

**2 December 2021**

**‘Nut free’ school declarations**

Dear Principal

It has come to the notice of Environmental Health colleagues that a number of schools are issuing statements that they are ‘nut free’, in an effort to control risk for those pupils affected.

Although the school catering service does not use nuts or products containing nuts in any recipes, we cannot claim to be nut free.

Various products are used in recipes that do not contain nuts or nut derivatives, however the food packaging on these products include ‘May contain’ or ‘Produced in a factory where allergens are present’ statements. This is called precautionary allergen labelling (PAL) [Precautionary allergen labelling checklist | Food Standards Agency](https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/precautionary-allergen-labelling-checklist). To help consumers make safe and informed choices, food businesses may voluntarily provide this information about the unintentional presence of allergens.

The catering service procure a high volume of food items from various suppliers. Frequent substitutions and product reformulation create the task of removing items with PAL from the kitchen extremely difficult. To ban all of these would also restrict the foods that could be offered through the school meals service and in packed lunches, potentially affecting the legal requirement to meet nutritional standards for school lunches for all other pupils who avail of these, particularly pupils entitled to a free school meal.

Allergy UK do not recommend banning nuts at all, as it is a very difficult guarantee to make and could potentially cause greater risk by creating a false sense of security. [https://www.allergyuk.org/back-to-school-campaign/faqforparents](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.allergyuk.org%2fback-to-school-campaign%2ffaqforparents&c=E,1,d7tJye32OYWXCwtlJCE5vp5Ti0LDkoUfBQgk7fu084PDAekd9qDOk43HAgfvFdBidcail1nnQ9TqFAkKWSssjPLAkoswsvAVPrYeukmCeFpgy1I,&typo=1).

Environmental Health has advised that schools who wish to be ‘nut free’ should have a written policy of their own including the specific control measures in place for example, food sharing, rewards in class, packed lunch policies etc.

The catering service continue to provide meals for all special dietary requirements including pupils with nut allergies. The following guidance is available to support schools in relation to special dietary requirements of pupils:

<https://www.eani.org.uk/parents/school-meals/dietary-requirements>.

If you have any questions in relation to the above, please do not hesitate to contact your Area Catering Manager to discuss further.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Briggs

**Head of Service – EA Catering**