

Backworth Park Primary School



Drinking Water Policy

February 2024

Context

Schools are a key setting to teach children about nutrition and healthy beverage choices. School based interventions reach all children regardless of their background.

In England 22.3% of children in Reception (aged 4–5 years) are overweight or obese. This rises to 37.8% of children by the time they are in Year 6 (aged 10–11 years). Higher rates are seen in North Tyneside at 25.9% in Reception and 38.1% in Year 6.

One reason for this is the high sugar diet that many children consume. High levels of sugar can also contribute to tooth decay. According to recent data, 20.3% of five-year-olds in the region had visually obvious decay. Every day in the UK there are 180 operations to remove children's teeth due to tooth decay, at a significant cost to the NHS and to families.

Some soft drinks, particularly sports and energy drinks, have high levels of caffeine. Such drinks can cause poor concentration in class, headaches, irritability, sleepiness, dizziness and can affect behaviour and attainment.

Schools are required to take action to improve children's health. Promoting drinking water and banning sugar contented and fizzy drinks will reduce tooth decay, promote healthier choices and improve the health of pupils. On average, children should be provided with 6–8 glasses of water per day.

At Backworth Park Primary School, we believe in ensuring easy access to water and promoting a regular water intake throughout the school day as vital in promoting health and providing a healthy learning environment.

Children will achieve most when both their health and learning needs are met. Drinking water throughout the day is an important way of protecting health and wellbeing. There is increasing evidence that it can help children to improve their concentration and enhance educational achievements at school. It is also linked to improving social behaviour and improving relationships between pupils and teachers.

Drinking adequate quantities of water throughout the school day is an essential part of the foundation for good health and effective learning. Creating a culture of drinking water at school and taking every opportunity to enhance the healthy drinking environment are core components of a healthy school. Drinking water is a key requirement in a healthy diet.

Aim of the policy:

At Backworth Park Primary School we aim to ensure that staff and pupils are more aware of the importance of a regular fluid intake in maintaining good health, and more able to maintain easy access to water for pupils and staff throughout the school day.

We aim:

- to promote a regular intake of water for pupils and staff
- to increase awareness of the health benefits of drinking adequate levels of water regularly throughout the school day
- to establish relevant school policies that encourage pupils and staff to drink fresh water regularly, throughout the school day
- to improve the oral and general health of pupils

We will work towards the following targets:

- The school should create an environment that provides drinking water as a pleasurable experience.
- Water must be actively promoted to pupils i.e. teachers acting as good role models by drinking water openly.
- Water must be accessible to pupils at all times during the day.
- All children should have an equal opportunity to drink water.
- Provision for extra water and extra water breaks must be provided when pupils exercise and/or in warm weather.
- Pupils must be allowed good access to the toilets during the day.

The short and long term benefits to children of drinking water throughout the school day include:

- Children are not distracted by feelings of thirst, tiredness and irritability.
- Children are more receptive to learning.
- Improved cognitive function and mental performance.
- Improves social behaviour.
- Physical performance and sports performance are improved.
- Improved bladder and bowel control (helps to reduce bed and daytime wetting and soiling)
- Helps to prevent constipation.
- Promotes good oral health.
- Promotes fresher breath and healthier skin.
- Reduces risk of urinary tract infections.
- Helps to keep the kidneys healthy and reduces the risk of kidney stones.
- Can help reduce the long-term risk of certain cancers.
- Water (as opposed to soft drinks) can help prevent childhood and adolescent obesity.

Water Bottles in school

- Children should only drink water during class. Where a child has not been exposed to drinking water and refuses, our school nurse can help and support families. This includes flavoured water. Juice or sweet, sugary drinks are not permitted in school. This is very important as sweet and/or acidic drinks are harmful to the teeth. The more frequently they are drunk, the greater the harm to the teeth.
- Bottles should be of clear plastic to avoid other drinks being brought in. 'Prime' bottles are not permitted.
- Non-spill sports style caps avoid mess if a bottle is accidentally knocked over.
- Bottles are to be taken home after school for washing and refilled with mains tap water.
- To prevent bottles from getting mixed up and to allay concerns about hygiene, a permanent marker can be used to label bottles with the child's name.
- To avoid unnecessary damage (trauma) to the teeth and mouth, the sports bottle cap should only be opened by hand. It must NOT be pulled open by using the teeth.
- Only suitable containers designed for carrying and drinking water should be utilised. Water should NOT be sent to school in a glass bottle or container.

The only drinks to be available to primary school and nursery class children are:

- Plain water (unless for medical reasons)
- If a child has a medical condition, which prevents them from drinking water, then this is treated as an exception to this policy and will be approved by school where medical evidence is provided
- Plain milk for under 5's, provided by the DfE and any child entitled to benefit related means, paid for by school and those parent/ carers who choose to pay for milk through Cool Milk.
- Other drinks should not be made available from the school kitchen.
- School will request that caterers and in-house teams follow this policy, removing drinks other than water from their canteens.
- The water-only policy is to be applied to all breakfast and afterschool clubs, as well as extra-curricular events such as sports days and external sporting events.
- Staff should be water-only role models and regularly drink water in front of their pupils to highlight the importance of hydration. Staff must not be seen to be drinking sugary or fizzy drinks by children and should limit other drinks to the staff room only.
- Parents/ carers are discouraged from bringing drinks other than water to the playground before and after school.
- Water only should be provided in lunch boxes. Fizzy, high sugar, squash and fruit juice are not permitted.

Further information:

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/>

<https://www.nutrition.org.uk/life-stages/children/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-urges-parents-to-cut-sugary-drinks-from-childrens-diets>

<https://www.childrens.com/health-wellness/effects-of-sugary-drinks-on-your-childs-health-infographic>