

Step by Step Guide for Parent / Guardian

Special diets are very important part of our catering provision in schools, to ensure school meals are available for everyone and includes children with food allergies, intolerances and medical diets.

We work in partnership with your school as it is crucial that the process is a joint approach between the child, parent / guardian, school and Gateshead School catering.

To ensure your child is catered for each lunch time we will hold a meeting with you, your child and one of our management team to go through the school menu and pick what your child would like to eat each day. Where possible we try to adapt the main meal for your child, however in some instances this is not always possible, with this in mind we would look to offer a jacket potato or sandwich option to ensure there is something available every day.

1. Notify the school of your child's allergy, intolerance or medical diet with correspondence from your child's doctor or dietician. Request a Special Diet form. (Medical correspondence is required to ensure ultimate safety of the child by providing complete transparency of their food allergies, intolerance or medical requirements. Failure to provide medical correspondence will result in the request not being processed for the safety of the child and Gateshead staff)
2. Complete the Special Diet form and provide a recent photo of your child. Return the form along with a copy of your medical correspondence to the school, who will email this to Gateshead School Catering management team.
3. A member of Gateshead management team will be in contact to arrange a meeting at a convenient time for both to discuss your child's needs. They will go through the menu cycle to highlight what your child can eat from the options available – we will try to adapt the main meal so your child can enjoy similar things to their friends. If the main meal is not suitable, we will offer a jacket potato or sandwich option. Some special diet menus are used across all schools by a number of different pupils therefore it is impossible for us to safely cater for individual likes and dislikes. The special diet menu will consist of one hot main meal in addition to a suitable jacket potato option if your child does not like the main option.
4. Some gluten free, milk free and egg free equivalent ingredients or dish components are dependant on supplier availability.
5. Once you are happy with the menu items selected a menu sheet will be completed time for your child, all parties will sign to say they are happy with the menu. (From the we receive your child's Special Diet form with the correct correspondence there is a maximum turnaround time of 3 weeks – Whilst waiting for their special diet menu your child can be provided with a suitable jacket potato option or alternatively bring a packed lunch from home)
6. Please note that until the special diet form has been completed and returned with the correct correspondence, a meeting has been held to agree a menu and the

kitchen team briefed, we cannot take liability for any potential allergic cross contamination

7. The menu changes annually in September, a simple refresher meeting / conversation can be arranged to update your child's menu.

Manufacturers use 'May contain' warnings on product labels to warn consumers of a risk of cross contamination during production stage of an unwanted allergen in the final product. It is Gateshead's policy to treat such warnings as 'contain' to reduce the risk to our special diet pupils. Any special diet menu will remove products with 'may contain' declaration from the appropriate allergen.

Every special diet request will be considered however there may be rare occasions when we have to reject a special diet based on safety concerns for the pupil. For example, if the pupil has a high volume of allergies or intolerances that make providing a balanced menu impossible or if the pupils allergies are so highly sensitive the production is too great, this decision is not taken lightly.