



Version	Updated by	Updated on	Changes
1.0	Al-Khateeb, R.	02-Oct-2024	Initial document creation

MRC-NECC Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy

1. Objectives

This policy aims to:

- Promote healthy eating habits and ensure food safety for all students and staff, in line with the Abu Dhabi Guidelines for Food in Educational Institutions.
- Provide information about MRC-NECC's procedures in regard to the supply, selection, storage, and distribution of foodstuff ensuring its safety for consumption.
- Encourage sustainable meal practices to support student development, mental and physical well-being, and environmental sustainability.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students, employees, outsourced catering staff, and the school community. It outlines responsibilities for food safety, nutrition, and adherence to hygiene standards.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Director and Executive Assistant are responsible for developing, updating, and disseminating this policy in coordination with the Health and Safety Officer.

3.1 School Administration

- Oversee compliance with food safety and hygiene standards as specified by the **Abu Dhabi Agricultural and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA)** and **Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (ADPHC)**.
- Evaluate catering service providers to ensure a variety of culturally sensitive, inclusive, and healthy food options.
- Ensure food services meet the nutritional needs of students, including those with allergies and food sensitivities.

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3.2 Health and Safety Officer

- Ensure compliance with all food safety and hygiene standards as outlined by **Abu Dhabi Agricultural and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA)** and **Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (ADPHC)**.
- Ensure that the catering service provider possesses the necessary licenses and permits required by the **Abu Dhabi Agricultural and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA)** and other relevant authorities.
- Conduct regular inspections of the school's food service areas (e.g., canteen, kitchen, cafeteria) to verify that hygiene and food safety protocols are followed and the appropriate use of PPE supplies in all food-related areas, and ensure that all food preparation, storage, and handling practices meet the regulatory requirements.
- Lead risk assessments related to food safety, including food storage, preparation, and handling in all relevant areas (e.g., kitchen, canteen, cafeteria), and ensure that procedures are in place to mitigate any health and safety risks.
- Monitor compliance within the school's designated nut-free zones and adherence to other dietary restrictions, ensuring these are clearly communicated to staff, students, and parents.
- Coordinate with the Executive Assistant, who serves as the main point of contact with the catering team, to address any health and safety concerns raised by staff or parents and ensure comprehensive documentation of food safety and health-related issues.

3.3 Catering Service Providers

- Adhere to food safety regulations, provide a detailed list of ingredients, and offer balanced menu options that include fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein.
- Work with the Executive Assistant to accommodate individual dietary needs based on student health plans.

3.4 All Employees

- All staff members are responsible for actively supporting the school's Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy. This includes:
 - Promoting healthy food choices during student supervision, whether in the classroom, cafeteria or during extracurricular activities.
 - Being vigilant during snack/mealtimes to ensure students follow the school's healthy eating guidelines.
 - Reporting any special dietary needs or restrictions of students to the Executive Assistant, who will coordinate with catering providers to ensure appropriate accommodations are made.
 - Reporting any concerns about students' eating behaviors, allergies, or food-related health issues to the school nurse or administration.
 - Actively participating in training on food safety and healthy eating organized by the school or relevant authorities, such as the Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (ADPHC).

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مركز محمد بن راشد للتعليم الخاص

Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Special Education

Operated By

The New England Center for Children* مبادرة مركز نيو إنجلاند للأطفال

4. Policy Requirements

4.1 Healthy Eating Environment

- The school's catering service provider must meet the nutritional standards prescribed by the **Abu Dhabi Guidelines for Food in Educational Institutions** while being flexible to accommodate the diverse dietary needs of our students.
- No food containing specific items (e.g., alcohol, pork, carbonated drinks, and allergens) is permitted on the school premises. This includes all meals, snacks, and shared events.
- Our school has designated nut-free zones to ensure the safety of students and staff with nut allergies. No food containing nuts—including peanuts, almonds, hazelnuts, and products made from them—is permitted in these areas. This includes all meals, snacks, and shared events.
- Recognizing that many of our students have restrictive dietary needs and that some may not be able to adhere to certain food exposures, we work individually with each student to meet their unique requirements. We promote healthy, varied eating as much as possible while respecting each student's preferences. Our goal is to create a supportive eating environment that fosters choice without pressure, ensuring their safety and well-being.
- During mealtimes, therapists/case managers accompany students in the cafeteria, supervising them as they eat. We provide pre-packed meals with two options or personalized meals to ensure students receive appropriate nutrition. This supervision helps monitor for any concerning behaviors, such as disordered eating, and staff will be trained to facilitate positive food experiences and support healthy eating choices.

4.2 Nutritional Education

- The school will provide nutrition education tailored to our students' diverse learning styles, emphasizing food exposure as a vital strategy for expanding their food preferences. This includes engaging in discussions about healthy eating, and guidance on reading food labels whenever possible, and encouragement to explore a variety of foods at their own pace.
- Recognizing that many of our students are picky eaters, staff will receive regular training on effective strategies to support these students in developing a positive relationship with food. Training will focus on fostering an environment that encourages exploration and gradual acceptance of new foods while being mindful of individual dietary needs and preferences.
- The school will utilize notice boards and healthy eating posters/flyers in appropriate areas, including the cafeteria, to promote nutrition education and encourage students and families to engage in healthy eating practices.
- The curriculum will also incorporate sustainable meal practices, helping students understand the broader impact of their food choices on health and the environment.

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4.3 Sustainable Meal Practices

- The school is committed to promoting environmentally sustainable meal practices, emphasizing the importance of reducing food waste and making thoughtful food choices.
- Engaging staff, parents, and students whenever possible in discussions about sustainable practices will be an essential part of our approach, fostering an understanding of the importance of mindful consumption and reducing packaging waste.

5. Food Safety

5.1 Compliance and Hygiene

- All food preparation, storage, and handling must adhere to **Abu Dhabi Guidelines for Food in Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi**, the **Federal Law No. (10) of 2015 on Food Safety in the provision of food services**, and any relevant ADEK requirements.
- The school Health and Safety Officer will maintain food safety records and ensure that canteen staff follow proper food handling procedures.

5.2 Special Considerations

- The school nurse is responsible for keeping an up-to-date record of students' allergies and food sensitivities, which will be regularly communicated to relevant staff.
- A list of students with allergies will be securely available in relevant areas (e.g., kitchen, canteen, cafeteria) for emergencies.
- The Executive Assistant will collaborate with the catering service provider to ensure that food labels explicitly highlight any allergenic ingredients.
- Procedures for managing allergic reactions will be coordinated through the school nurse, ensuring that appropriate medications are maintained on-site. The nurse will also oversee training for staff on recognizing and responding to allergic reactions to ensure a swift and effective response when needed.

6. Parent and Community Engagement

- Parents will receive guidelines on preparing healthy meals for their children, including restrictions on unhealthy food items (e.g., sugary drinks, fried foods) as outlined by the **Abu Dhabi Guidelines for Food in Educational Institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi**.
- While the school offers pre-packed snack and lunch meals, some parents may prefer to provide food from home. This is acceptable as long as the school is informed, and the food aligns with our nutritional requirements and safety standards. We encourage open communication about food choices to ensure that students are supported in their dietary needs.
- The school will collaborate with parents on meal planning and regularly update them on food-related concerns, fostering a partnership that supports each child's unique eating habits.
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7. Compliance

- MRC-NECC Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy shall fully comply with the rules and requirements specified by the **Abu Dhabi Agricultural and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA)** and **Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (ADPHC)** and any other relevant official authorities in this regard.
- 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.

Approved By:

Pamela Olsen PhD, MEd., BCBA
Executive Director



Approved Date: 03-Oct-2024

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