



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

SCHOOL POLICY

on

FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY



Introduction

A safe and healthy diet is essential for physical and mental health, making it a key contributor to 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 and encourage healthy food choices. Beyond promoting health, schools also have a responsibility to ensure that their food provision supports their efforts to improve the environmental sustainability of their operations. By adopting sustainable food practices, schools can help reduce their environmental impact and model responsible behavior for students. This policy sets out the basic requirements for schools in providing healthy and sustainable food environments.

Purpose

- Ensure that the school eating environment and food services comply with the *Abu Dhabi Guideline for Unified School Nutrition and Food Safety* (QCC, 2025), and any other relevant guidelines by concerned authority, in relation to the healthy and safe provision of food services.
- Enhance the school community's nutritional awareness and meal practices by promoting a deeper understanding of healthy, sustainable eating habits and creating supportive environments with high nutritional standards.

Definitions

ADG2 Requirements	The requirements of the <i>Abu Dhabi Guideline (ADG2): Abu Dhabi Guideline for Unified School Nutrition and Food Safety</i> issued by the Quality & Conformity Council (QCC), 2025 and any amendments).
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	Any substance or part of a substance intended for human consumption by eating or drinking, whether it is a raw, manufactured, or semi-processed substance, including beverages, bottled drinking water, chewing gum, and any substance used in the manufacture of food preparation and processing, but it does not include cosmetics, tobacco or substances that are used only as drugs (ADG 2, “Terms and Definitions”).
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	A dietary practice of consuming a variety of safe 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, including the prevention of diseases. 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 Food and Nutrition Policy

- 1.1 Policy Requirements: Schools shall develop and implement a Food and Nutrition Policy, in line with this policy and the ADG2 requirements. The policy shall:
1. Set out the school's commitment to creating a culture of healthy eating, food safety, and sustainability, and the steps to be taken in relation to this, including:
 - a. Measures to foster an environment conducive to healthy eating (see [Section 2. Promotion of Healthy Eating](#)).
 - b. 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 adhering to the hygiene and food safety standards prescribed in the ADG2 requirements in relation to food preparation, packaging, transportation, and handling.
 3. Set out measures for large-scale events that are open to the larger school community (e.g., international day) to ensure that any food prepared meets the ADG2 requirements, and reinforcing the prohibition of “Red List” items (e.g., alcohol, carbonated drinks, pork, allergens; as outlined in Appendix A. Restricted Foods and Beverages on the Red List as per ADG2 Requirements).
 4. Schools are authorized to commit to further stringent measures for shared events, to ensure stricter healthy eating guidelines and/or sustainable practices.
 5. 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](#)).
 6. Be published on the school website and made accessible to staff, students, vendors, and parents.

2. Promotion of Healthy Eating

- 2.1 Healthy Eating 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, in line with the ADG2 requirements.
1. ADG2 requirements are applicable to school canteens, cafes, kiosks, vending machines and food brought from home. This includes any food served during the school day (e.g., in class) in addition to school-sponsored activities and events as per Section 7. (Scope) in the ADG2 requirements.
- 2.2 Active Supervision: Schools shall have measures in place for staff to actively supervise students during snack/mealtimes, including:

1. Conducting visual compliance spot checks (see [Section 2.8. Enforcing Lunchbox Compliance](#))
2. Ensuring that all students have access to a meal every day (unless fasting). For schools that have a food service, a meal shall be provided to the student, with parents being notified through supportive communication and reminded that they will be charged for the provision.
3. Being vigilant about concerning food-related behavior (eating disorders, food-related bullying/misconduct, etc.) and having a school-based system to report incidents/observations to parents (e.g., through the nurse, school counselors, teachers, or other staff concerned with student wellbeing).
4. Modeling good eating habits by encouraging staff to eat together with students (where appropriate) as per Section 11.10.2 (School Staff Participation) in the ADG2 requirements and obligating all students to clean up after themselves.
 - a. For KG and Cycle 1, staff on duty (any staff member who has breakfast/lunch duty as determined by the school) shall sit with and supervise groups students during their meals.
 - b. Staff shall be encouraged to eat with the students, and a portion of this time shall be occasionally dedicated to educational purposes, preferably through play (e.g., teaching proper utensil usage, table manners, identifying food groups, encouraging students to try new foods, cleaning up after oneself, repacking all wrappings in one's lunch box to practice "zero-waste" habits).

2.3 **Balanced Meals:** Schools shall ensure that only balanced meals that meet the ADG2 "MyPlate" requirements as per Section 11.2 (Composition of a Balanced School Meal) are served/consumed at lunch time, in line with the quantities recommended in Section 11.3 (Nutritional Requirements for Meals) in the ADG2 requirements.

1. Schools are authorized (and are highly encouraged) to introduce further measures to promote balanced meals, such as not permitting students to purchase individual food items at lunch time that do not meet the requirements of a balanced meal. In such cases:
 - a. Individual items may be regrouped/combined into meal options (e.g., option 1: a chicken sandwich with a side of vegetables and fruit OR option 2: a mixed chicken and vegetable sandwich with a side of fruit).
 - b. Schools may authorize students to purchase individual items at lunch time to complete a balanced meal only if they have brought other complementary items (e.g., a student has brought a serving of vegetables and/or fruits from home. In this case, the student is authorized to purchase a sandwich on its own, without purchasing the full meal).
 - c. However, schools shall practice discretion in addressing financial constraints and practice sensitivity and leniency in such cases, working with parents to actively encourage the packing of balanced meals.
2. Sweets and desserts without excess sugar/fat that meet the ADG2 requirements may only be served at breakfast (if applicable) or during snack times (not during lunch) and shall be limited to a single portion per student per break period. All snacks shall meet the standards of Section 11.4 (Nutritional Requirements for Snacks) in the ADG2 requirements.

3. Home-packed meals shall be prepared as per Section 11.8.1 (Guidelines for Home-Packed Lunchboxes) in the ADG2 requirements.

2.4 ADG2 “Red List”: Schools shall ensure adherence to the banning of “Red List” food for any food consumed by students on school premises (whether provided at school or brought from home).

1. Exceptionally, schools are authorized to permit non-Muslim students to bring non-halal meat options from home for personal snacks and meals. However, students shall adhere to a strict no-sharing policy of such items, subject to disciplinary actions for level 2 offenses in case of violation, as per the [ADEK School Student Behavior Policy](#).
2. Schools are equally authorized to institute a full ban on non-halal meat options.
3. In either case, staff, parents, and students shall abide by the school’s policy on this matter, and ADEK nor the school shall not be held responsible for any incidents.

2.5 Hydration: Schools shall regularly remind students (through water breaks, posters, etc.) to stay hydrated by drinking water, which shall be the “default beverage served during school meals and special events” (QCC, 2025). This is particularly importantly before, during, and after physical activity as per the [ADEK School Physical Education and School Sports Policy](#). Water shall be available throughout the school and at critical times and events as per Section 11.5 (Hydration and Beverage Requirements) in the ADG2 requirements.

2.6 Sharing of Food: Schools have the discretion to ban the sharing of food in class and during the regular school day. While not recommended in order to prevent any food-related incidents (e.g., food allergies, potential foodborne illnesses due to improper handling/storage, to respect individual cultural or dietary considerations), the sharing of food is authorized under the following conditions:

1. Food sharing is only authorized for students who have parental consent to consume food that is not provided by the school’s licensed food services, in line with any individual dietary restrictions.
2. Shared food shall meet the ADG2 requirements (strictly excluding prohibited “Red List” items).
3. Food is handled properly and stored in appropriate containers and settings to maintain optimal temperatures.
4. Schools shall encourage in-class celebrations (e.g. birthdays, lesson completions, etc.) using alternative means (e.g. small gifts, party favors) in line with ADG2 requirements to “use non-food-based rewards such as school-wide recognition (e.g., announcements, noticeboards, letters to parents) or tangible items (e.g., stationery, games, sports equipment)” (QCC, 2025).

5. For larger school-wide events (e.g., fairs, international day), all food shall be properly identified with labels where appropriate) to respect individual dietary restrictions.
 6. Schools shall inform parents of the requirements around the sharing of food, but shall not be held responsible for any food-related incidents stemming from these occasions.
- 2.7 Microwaves: Microwaves shall not be placed in visible areas nor be authorized for usage by students in order prevent any incidents (e.g., potential burns from uneven heating, risk of explosions caused by improper food container materials, hygiene concerns, possible degradation of food quality caused by incorrect usage).
- 2.8 Enforcing Lunchbox Compliance: Schools shall ensure home-packed lunchboxes are aligned with sections 4.2 (Key Regulatory Shifts) and 11.8 (Guidelines for Home-Packed Lunchboxes) in the ADG2 requirements:
1. Schools shall conduct daily visual spot checks on a sample of lunchboxes to ensure compliance with the school's nutritional standards. This shall be done in a non-invasive, respectful, and non-judgmental manner, with parents being notified of non-compliance on the same day.
 2. Schools are authorized to confiscate or ask students to put away non-compliant food items to be returned home under the following conditions:
 - a. Schools With Food Services: Following 3 non-compliance notifications sent to parents, a healthier alternative shall be offered from the school's food services, with parents being notified that they will be charged for the alternative provision.
 - b. Schools Without Food Services: School are only authorized to confiscate/ask students to put away non-compliant snacks and beverages if the student has something to eat for their meal (e.g., a main dish/sandwich, even if not compliant). Parents shall be notified supportively with reminders to avoid packing non-compliant items.
 - c. Confiscation is only authorized if schools have a system in place to donate non-compliant items. The disposal of food otherwise is not authorized to prevent the promotion of wastefulness.
 - d. Students are not authorized to eat confiscated/returned non-compliant foods on the school premises, including on the bus, and both students and parents shall be reminded of this rule regularly.
 3. Schools are authorized to charge parents for alternative food provision offered to students from their own food services in the above cases, or if a student did not bring food to school for any reason. This provision shall be explicitly stated in the parent-school agreement and in each of the 3 non-compliance notifications sent prior to replacing student meals with healthier alternatives from the school's food services.
 4. In the case of repeated non-compliance, schools shall further engage with parents through appropriate parties (e.g., school counselor, nurse, wellbeing lead, dean of students, child protection officer, etc.)

2.9 Personal Hygiene: Schools shall ensure that all students follow basic personal hygiene practices by:

1. Washing/disinfect their hands before eating.
2. Schools shall display handwashing/sanitization signage in eating areas.
3. Staff shall be mindful of younger children and assist them with any hygiene issues (e.g., make sure they do not have food on their person after eating).

2.10 Nutrition Education: Schools shall deliver nutrition education to students through the formal curriculum and other engagement strategies (e.g., competitions, cooking classes, workshops) in line with Section 11.10 (Nutrition and Food Literacy Promotion) in the ADG2 requirements. 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.
4. Impact of food marketing on dietary choices.

2.11 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, 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.

1. Schools shall ensure that staff use positive and supportive language about healthy eating that is focused on wellbeing rather than appearance, and avoid the use of negative language concerning body image and perception of food (e.g., “fat”, “skinny”, or “junk”) (QCC, 2025).
2. **Modelling Good Food Behavior:** Schools shall ensure that teachers and staff consistently model good food behavior, recognizing their influential role in shaping students’ attitudes toward nutrition and healthy eating (e.g., demonstrating balanced food choices, avoiding the promotion or consumption of unhealthy foods in front of students, encouraging respectful mealtime habits) as per ADG2 requirements, which prohibits the display, sale, or advertisement of food that do not meet the nutritional requirements on school premises.
3. Staff shall actively support the promotion of a positive food environment by reinforcing positive messages and fostering a safe “environment where students feel comfortable discussing food, health and body image openly” (QCC, 2025).

2.12 Parent Engagement:

1. Schools shall share guidelines with parents regarding healthy and balanced eating practices at the beginning of the academic year (and to new students

upon admission). These guidelines shall include a copy of the restricted foods that appear on the ADG2 “Red List” 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 and its own Food and Nutrition Policy in the school-parent agreement and the parent handbook, as per the [ADEK School Parent Engagement Policy](#).

2. Schools shall distribute to parents any 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. Schools shall 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 as per Section 1.1.8.4 (Communication with Parents) in the ADG2 requirements.
4. All communication must be “clear, non-blaming, and responsive to cultural and individual dietary needs” and schools shall partner with parents “to reinforce consistent, supportive nutrition and body image messages at home” as per Section 1.1.8.4 (Communication with Parents) in the ADG2 requirements.
5. For events where food sharing/sales has been authorized by ADEK, schools shall communicate to parents that any food brought in shall adhere to the ADG2 requirements.
6. Schools shall communicate all food-related concerns (all instances included in [Section 2.2.3](#)) to parents on the same day as the concern was noticed.

2.13 Records of Food-Related Complaints: Schools shall keep records of all food-related complaints and establish response procedures to address these complaints, in line with the [ADEK School Records Policy](#).

2.14 Continuous Improvement and Engagement: Schools shall actively engage parents, staff, students, and food service providers in feedback mechanisms (e.g., food tasting sessions, suggestions for new menu items, age-appropriate surveys) to develop a healthy eating culture at the school and ensure ongoing quality enhancement.

3. Food Services

3.1 Quality Control and Compliance: Schools shall adhere to the ADG2 requirements and Federal Law No. (10) of 2015 on Food Safety in the provision of food services (including canteen meals, vending machines, and food kiosks), and obtain and maintain valid licenses and inspection records/notices.

3.2 Schools shall ensure that contracts with food service providers explicitly require compliance with the ADG2 and ADPHC requirements. Food services may be provided by:

1. SEHHI-certified and approved suppliers, or

2. New suppliers, provided that they are formally registered and operate under the condition of obtaining SEHHL certification prior to continuing service.
- 3.3 Reporting of Non-Compliance by Food Services: Schools shall report non-compliance by food services to ADAFSA.
- 3.4 Food Delivery Services: Schools shall not permit students to use external food delivery services (e.g., Talabat, Careem, Noon, Deliveroo, Instashop) during school hours. Staff using these services shall use discretionary measures to avoid the unintentional promotion of unhealthy food items (e.g., picking up a fast-food delivery in a tote bag, ordering healthier alternatives on days when they are assigned mealtime supervision), in line with the ADG2 requirements on limiting student exposure to the marketing of non-nutritious food.

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 ADG2 requirements:
 - 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/snacks 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, in line with the [ADEK School Health and Safety Policy](#).
 - f. Appropriately label and store medicines required to manage student allergies.
- 4.3 For students with special dietary requirements (alternative quantities, restrictions, or meal timings for high performance athletes, those with medical conditions, etc.), parents shall submit written requests (with justification) for accommodations, and schools shall collaborate with approved suppliers to provide inclusive menus that meet diverse dietary needs in line with ADG2 requirements.

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/snacks 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).
- 5.2 Consumption of School Produce: All school-produced food items (for schools who have onsite gardens or farms) shall be handled and prepared following strict food safety and hygiene standards, as per ADAFSA and ADG2 requirements, to ensure the health and safety of all students. The school shall take into account students' allergies, dietary restrictions, or cultural preferences related to consuming school-produced food.

6. Food Marketing

- 6.1 Promotion: As per Section 11.9.1.1 (Visual Nudges and Messaging) in the ADG2 requirements, schools shall employ marketing strategies to promote and encourage healthy and safe eating practices, including verifying that food service providers are engaged in promotional marketing in compliance with the ADG2 requirements.
- 6.2 Prohibition: Schools shall prohibit the display, sale, and advertisement of non-compliant food (and related brands) on its premises and any school-sponsored events as per Section 11.9.4. (Marketing and Advertisement Rules) in the ADG2 requirements. This includes, but is not limited to:
1. Events where food is provided or sold, such as sport days, national/international celebrations, school breakfast/lunch programs, fundraisers, and classroom activities.
 2. Unintentional marketing by staff when carrying food delivery bags displaying restaurant logos or eating non-compliant items from home in front of students.
 3. Marketing techniques that “may be used to influence food and beverage purchasing, including sports sponsorships, promotions and deals, and gifts, toys and prizes” (QCC, 2025).
 4. Select “appropriate sponsorship from a wide range of commercial entities, if sponsorship of school events is required” (QCC, 2025).

7. Compliance

- 7.1 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). Schools shall be compliant with the updated requirements in version 1.2 of this policy by 30 March 2026.
- 7.2 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.



APPENDICES

Appendix A. Restricted Foods and Beverages on the Red List as per ADG2 Requirements

1. Red List Items

1.1 High Fat and High-Sugar Foods:

1. Deep-Fried Foods:
 - a. Examples: Fried chicken, falafel, samosas, fries, and other deep-fried food options.
 - b. Reason: High oil absorption leads to elevated saturated/trans fats and extra calories.
 - c. Alternatives: Oven-baked, air fried or roasted versions of the examples covered above.
2. Sweets and Desserts with Excess Sugar/Fat:
 - a. Examples: Cakes, donuts, croissants, sweet pastries, marshmallows, candy, lollipops, ice cream, slushies, chocolate (less than 50% cocoa), and other high fat and sugar dessert options.
 - b. Reason: Contributes to excessive sugar, saturated fat, and empty calories that can undermine dental health and weight management.
 - c. Alternatives: Portion-controlled whole-grain muffins with minimal sugar, fruit-based desserts, dark chocolate (more than 50% cocoa).¹

1.2 Unhealthy Beverages:

1. Soft Drinks (All Types):
 - a. Examples: Regular, diet, or zero-calorie artificially sweetened sodas.
 - b. Reason: Often high in sweeteners (sugar or artificial) and phosphates, high in caffeine, lacking nutritional value.
 - c. Alternatives: Water, carbonated water, unsweetened fruit-infused water, low-sugar 100% fruit juices (max 200 ml).
2. Energy and Sports Drinks:
 - a. Exception: Energy and sport drinks are not allowed but Isotonic sports drinks can be allowed under specific conditions.²
 - b. Reason: Typically high in caffeine, sugar, and other stimulants not appropriate for children's daily intake.
 - c. Alternatives: Water, electrolyte solutions specified by health professionals.
3. Caffeinated Beverages:
 - a. Examples: Hot/iced coffee and teas.
 - b. Reason: Excessive caffeine can impact blood pressure, sleep, and concentration in children.
 - c. Alternatives: Herbal teas without caffeine, warm milk (complying with banned additives).

¹ Refer to section 11.4.2 table 9 for the accepted baked good portions in the ADG2 Requirements.

² Refer to section 11.7.3 for more details on Athletes and Physically Active Students in the ADG2 Requirements.

4. Fruit Syrup Juices:
 - a. Example: Juice that contain the statement “Made from real fruit juice” or “beverage, cocktail, drink”.
 - b. Reason: Syrup-based juices are essentially sugar-loaded drinks lacking the fiber/vitamins of real fruit.
 - c. Alternatives: 100% fruit juice (max 200 ml) without added sugar, artificial flavoring and/or coloring. It can be diluted with water or carbonated water. Freshly blended smoothies without added sugar can be made with low fat dairy.³

1.3 Processed and High-Fat Meals:

1. All Non-Halal Meat Options:
 - a. Examples: Food items containing pork derivatives or with added alcohol (ethanol) or one of its products.
2. Processed Meats:
 - a. Examples: Hotdogs, sausages, mortadella, pepperoni, salami, smoked turkey, smoked salmon, bacon and other Deli meats options.
 - b. Reason: High sodium, preservatives, and saturated fats; linked to long-term health risks.
 - c. Alternatives: Lean poultry, fish, or unprocessed meats (baked or grilled).
3. High-Fat Meat Products:
 - a. Examples: All high fat meat cuts coming from beef, lamb and camel.
 - b. Reason: Contributes to excess saturated fat, processed meats, and high sodium, increasing the risk of various health concerns which can undermine healthy weight management.
 - c. Alternatives: Chicken breast, trimmed beef, or plant-based proteins (legumes).

1.4 Additive-Contain Foods:

1. Food and Synthetic Colorings and Flavors:
 - a. Examples: Sunset yellow E110, Quinoline yellow E104, Carmoisine E122, Allura red E129, Tartrazine E102, Ponceau 4R E124, RED40, YELLOW5, YELLOW6, BLUE1 and Food containing artificial sweetener, preservatives, colors or flavors manufactured from chemicals.
 - b. Reason: Chemical dyes or chemical food flavoring can cause hyperactivity or allergic reactions in sensitive individuals.
 - c. Alternatives: Natural colorings from vegetable juices (beetroot, carrot, turmeric), or fresh fruits.
2. Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) and Flavor Enhances:
 - a. Reason: Can cause headaches or allergic-like reactions in sensitive children; encourages overconsumption of high-sodium foods.
 - b. Alternatives: Use fresh herbs, spices, onion, garlic, or citrus for flavor enhancement.
3. High Fructose Corn Syrup:
 - a. Reason: HFCS correlates strongly with obesity and metabolic issues.

³ Refer to section 11.5.2 table 12 for more details on juice specifications in the ADG2 Requirements.

- b. Alternatives: Use minimal sugar, honey, or fruit purees for sweetness; still in moderation.
4. Artificial Sweeteners:
 - a. Examples: All sweeteners that are not listed under the UAE technical regulation UAE.S 192:2019 Additives.
 - b. Reason: Some artificial sweeteners that are not listed under UAE technical regulations are possibly carcinogenic to humans.
 - c. Alternatives: Sweeteners as listed in the UAE technical regulation UAE.S 192:2019 Additives Permitted for Use in Food Stuffs. An example of an acceptable sweetener is stevia (made from the leaves of the *Stevia rebaudiana* plant).

1.5 Dairy and Soy Products:

1. Dairy Drinks:
 - a. Examples: Flavored and sweetened dairy products and those that exceed set sugar/fat thresholds.
 - b. Reason: Excess saturated fat, and sugar can overshadow nutritional benefits of milk.
 - c. Alternatives: Unflavored full fat or low-fat milk, unsweetened yogurt, and natural cheese.
2. Soy Products:
 - a. Examples: Soy milk, and sauces that contain soy and its derivatives.
 - b. Reason: Many soy products contain flavor enhancers, sweeteners, or other chemicals.
 - c. Alternatives: Other plant-based milks (unsweetened coconut milk, or oat milk).
3. Cheese Imitations:
 - a. Example: Imitation cream cheese, sandwich slices, flavored cheese slices and other highly processed imitation cheese products.
 - b. Reason: Overly processed cheese spreads/imitations can be high in trans fats, salt, and additives.
 - c. Alternatives: Low-fat mozzarella, reduced-fat cheddar, other low-fat dairy options.

1.6 Other Restricted Items:

1. Pickled Vegetables (High Salt/Preservatives):
 - a. Reason: Excess salt and preservatives clash with low-sodium requirements.
 - b. Alternatives: Fresh or lightly marinated vegetables using vinegar/herbs with minimal salt.
2. High Caloric Spreads, Salad Dressings and Sauces:
 - a. Examples: Mayonnaise, liquid and dried chili, ketchup. ready sauces such as ranch sauce, jalapeno sauce, Italian sauce and others.
 - b. Reason: High sugar, salt, or fat sauces with artificial flavoring or/and coloring.

- c. Alternatives: Low-sodium, low-fat homemade sauces (tomato-based with herbs, yogurt-based dressings). Low fat mayonnaise, low salt and sugar ketchup.
- 3. Allergens: Nuts, Soybean, Sesame**
- a. Examples: All nuts and their products, peanuts and their products, soybean and its products, and sesame seeds and its products.
 - b. Reason: Allergen concerns.
 - c. Alternatives: Seeds such as chia seeds, flax seeds, pumpkin seeds and sunflower seeds (unsalted).



References

- Abu Dhabi Quality and Conformity Council (QCC). (2025). *Abu Dhabi Guideline (ADG2): Abu Dhabi Guideline for Unified School Nutrition and Food Safety* (ADG 2, 4th ed.).
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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.

Current version:

Amended to align with the new Abu Dhabi Guideline (ADG2): Abu Dhabi Guideline for Unified School Nutrition and Food Safety (QCC, 2025).

Past versions:

- 2024 (September)_ADEK_School_Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy_v.1.1
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- 2024 (January)_ADEK_School_Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy_v.1.0
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