

St Mary's & St Benedict's Water only approach

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. 51% of parents say their children drink more water and 47% say their children are eating more fruits and vegetables as a result of healthy school activities.

One reason for this is the high sugar diet that many children consume. For example, one can of Coca-Cola contains 35g of sugar and a single can of Pepsi contains 36g of sugar which equates to 150% of the recommended daily sugar intake for children aged between 7 and 10 years. Fruit juices and smoothies also contain high levels of sugar despite often being advertised as healthy.

High levels of sugar can also contribute to tooth 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 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.

Introduction

Many schools in the UK have already adopted a water only approach to decrease the amount of sugar children are consuming, whilst increasing their hydration.



A water only school is one where the only drink available to students is water (and milk in nursery classes). Schools should ensure that children are not bringing sugary drinks onto the school premises, including for after school or with their lunch.

St Mary's & St Benedict's guidance

1. The only drinks to be available to primary school and nursery class children are:
 - Plain water (unless for medical reasons)
 - Plain reduced fat milk in infant classes (including skimmed or semi skimmed, lactose free and soya milk).
2. If a child has a medical condition that requires them to drink sugary drinks then this is treated as an exception to this policy and should be approved by the headteacher.
3. Other drinks, such as milk, **may** be made available from school kitchens at lunch. Milk may be an option each day – to promote healthy calcium intake. Drinking water provided must be free from water fountains and jugs on tables and not for sale in plastic bottles.
4. Pupils must have free access to drinking water throughout the day and be encouraged to drink it.
5. The water-only guidance is to be applied to **all** breakfast and after-school clubs, as well as extra-curricular events such as sports days and school fetes.
6. Teachers should be water-only role models and regularly drink water in front of their students to highlight the importance of hydration. Staff should not be seen to be drinking sugary or fizzy drinks by children and should limit other drinks to the staff room only.
7. This approach does NOT ban cordial but is should be seen as an occasional treat not an everyday drink – for example at our annual Christmas parties. Likewise, milkshake may occasionally be an option at lunchtimes in the dinner hall.

