Healthy Eating and Food Safety

Approved by: Principal	Date: 30 January 2026

Last reviewed on:	Date: 26 January 2026

Next review due:	Date: 22 June 2026

#	Description of Changes	Rev. No	Date of Issue
1	First Issue	00	21 June 24

ICS Vision
The "School of Choice" inspiring, challenging and empowering a 21st century learning community through an ethical and innovative education system.

ICS Mission
Provide a safe, friendly learning environment where lifelong learners follow an international curriculum which promotes academic excellence and nurtures key values and competencies in our global minded, future leaders.

Introduction

International Community School (ICS) is dedicated to ensuring that students and staff have access to healthy, nutritious, and safe food options that promote overall well being. Recognizing the critical role that diet plays in physical, mental, and emotional health, ICS has implemented a comprehensive Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy. This policy is designed to meet the high standards set forth by the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) and the Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food Canteens in Educational Institutions. The policy aims to create a school environment where healthy eating habits are encouraged, food safety is prioritized, and sustainable practices are integrated into daily operations.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish and promote a healthy eating culture within the ICS community that supports the physical and mental wellbeing of students and staff.
- Ensure that all food provided at ICS complies with ADEK's nutritional standards and food safety regulations.
- Foster an environment where students are educated about the importance of nutrition and are empowered to make healthy food choices.
- Provide clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of staff, students, parents, and external food providers in maintaining a safe and healthy food environment.
- Integrate sustainability into the school's food services by reducing waste, sourcing local and eco-friendly products, and minimizing the carbon footprint of the school's food operations.

Definitions

Carbon Footprint
The total amount of greenhouse gasses, primarily carbon dioxide, released into the atmosphere as a result of the production, transportation, and consumption of food items. This includes emissions from farming, processing, packaging, and distribution.

Food Label
Any written, printed, or graphic material that is present on a food product or its packaging, providing information about its ingredients, nutritional content, allergens, and safety instructions.

Food Services
The complete range of food-related activities provided by the school, including the preparation, distribution, and sale of food within the school canteen, as well as during school events, extracurricular activities, and other school-related functions.

Healthy Eating
A dietary approach that emphasizes the consumption of a variety of nutrient-dense foods in appropriate portions. Healthy eating supports the body's nutritional needs and includes a balance of carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals.

Nutritional Value
A measure of how beneficial a food item is in terms of its nutrient content, including essential vitamins, minerals, proteins, fats, and carbohydrates. Foods with high nutritional value contribute positively to health and wellbeing.

School Canteen
A designated area within the school premises where food is prepared, stored, and served to students and staff. The canteen must adhere to strict hygiene and safety standards as mandated by ADEK and other relevant authorities.

Sustainable Meal Practices
Meal practices that aim to reduce environmental impact by focusing on locally sourced, minimally

processed, and plant-based foods. These practices promote resource efficiency, reduce waste, and support the health of the planet.

Waste Management
The process of handling food waste and packaging materials, from collection and disposal to recycling and composting, in a manner that minimizes environmental harm.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Board
The Governing Board at ICS has the overarching responsibility for ensuring that the school complies with all regulations regarding healthy eating and food safety. Specific responsibilities include:

- **Policy Approval**: Reviewing and approving the Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy, ensuring that it meets ADEK standards and aligns with the school's mission.
- **Resource Allocation**: Ensuring that sufficient resources are available to implement and maintain healthy eating and food safety initiatives, including staff training, equipment, and facilities.
- **Compliance Monitoring**: Regularly reviewing reports on food safety and healthy eating practices to ensure compliance with ADEK guidelines and making necessary adjustments to the policy.
- **Evaluation and Feedback**: Assessing the effectiveness of the policy annually and incorporating feedback from stakeholders, including parents, staff, and students, to improve the policy's implementation.

Principal
The Principal plays a key role in the implementation and oversight of the Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy. The Principal's responsibilities include:

- **Policy Implementation**: Ensuring that all aspects of the policy are implemented effectively across the school. This includes coordinating with the Canteen Manager, Health and Safety Officer, and teaching staff.
- **Stakeholder Communication**: Keeping parents, students, and staff informed about the school's healthy eating initiatives and food safety practices through regular communications, meetings, and newsletters.
- **Incident Management**: Addressing any issues related to food safety or student health that arise within the school, coordinating with the Health and Safety Officer to ensure prompt and appropriate responses.
- **Training Oversight**: Ensuring that all relevant staff, including canteen workers and teachers, receive appropriate training in food safety, hygiene, and healthy eating principles.

Canteen Manager
The Canteen Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school canteen, ensuring that food served is both healthy and safe. Key responsibilities include:

- **Menu Planning**: Developing and reviewing menus to ensure they provide a balanced diet that meets the nutritional needs of students. This includes offering a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins while minimizing processed foods, sugary drinks, and high-fat items.

- **Food Safety Compliance**: Ensuring that all food handling, preparation, storage, and serving practices comply with the Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food Canteens in Educational Institutions. This includes maintaining proper temperature control, preventing cross-contamination, and adhering to strict hygiene protocols.
- **Vendor Management**: Selecting and monitoring food suppliers to ensure they meet the school's standards for quality, safety, and sustainability. The Canteen Manager is responsible for verifying that all food products are sourced from licensed and reputable vendors.
- **Staff Supervision and Training**: Supervising canteen staff to ensure they adhere to food safety standards and providing ongoing training in safe food handling, hygiene, and healthy cooking techniques.

Teachers and Staff

Teachers and staff at ICS play a crucial role in promoting healthy eating habits and ensuring food safety. Their responsibilities include:

- **Supervision During Meal Times**: Actively supervising students during meals to encourage healthy eating behaviors, ensuring that students consume balanced meals, and monitoring for any signs of food-related issues such as allergies or eating disorders.
- **Nutritional Education**: Integrating nutrition education into the curriculum, teaching students about the importance of balanced diets, reading food labels, and making informed food choices. Teachers should also model healthy eating behaviors in the school environment.
- **Support for Health Initiatives**: Participating in and promoting the school's healthy eating initiatives, such as workshops, competitions, and events focused on nutrition and wellness.
- **Monitoring and Reporting**: Being vigilant for any food safety concerns or student health issues related to diet and promptly reporting these to the Canteen Manager or Health and Safety Officer.

Students and Parents

Students and parents are essential partners in the success of ICS's healthy eating and food safety efforts. Their responsibilities include:

- **Adherence to Guidelines**: Students and parents are expected to follow the school's guidelines on healthy eating, including restrictions on bringing unhealthy foods, such as sugary snacks, carbonated drinks, and processed foods, to school.
- **Communication with the School**: Parents should communicate any dietary restrictions, allergies, or health concerns to the school and ensure that the school has up-to-date medical information for their child.
- **Participation in Healthy Eating Programs**: Parents are encouraged to engage with the school's healthy eating programs by attending workshops, participating in school events, and reinforcing healthy eating habits at home.
- **Feedback and Collaboration**: Providing feedback on the school's food services and working with the school to address any concerns or suggestions for improvement.

Health and Safety Officer

The Health and Safety Officer at ICS is responsible for ensuring that food safety standards are maintained throughout the school. Their responsibilities include:

- **Risk Assessments**: Conducting regular risk assessments of the school's food services, including the canteen, to identify potential hazards and implement corrective actions.
- **Hygiene Inspections**: Carrying out routine inspections of food preparation, storage, and serving areas to ensure they meet hygiene standards and reporting any non-compliance to the Principal and Canteen Manager.
- **Incident Response**: Managing any food safety incidents, such as cases of foodborne illness, contamination, or allergen exposure, and ensuring that appropriate steps are taken to prevent recurrence.
- **Regulatory Compliance**: Ensuring that ICS complies with all relevant food safety regulations, including ADEK guidelines and the Abu Dhabi Guideline for Food Canteens in Educational Institutions, and maintaining up-to-date records of all inspections, training, and incidents.

Food Safety Procedures

School Canteen Operations
ICS operates a school canteen that adheres to the highest standards of food safety and nutrition. Specific procedures include:

- **Food Sourcing**: All food served at ICS is sourced from certified and reputable suppliers who comply with local and international food safety standards. The Canteen Manager ensures that all food products are fresh, of high quality, and free from contaminants.
- **Menu Design**: Menus are designed to provide a balanced diet that includes a variety of nutrient-rich foods. The menu is regularly reviewed and updated based on student feedback, seasonal availability, and nutritional guidelines provided by ADEK.
- **Food Storage**: All food items are stored under conditions that prevent spoilage and contamination. Perishable items are kept at appropriate temperatures, and dry goods are stored in clean, pest-free environments.
- **Food Preparation**: Food is prepared in a hygienic environment using clean equipment and safe cooking practices. Cross-contamination is prevented by using separate utensils and surfaces for different types of food, especially raw and cooked items.
- **Food Serving**: Food is served at the correct temperature, with hot foods kept hot and cold foods kept cold. Serving utensils are sanitized regularly, and food is displayed in a manner that prevents contamination from handling or exposure to the environment.
- **Staff Hygiene**: All canteen staff are required to maintain high standards of personal hygiene, including wearing clean uniforms, washing hands frequently, and using gloves when handling food.

Promotion of Healthy Eating

Healthy Food Culture
ICS is committed to creating a culture that supports healthy eating across the entire school community. This includes:

- **Nutritional Education**: Students receive comprehensive education on nutrition as part of the formal curriculum. Topics covered include the benefits of a balanced diet, the importance of hydration, how to read and understand food labels, and the environmental impact of food choices.

- **Healthy Snack Guidelines**: The school provides clear guidelines to parents and students regarding healthy snacks. These guidelines discourage the inclusion of high-sugar, high-fat, and heavily processed foods in packed lunches. Instead, parents are encouraged to provide fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein-rich snacks.
- **Student Involvement**: Students are encouraged to take an active role in promoting healthy eating within the school. This may include participating in school garden projects, attending cooking workshops, or joining student committees that provide feedback on canteen menus.
- **Health Campaigns and Events**: ICS regularly organizes health campaigns and events focused on nutrition and wellness. These may include workshops on healthy cooking, competitions that promote nutritious meal planning, and themed weeks that highlight the benefits of specific food groups.

Parent and Community Engagement

ICS recognizes the importance of involving parents and the broader community in promoting healthy eating habits. To this end:

- **Communication of Guidelines**: Parents receive regular communications from the school regarding healthy eating guidelines, including what foods are encouraged and which are restricted. This information is also included in the school-parent agreement.
- **Workshops and Events**: The school organizes workshops for parents on topics such as meal planning, understanding food labels, and cooking healthy meals at home. These events are designed to equip parents with the knowledge and skills needed to support their children's healthy eating habits.
- **Collaborative Efforts**: ICS works closely with local health organizations, nutritionists, and dietitians to ensure that the school's healthy eating initiatives are based on the latest research and best practices. These collaborations may also include guest speakers at school events or joint community health initiatives.
- **Feedback Mechanisms**: Parents are encouraged to provide feedback on the school's food services through surveys, meetings, and direct communication with the Canteen Manager or Principal. This feedback is used to continually improve the quality and variety of food offered at the school.

Special Considerations

Food Allergies and Intolerances

ICS is committed to providing a safe environment for students with food allergies and intolerances. Specific measures include:

- **Allergy Documentation**: The school maintains comprehensive records of all students' food allergies and intolerances. These records are updated regularly and are accessible to relevant staff, including canteen workers, teachers, and the Health and Safety Officer.
- **Safe Food Preparation**: Special precautions are taken during food preparation to prevent cross-contamination. This includes using separate equipment and utensils for allergen-free foods and ensuring that canteen staff are trained in allergen management.
- **Allergen Information**: All food items served in the canteen are clearly labeled with information about potential allergens. This includes common allergens such as nuts, dairy, gluten, and

shellfish. Food labels are reviewed regularly to ensure accuracy and compliance with ADEK guidelines.

- **Emergency Response Plan**: The school has an established emergency response plan for managing allergic reactions. This plan includes training staff to recognize the symptoms of an allergic reaction, the location and use of emergency medications like epinephrine, and protocols for contacting emergency services if necessary.
- **Parental Communication**: Parents of students with food allergies are required to notify the school of any new allergies or changes to their child's condition. The school communicates with parents about the measures in place to protect their children and updates them on any relevant food safety incidents.

Sustainability Practices

Sustainable Food Choices

ICS is committed to integrating sustainability into its food services. This includes:

- **Eco-Friendly Sourcing**: The school prioritizes the purchase of locally sourced, organic, and sustainably produced foods. This not only supports local farmers but also reduces the carbon footprint associated with food transportation.
- **Waste Reduction Initiatives**: ICS has implemented several initiatives to reduce food waste, including portion control, using leftovers in creative ways, and encouraging students to take only what they can eat. The school also participates in composting programs to turn food waste into fertilizer for the school garden.
- **Sustainable Packaging**: ICS minimizes the use of single-use plastics in its food services. Instead, the school encourages the use of biodegradable or reusable packaging for both school-provided meals and student-packed lunches. Where possible, the school sources packaging materials that are compostable or made from recycled content.
- **Promotion of Sustainable Practices**: The school actively promotes sustainable meal practices among students, staff, and parents. This includes educating the school community about the environmental impact of different food choices, encouraging plant-based meals, and organizing events that highlight the importance of sustainability in food production and consumption.

Compliance and Monitoring

Inspection and Licensing

ICS adheres to all inspection and licensing requirements set out by ADEK and other relevant authorities. Specific measures include:

- **Canteen Inspections**: The canteen undergoes regular inspections by both internal staff and external health inspectors to ensure that all food safety and hygiene standards are met. These inspections cover all aspects of food handling, storage, preparation, and serving.
- **Licensing Compliance**: The school ensures that all necessary licenses and permits for operating the canteen and providing food services are up-to-date and compliant with ADEK regulations. This includes maintaining records of all inspections, licenses, and any corrective actions taken to address identified issues.
- **Record Keeping**: Comprehensive records of all food safety inspections, staff training sessions, incident reports, and corrective actions are maintained by the Health and Safety Officer. These

records are stored securely and are available for review by ADEK and other regulatory bodies as needed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The effectiveness of the Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy is regularly monitored to ensure it meets the needs of the ICS community and complies with regulatory requirements:

- **Annual Review**: The Health and Safety Officer, in collaboration with the Principal and the Governing Board, conducts an annual review of the policy. This review assesses the policy's effectiveness, identifies any gaps or areas for improvement, and ensures that the policy reflects the latest ADEK guidelines and best practices in nutrition and food safety.
- **Surveys and Feedback**: Regular surveys are conducted with students, parents, and staff to gather feedback on the school's food services. This feedback is analyzed to make data-driven decisions about menu changes, food safety practices, and health initiatives.
- **Continuous Improvement**: The results of the annual review and feedback surveys are used to make continuous improvements to the school's healthy eating and food safety practices. This may include updating the menu, enhancing food safety protocols, or launching new health and wellness programs.

Compliance

This policy is effective from the start of the Academic Year 2024/25, with full compliance required by AY 2025/26. ICS acknowledges that failure to comply with this policy may result in legal accountability and penalties as stipulated by ADEK regulations. The school ensures that all staff, students, and parents are informed of this policy and that it is implemented consistently.

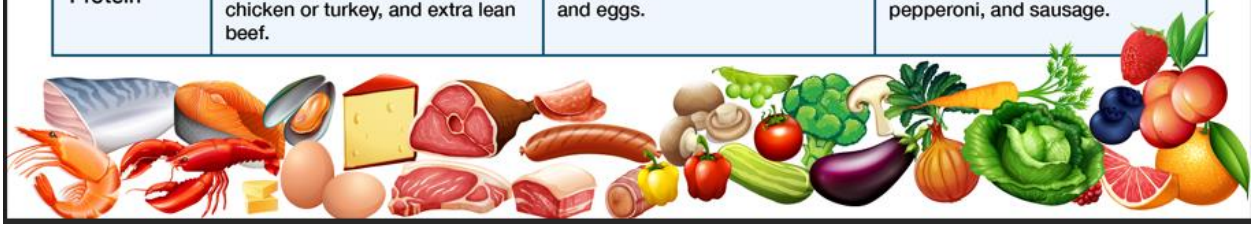
Linked Policies

This Healthy Eating and Food Safety Policy is interconnected with several other ICS and ADEK policies, ensuring a comprehensive approach to health, safety, and wellbeing. These linked policies include:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Parent Engagement Policy
- Environmental Sustainability Policy
- Student Protection Policy
- Sustainability Policy

See below for ICS Healthy Eating Poster

HEALTHY FOOD TRAFFIC

Green, Yellow and Red Food Choices

Food	Go Go for it!	Slow Eat just a little	Stop Think about your choice
Beverages	Water and non-fat or 1 % Mik	100% Fruit juice and 2% Milk	Energy drinks, lemonade, soda pop, sports drinks, and whole milk
Snacks	All fresh fruit and vegetables.	Air-popped popcorn, dried fruit, Frozen juice bars, granola bars.	Cakes, candy, cookies, crackers, chips, preizeles, and microwave buttered popcorn.
Vegetables	Fresh, Frozen, and canned vegetables without added salt, fat, or sauces, includes asparagus, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, green beans, peas, spinach, etc.	Vegetables with added fat, salt, and sauces. Oven-baked fries.	Deep fried vegetables and French fries
Fruits	All fresh, frozen or fruit canned in juice. Includes apples, bananas, grapes, kiwi, oranges, pears, etc.	100 % fruit juice or fruits canned in light syrup	Fruit drinks, fruit canned in heavy syrup, and frozen fruit with added sugar.
Grains	Brown rice and food made with whole grains. Includes whole-grain bread, hot and cold cereals, pitas, and pasta.	White Rice and food made with white refined flour.	Donuts, muffins, pastries and sugary cereals.
Milk and Dairy Products	Non-fat or 1% low-fat diary items. Includes fat-free or 1% milk, cottage cheese, and yougurt.	2% low-fat diary products. Includes 2% milk, cottage cheese, cheese, ice cream and yogurt.	Full fat dairy products. Includes whole milk, cheese, ice cream and yogurt.
Protein	Beans, egg whites, fish, tuna (canned in water), tofu, skinless chicken or turkey, and extra lean beef.	Lean ground beef, ham, nuts, peanut butter, tuna (canned in oil) and eggs.	Fried meat or eggs, chicken nuggets, ground beef, hot dogs pepperoni, and sausage.