

Medical Diets Policy

Version 3.0
July 2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to define Edwards & Ward's approach to the provision of medically prescribed diets within our primary school catering service.
- It sets out our responsibilities, the principles that underpin our medical diets provision, and the processes used to assess, approve and safely provide meals for pupils with medically diagnosed dietary requirements.
- This policy should be read alongside the Edwards & Ward Special Diets registration process and associated operational procedures. It forms part of the Company's wider allergen management system and supports the safe provision of medically prescribed diets across our primary school catering service.
- 1.2 A medical diet is defined as any medically diagnosed dietary requirement that requires **additional information, individual assessment, specific controls and/or adaptations to the standard catering provision** to enable a pupil to eat safely.
- Edwards & Ward is committed to providing safe, inclusive and nutritious meals for pupils with medically diagnosed dietary requirements wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so.
- As part of our role as caterers, we have a duty to safeguard pupils through robust allergen management and effective food safety controls. We strive to provide pupils requiring medical diet support with the same opportunity to enjoy our food as their peers and are committed to providing the information, controls or reasonable adjustments needed to meet their individual requirements.

Our Approach

Safety first	The safety of the pupil always takes precedence when decisions are made regarding the provision of medical diets.
Individualised	Every medical diet request is assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine the most appropriate and safest course of action.
Partnership	Effective medical diet provision relies on close collaboration between Edwards & Ward, schools, parents, carers and healthcare professionals.
Consistency	Central product approval, controlled procurement and standardised processes support consistent allergen management across our catering service.
Inclusion	Where it is safe and reasonably practicable to do so, we aim to provide pupils requiring medical diets with the opportunity to enjoy school meals alongside their peers.

2. Allergen Risk Management and Product Approval

2.1 Edwards & Ward operates a centrally controlled buying list for its primary school menus. All products are approved by the Company Nutritionist before use, and any proposed substitutions or replacement products must be authorised centrally before being introduced into the menu cycle.

This controlled approach promotes consistency across our primary school catering service, reduces unnecessary product variation and forms a key part of our allergen management strategy. It helps ensure that all kitchens are working from the same approved range of products and supports the safe provision of medical diets.

On-site catering teams must follow approved menus, recipes, buying lists and Special Diets paperwork and must not make ad hoc substitutions or introduce alternative products for pupils requiring medical diet support.

2.2 As part of the product approval process, all products are reviewed against the 14 regulated allergens in accordance with current food information legislation.

Where appropriate, consideration is routinely given to pupils with medically diagnosed allergies or dietary requirements beyond the 14 regulated allergens where these are known to Edwards & Ward through the Special Diets registration process. This helps minimise the impact of future product changes on pupils already receiving approved medical diets.

2.3 Edwards & Ward works closely with approved suppliers to minimise the use of products carrying precautionary allergen statements (for example, "**may contain**") within its standard primary school menus.

Products carrying the precautionary allergen statements "**may contain nuts**" or "**may contain peanuts**" are not approved for use within the Edwards & Ward primary school buying list.

When developing Special Menus, Edwards & Ward applies an all-or-nothing approach to precautionary allergen labelling. Any product carrying a precautionary allergen statement relating to a pupil's medical diet is treated as containing that allergen and is therefore excluded from the approved menu.

These controls form an integral part of Edwards & Ward's allergen management system and support the safe provision of meals for pupils requiring medically prescribed diets.

3. Medical Diets Menu Provision – Primary Schools Lunch Service	
3.1	Edwards & Ward's medical diet provision is in line with advice from the Department for Education and the LACA Allergen Management Guidance for Catering in Education.
3.2	At Edwards & Ward, school menus are designed to cater for the majority of the school population by offering a variety of foods in a range of dishes, including vegetarian options. We do, however, acknowledge that some pupils may have more specific dietary requirements and menus may need to be adapted accordingly.
3.3	Our Company Nutritionist heads up our Special Diets Team, who process all medical diet requests. These are decided on a case-by-case basis as part of the medical diet risk assessment process, which considers both the nature of the requirement and the capabilities of the kitchen.
3.4	We provide 'Special Menus' for pupils with allergies to any of the 14 mandatory listed allergens under Food Information Regulations, including retained Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011, or combinations thereof, provided the menu assessment process deems it safe to do so.
3.5	Medical diet requests relating to allergens outside the 14 mandatory listed allergens under Food Information Regulations, including retained Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011 will be reviewed via the medical diet risk assessment process, but we reserve the right to decline these if the risk is deemed too great, or if they cannot be catered for by making reasonable adjustments.
3.6	Medical diets which are not allergen-related, such as diabetes, texture-modified dysphagia, autism, and phenylketonuria, are also managed by our in-house Registered Nutritionist and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
3.7	Religious and cultural diets are not classed as medical diets and therefore should not be registered via our online form. Most religious and cultural diets can be catered for with our vegetarian or vegan menus. Parents and carers should notify the school, which is responsible for communicating this to the on-site catering team.
3.8	Our 'Special Menus' are adapted to align as closely as possible to the standard school menu; however, we are not always able to guarantee a choice of hot meals. Where standard options cannot be safely adapted or substituted, a jacket potato with suitable toppings and fresh fruit will be offered, provided these accommodate any dietary requirements.
3.9	Where Edwards & Ward prepares food that falls within the definition of Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS), such as packed lunches for educational visits where applicable, we will comply with the Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (Natasha's Law). Where required, PPDS foods will display a full ingredients list with the 14 regulated allergens clearly emphasised in accordance with current legislation.

4. Medical Diet Registration Process – Primary Schools

- 4.1 The Edwards & Ward Special Diets registration form, together with a full list of frequently asked questions, is available via the [Edwards & Ward Special Diets webpage](#). Standard menus and accompanying allergen information are also published on the [Edwards & Ward Menus & Allergens webpage](#) for transparency and general reference. Published menu and allergen information **must not be used by parents, carers or schools to manage a child's medical diet**. Any pupil requiring a meal due to a food allergy, food intolerance, coeliac disease or other medically prescribed dietary requirement **must be registered through the Edwards & Ward Special Diets process**.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that parents and carers are aware of the Edwards & Ward medical diet process and are directed to the online registration form where required. Schools should also support parents and carers with the accurate completion of the form where they may be unable to do so independently, for example, due to a language barrier or other accessibility needs. Schools should make parents and carers aware of the Edwards & Ward Special Diets process as early as possible, ideally before a pupil starts school or immediately following notification of a new medically prescribed dietary requirement. Early registration helps ensure that suitable arrangements can be assessed and, where appropriate, implemented in time for the pupil's first day requiring a medical diet.
- 4.3 Parents and carers **must complete the [Edwards & Ward Special Diets registration form](#)** for any pupil requiring medical diet support. They should provide appropriate supporting medical evidence wherever possible to enable the Special Diets Team to assess the request safely and accurately. Where supporting medical evidence is not immediately available, requests may still be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, **the absence of supporting evidence may delay the assessment process**, as the Special Diets Team may need to seek further information or clarification before confirming whether suitable provision can be made. Medical dietary requirements **must not be managed independently** by parents, carers, schools or on-site catering teams using standard allergen information or informal arrangements. All requests must be referred through the Edwards & Ward Special Diets process so that the appropriate assessment, information and controls can be put in place.
- 4.4 On completion of our online form, our Special Diets Team will review the information, and if all conditions are met, the registration will be processed. Parents/carers will receive a confirmation email with any relevant menus, nutrition and/or allergen information. Copies of these will also be sent to the kitchen. We aim to complete this process within three weeks, with the exception being during the mobilisation process and at the start of each academic year when the volume of requests is significantly higher. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that all necessary information has been provided when completing the form in order to avoid unnecessary delays. In cases where the conditions for registration are not met, parents/carers may be asked to provide more information or will receive an email informing them that their request has been declined.

4.	Medical Diet Registration Process – Primary Schools <i>(continued)</i>
4.5	Whilst a medical diet menu is being prepared, jacket potatoes with suitable toppings and fresh fruit will be offered, provided these accommodate any dietary requirements. In cases where these options are not suitable, pupils must bring a packed lunch as an interim measure.
4.6	A medical diet will continue to be provided for future menu cycles until we receive written confirmation that it is no longer required. Schools must inform Edwards & Ward about any leavers and confirm lists of pupils requiring medical diets in advance of each menu change.
4.7	We apply an all-or-nothing approach to our special menus and remove all products that 'contain' or 'may contain' the relevant allergen. We will not be responsible for providing menus to suit individual allergen tolerances, the gradual reintroduction of allergens, or short-term dietary trials.
4.8	Medical diet menus are always double-checked by two members of the Special Diets Team; however, writing special menus is a manual process and, as such, is always subject to human error. Parents/carers are advised to review their menus and contact the Special Diets Team directly if they have any concerns.

5. On-site Identification of Pupils with Medical Diets	
5.1	Information relating to medical diets is held in the kitchen in the form of a photo record sheet for each child. These records are used to help staff identify pupils during service and include the dietary requirement and relevant emergency contact information. Only the information necessary for safe meal provision is shared with the kitchen; copies of medical records are not provided.
5.2	Special Menus are approved for individual pupils and must not be used for any other child, even where their dietary requirements appear to be the same. An adapted meal must only be provided where the pupil has completed the Edwards & Ward Special Diets process, and an approved photo record sheet and associated menu information are held in the kitchen. No photo record sheet means no adapted meal may be served.
5.3	On-site catering teams must only provide medical diet meals and make menu adaptations that have been approved through the Edwards & Ward Special Diets process. Requests from schools, parents or carers to make changes outside the approved arrangements must not be actioned by the kitchen. These should be referred to the appropriate Edwards & Ward manager or the Special Diets Team for review and approval before any change is made.
5.4	All schools must have a clear system in place for the identification of pupils requiring medical diets. This can be in the form of lanyards, coloured bands, stickers, etc. The identification method should be clear, consistent and easily recognised by catering staff, school staff, relief staff and agency staff to help ensure the correct meal is served to the correct pupil. This method should be agreed by the school, on-site catering team and Edwards & Ward management, and be recorded in the special diets folder stored in the kitchen.
5.4	Kitchens must complete the Medical Diets checklist at each meal service for each child who requires a medical diet. If there is any uncertainty regarding a pupil's medical diet paperwork, menu or identification method, this must be raised with the appropriate Edwards & Ward manager or the Special Diets Team before serving from the special menu. Where there is uncertainty about the suitability of a special menu item, an appropriate safe alternative should be provided in line with the pupil's agreed medical diet information.

6. Menu Provision – Secondary and Other Services

Medical diets are not registered, and individual Special Menus are not routinely provided within our secondary school, workplace and leisure services.

In accordance with Food Information Regulations, including retained Regulation (EU) No. 1169/2011, each service point holds a clear and comprehensive allergen matrix identifying the presence of the 14 regulated allergens within each dish served.

Standard menus and accompanying allergen information are also published on the [Edwards & Ward Menus & Allergens webpage](#) website for transparency and general reference.

Published menu and allergen information must not be used to manage a medically prescribed diet. Individuals with food allergies or other medically prescribed dietary requirements should discuss their dietary needs with the on-site catering team before selecting food.

Across the sectors of our business that produce Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS) foods, Edwards & Ward complies with the Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (Natasha's Law) by providing full ingredient lists with the 14 regulated allergens clearly emphasised.