of sugary or sweetened drinks can:

- Increase the risk of tooth decay
- Encourage a preference for sweet tastes
- Lead to unnecessary calorie intake
- Reduce how much plain water children are willing to drink

Practical Tips for Busy Families

- Keep breakfast **quick and simple** (e.g. toast + peanut butter + banana)
- Offer **regular meals and snacks** to avoid energy dips
- Swap sugary snacks for **fruit, yogurt, or wholegrain options**
- Encourage **water over sugary drinks**
- Don't aim for perfection—**consistency over time matters most**

Sources

- American Academy of Pediatrics – Breakfast and learning
- Adolphus et al. (2016) – Breakfast and cognitive performance systematic review
- Hoyland et al. – Breakfast and cognition review
- Iovino et al. (2016) – Clinical trial on breakfast and cognition
- EatingWell – Diet patterns and brain health
- University of Reading study on walnuts and cognition
- Verywell Health – Choline and brain function

For any of your safeguarding concerns:

If you ever have a concern about a child or adult please speak to any member of staff who will support you, alternatively you can speak with our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mr Amies.

We have updated the safeguarding page on our website. There are some helpful links to organisations that might be able to provide support for you, should you require, with such things as bereavement, benefits, debt, legal issues and more.

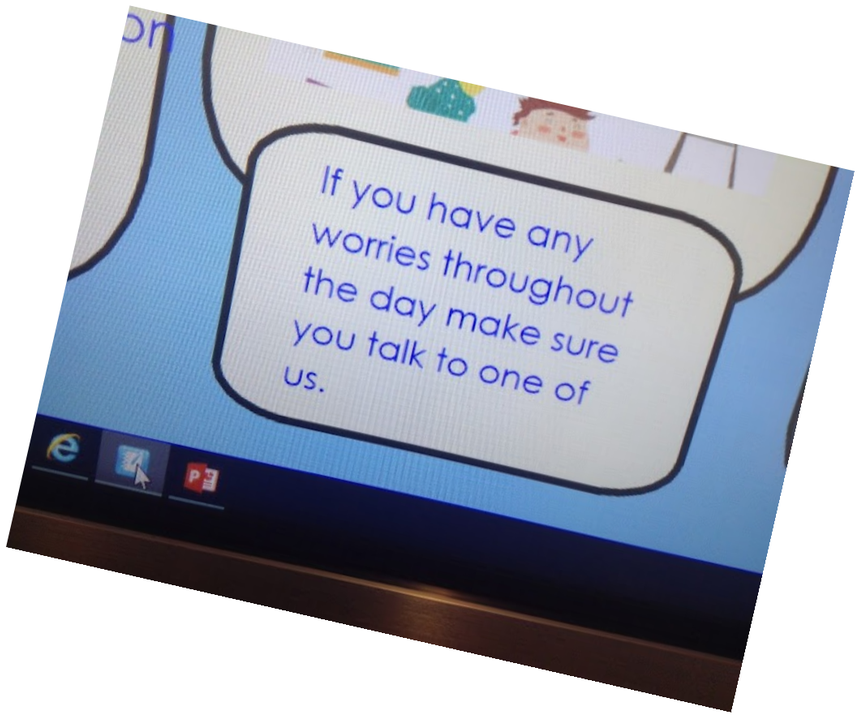
For more information, visit the 'Parent Zone' section of our safeguarding page:

https://www.sheringhamprimary.norfolk.sch.uk/our-school/safeguarding/

We are able to offer support with many family issues, so please do contact Mr Amies, at the school, if you would like to discuss anything that we might be able to help with.

We also have trained Domestic Violence Champions for Change in school.

If anyone would like advice or information on this very sensitive area please contact Mrs Carter or Mr Amies.



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