# Aspens Response to the Updated School Food Standards Announcement

Aspens welcomes the release of the updated School Food Standards. As we review the details to fully understand their implications, we continue to believe that what children eat at school plays a vital role in their daily health, focus, and long-term wellbeing.

## Preparing for 2027 Together

The lead-in time through to September 2027 provides an important window for us to work closely alongside our school partners. We will start discussing plans soon so we can collaborate effectively, communicate transparently, and bring parents, students, and staff along with us. Taste preferences and dietary habits take time for pupils to adapt to, and working together will be essential to minimise any potential drop in uptake as habits shift.

Our primary focus is delivering 100% compliant menus while engaging directly with our clients to understand cost implications and review contractual impacts. We look forward to navigating this transition together, presenting our new compliant menus in the late Spring Term of 2027.

Additionally, as your catering and nutritional experts, we will provide a whole-school food policy template by the end of the Autumn Term 2026 to help protect pupil health while safeguarding school finances and best value.

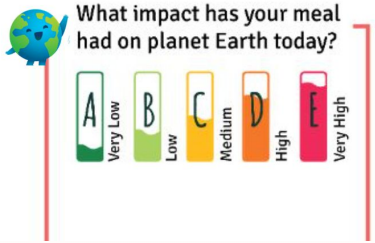
# Primary Autumn/Winter Menu

**The Autumn/Winter 2026-27 menus are inspired by our teams and customers valuable input. Keep reading for the delicious details!**

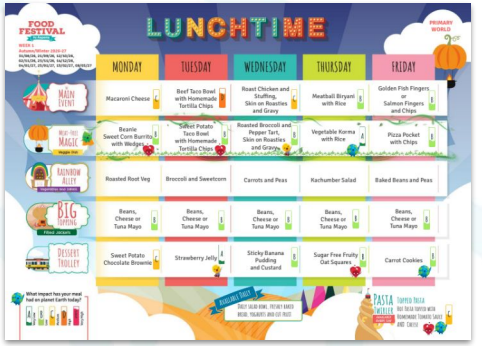
**Primary Traditional, World and Halal Menu Updates Combined:**

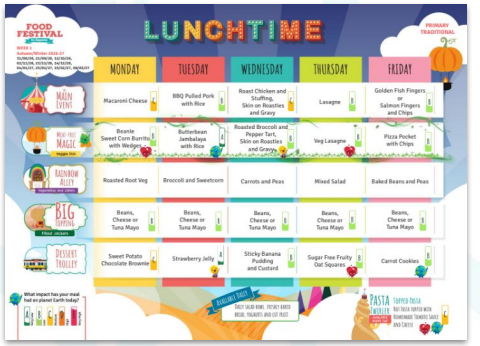
- **Two vegetable sides every day** to improve choice, colour and variety!
- Featuring our **Planet Hero** icons to highlight better choices for pupils and the planet.
- **Simple $CO_2$ emission labelling** showing the environmental impact of our meals.
- Dessert that include **more fruit and vegetables!**
- Recipes using **leftover ingredients** to help **reduce food waste.**

These updates reflect your feedback and our ongoing commitment to offering meals everything





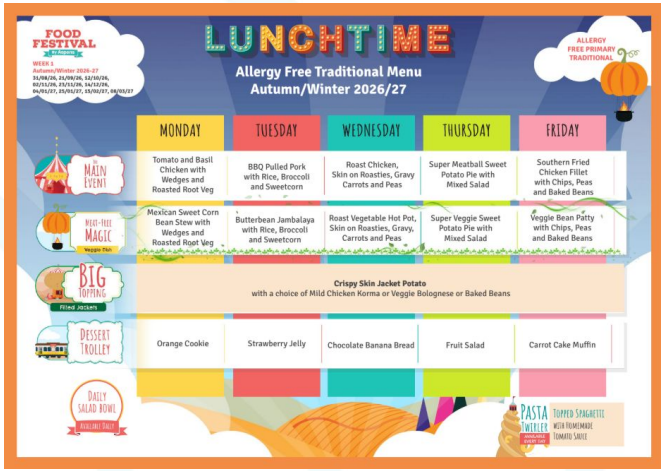



# Top 14 Allergy Free Menu

## Better, Safer, More Inclusive.

As a business, we are committed to making school meals safer, simpler and more inclusive for children with allergies. To achieve this, we are introducing a new Top 14 Allergy-Free Menu, designed to significantly reduce risk while still offering choice. With food allergies on the rise, we recognise our responsibility to provide safe, nutritious meals. Our medical diet provision remains in place for children with allergies beyond the 14 key allergens, ensuring that every child has access to meals that meet their specific needs.



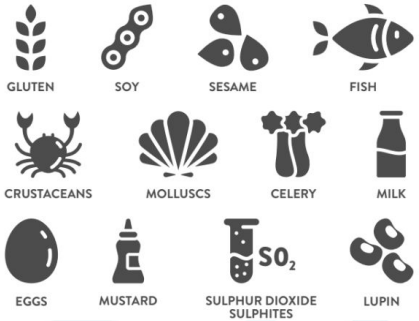

- **Variety Remains**
- **Greater Inclusivity**
- **Safer, Simpler Dining**

## Nutritional Benefits

- **Higher nutritional value**
- **Lower in unhealthy components**
- **Essential nutrients covered**
- **Balanced meals**

## Safety for Our Customers and Staff

- Food allergies affect 5%–8% of children, with 18% of allergic reactions occurring in schools.
- Cow's milk allergy is responsible for 26% of food allergy.
- Increased complexity = increased risk.
- Despite robust medical diet processes, allergen incidents still occur.
- Removing allergen-free substitutes.



# Primary Autumn/Winter Menu

## Nutrition Update

We're thrilled to share the fantastic nutritional performance of our school meals! Our menu is designed to not only be delicious but also to provide a significant boost to children's daily nutritional needs, helping them stay healthy and focused. We've used the **Nutri-Score** system, which rates food from A (healthiest) to E (least healthy), to ensure we're serving the best possible options.

### The Highlights

Our school lunches are playing a crucial role in providing key nutrients. We have reviewed 358 dishes to see how they stack up against the daily nutritional needs of primary school children. Here is what we found:

- **Our Main meals** provide 50% of a child's daily **protein** and 31% of their daily **fibre** – well above our recommendation for a single meal. One of our star performers is one portion of Veggie Wholegrain Pasta Bolognese with Mixed Salad and Garlic Bread. This dish is low in fat and provides 78% and 69% of a child's daily protein and fibre respectively.
- **Plant Diversity:** Recommendation guidelines state we should aim for 30 plant points a week. Our primary world menu contains 41 plant points and our traditional menu 42 plant points. Eating more plants and more types of plants create a stronger, more resilient gut ecosystem and deliver a wider spectrum of protective compounds to your body!

### Top Scoring Dishes

We are proud to share that **89%** of our main dishes are rated A or B on the Nutri-Score scale, indicating excellent nutritional quality. Some of our top scoring, A-rated mains include:

- **Veggie Wholegrain Pasta Bolognese, Mixed Salad, Garlic Bread**
- **Bean Chilli, Homemade Tortilla Chips, Wholegrain Rice, Green Salad**
- **Meatball Biryani with Rice & Kachumber Salad**




The AW26/27 menu delivers a strong, balanced nutritional offer across all age groups, with clear compliance and ongoing improvement. Meals are high in protein and fibre, providing up to 50% of daily protein in primary, and 66% in nursery per meal, with appropriate energy provision. Overall, the menu is nutritionally robust and continuously improving.

# The Planet Heroes

We're proud to continue our food education journey with our Planet Heroes. At Aspens, our goal is to nourish, educate and inspire students, not just through great food, but through the values and knowledge we embed into their daily dining experience.

Building on the success of our themed menu categories – Main Event, Meat-Free Magic, Big Topper, Rainbow Alley, Pasta Twirler and Dessert Trolley – Planet Heroes continues to bring sustainability and environmental awareness to the forefront of school dining. Through engaging food choices, activities and everyday experiences, our Planet Heroes help students discover how the choices we make can have a positive impact on our planet.

**Who Are the Planet Heroes?** Planet Heroes are engaging, colourful characters that make the connection between food choices and environmental impact in a way that's accessible and fun for pupils. Each hero aligns with specific sustainability values and menu items:

**Plant Hero – Celebrates Plant-Based Dishes**



**Power Hero – Champions Low Energy and Low Waste Recipes**



**Heart Hero – Highlights the Nutritionist Choice**



**Eco Hero – Promotes Low Carbon Footprint Meals**



## Additional Resources

**Primary Menu Planet Hero Loyalty Packs –** These packs contain collector cards that directly link to customers' menu choices, with each reward tied to a dish that features a Planet Hero highlighting an eco-friendly or sustainable option. This not only supports healthy choices but also reinforces key messages around sustainability and environmental awareness with students. When students complete a full collector card, they'll receive a special certificate and badge to celebrate their achievement.

**Planet Hero Roundels –** To highlight those dishes on the counter that correspond with the represented Planet Hero.

**Planet Hero Menu Board –** Available to order for those that wish to inspire students further with the sustainability messaging on a menu board displayed in the dining room with interactive wipe board for student engagement.











