



# Drinking Water Provision in Primary Schools Policy

**Model Policy for all Primary school provision including specialist school and pupil referral unit (PRU). This policy sets out the approach to maintaining Water Coolers/Fountains in Flintshire schools.**

*To be completed by Education & Youth:*

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## 1. Overview & Introduction

### 1.1

At St Ethelwold's VA School we are committed to ensuring all learners have adequate and easy access to free drinking water throughout the school day. We will ensure that all water coolers/fountains are well maintained and will follow regulations and guidelines to ensure safety. We will support Refill's initiative with the Welsh Government's partnership to substantially increase the availability of high-quality drinking water and help stop plastic pollution (Refill Wales, 2023).

### 1.2 Definition

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions will apply:

- **Water Cooler:** A dispenser of cooled, drinking water.
- **Water Fountain:** A machine that produces a small stream of water for drinking.
- **Drinking Water:** Water pure enough for drinking which does not represent any significant risk to health.

### 1.3 Description

The two main types of water coolers are Point of Use (POU) and bottle-fed models. Schools should use POU water coolers, which connect directly to the mains water supply and are powered by electricity. POU coolers are the most practical option for schools, as they have lower long-term operating costs compared to bottle-fed models.

Bottle-fed water coolers present several drawbacks. They can be heavy and cumbersome when full, increasing the risk of manual handling injuries during refilling. Additionally, the air space that forms as the water level drops allows bacteria to potentially contaminate the remaining water. Bacteria can also grow in the water bottles themselves if they are not stored or sited properly. Bottle-fed coolers also have an environmental impact due to the need for regular water deliveries, adding to the school's carbon footprint.

POU water coolers are the superior choice for schools, providing greater convenience, cost-effectiveness, and reduced health and environmental impact compared to bottle-fed models.

### 1.4 Legislative Context

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) this policy supports the following specific articles:

**Article 6** - You have the right to life, to grow up and reach your full potential.

**Article 13** - You have the right to information.

**Article 24** - You have the right to have clean water, nutritious food, a clean environment and good healthcare when you need it

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 requires school governing bodies, local education authorities and further education institutions to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the well-being of all children who are students at a school, or who are students under 18 years of age.

The Children Act 1989 and 2004 places a statutory duty on a range of organisations to make arrangements to ensure that their functions, and services provided on their behalf, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of learners.

The food and drink provided in all council-maintained schools must meet The Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013. These Regulations are based on the previous Appetite for Life guidelines and form part of the wider Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009.

The Governing body at St Ethelwold's VA School are aware of the relevant legislation and guidance and will have due regard for the following:

- **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014**  
*Part 1 Introduction: 2. "Meaning of Well-being"*
- **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**  
*Part 2 Improving Well-being: 4. "The Well-being Goals"*
- **Healthy Eating in Maintained Schools 2013** (*Nutritional Standards and Requirements*)  
*Section 1 – Promoting healthy eating and drinking by pupils in maintained schools*  
*Section 5 - Drinking Water in Schools*
- **Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2009**  
*Section 4 – Requirements for food and drink provided on school premises etc*  
*Section 5 – Drinking water in Schools*
- **Public Health (Wales) Act 2017**  
*Part 2 – Obesity*
- **Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011** *which encompasses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.*
- **Human Rights Act 1998**  
*Article 2 – Right to life*
- **Equality Act 2010**  
*Section D – Normal day-to-day Activities: D16*

## 1.5 Scope

This policy applies to all persons using the school site, learners, staff and visitors at St Ethelwold's VA school. It applies during the school day (including break and lunch time), and during any additional times the school is legally responsible for the learners up until 6.00pm and including residential and non-residential visits (Healthy Eating in Maintained Schools, 2013).

### **1.6 Policy Exceptions**

The Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards & Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013 do not apply to food and drink bought in from home.

Parents opting to supply their children with a drink or snack item for morning break, should be encouraged to provide drinks and snacks which are healthy, and/or of a healthier variety through the provision of regular healthy eating advice and information.

Parents opting to supply their children with a packed lunch, should be encouraged to provide a healthy and balanced meal, through the provision of regular healthy eating advice and information. Parents are reminded of the above guidance in relation to school trips in particular.

### **1.7 Related Policies**

St Ethelwold's VA School will monitor to ensure there is consistency and coherence in the way it provides drinking water provisions. Linked school policies include:

- Food and Fitness Policy
- Managing Healthcare Needs Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy

## **2. Aims and Objectives**

### **2.1 The Aims of the Drinking Water Provision policy are:**

- To improve the health and wellbeing of St Ethelwold's VA school community.
- To ensure all learners have access to free, safe drinking water.
- To ensure all water coolers are maintained and safe to use.
- To fully uphold the Rights of the Child with specific reference to Article 24:

**Article 24:** You have the right to have clean water, nutritious food, a clean environment and good healthcare when you need it.

### **2.2. The Objectives of the Drinking Water Provision policy are:**

- To ensure all learners have easy access to free, clean and safe drinking water throughout the school day. To ensure that all water coolers in school are safe and well maintained. To provide clear guidance on the maintenance of water coolers in school.

### 3. Rationale

Drinking water throughout the day is an important way of protecting health and contributing to well-being. Research has indicated how drinking plenty of water can help to prevent a range of short and long-term health problems such as headaches, bladder and bowel problems, and cancer. Water is a healthy drink and does not damage teeth, unlike still and fizzy soft-drinks high in sugar, additives, artificial sweeteners and caffeine. When we are thirsty our mental performance declines by 10 per cent. Mental performance improves with frequent intakes of small amounts of water. Studies have illustrated how learner's concentration improves when they are not distracted by feelings of thirst, tiredness and irritability. It has been suggested that learners can achieve more when their health and learning needs are met. It is important therefore to ensure that they have easy access to water throughout the day and to provide a school environment that supports health and well-being through a health promoting school approach. (*Think Water; Guidance on water in schools, 2004*).

Data from the School Health Research Network (SHRN) 2022/23 Primary School Student's Health and Wellbeing Survey Report provides a valuable insight into young people's attitudes towards food, fitness and physical activity (survey undertaken autumn term 2022 by 1915 students, which is 27.3% of those on roll).

61% of all students surveyed have reported usually drinking tap or bottled water once a day or more which is in line with the national average. Year 3 recorded 54% which was 2% lower than the national average for that year group.

20% of all students surveyed have reported usually drinking one or more sugary soft drinks a day which is slightly the higher than the national average of 19%. Year 3 reached a high of 24% which is 4% above the national average for this year group.

61% of all students surveyed have reported usually drinking one or more energy drinks a day which is in line with the national average. Year 4 was 1% above the year group's national average and Year 6 scored 4% above the national average for that year group.

Other studies show that UK school learners drink just a quarter of the water they need during the school day. Young learners have a higher proportion of water in their bodies than adults – and are therefore more likely to become dehydrated. Dehydration can cause an array of cognitive and behavioural problems which can impact students' ability to learn (*Nursing Times, 2012*).

Installing water coolers in schools can provide healthier alternatives to sugary drinks, without contributing to the environmental damage caused by plastic bottle, which supports the Refill Wales' mission to reduce plastic pollution. (*Refill Wales, 2023*).

Having easy access to water sources like water fountains and water coolers increases learner's water consumption by up to 25%. Access to safe drinking water is essential for maintaining learner's health and concentration, and schools have a responsibility to ensure that their learners have adequate access to clean and safe drinking water. Water coolers and fountains are a common source of drinking water in schools, but they can also pose a potential health risk if they are not properly maintained. UK schools have a responsibility to ensure that their water fountains provide safe drinking water to their learners, and doing so can not only protects institutions from liabilities, but also ensures learner's health and wellbeing. (*Cactus Water Systems, 2023*).

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

### 4.1 Role of the Governing Body

The role of the Governing Body at St Ethelwold's VA School is to ensure that:

- Information about the arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking at the school is included in the annual report to parents/carers.
- The School Meal Service complies with the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013.
- A member of the governing body will be nominated to oversee the implementation of the Water cooler policy.
- Adequate resources to support all within the school to access free drinking water.
- Ensure that the water coolers/ fountains are regularly inspected and maintained, and that any faults or defects are promptly repaired.

### 4.2 Headteacher and Senior Leaders

The role of the Headteacher and Senior Leaders at St Ethelwold's VA School is to ensure:

- Water coolers are accessible to all learners , including those with disabilities, and that they comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- Consider the placement of their water fountains to minimise the risk of contamination, for example by placing them away from toilets and other potential sources of bacteria.
- Avoid tanked water supplies.
- Report new installations and alterations to existing plumbing system to their local water supplier.

- Use approved contractors to carry out plumbing work and ensure water fittings are of appropriate quality.
- Adequate backflow prevention arrangements are in place to safeguard water supply quality.
- All staff promote healthy drinking in school in accordance with school guidance.
- Water coolers/ fountains are regularly inspected and maintained, and that any faults or defects are promptly repaired.
- Regular cleaning and disinfection of water fountains is carried out (via trained technicians) to prevent the growth of bacteria and other harmful microorganisms.
- Only trained Sanitisation Engineers / Technicians attend to the machines (to fix/repair and to clean and sanitise) to avoid risk of electric shocks, scalds, injury from manual handling and the handling of chemicals.
- The terms and conditions outlined on the Supplier's Maintenance agreement are upheld.
- The provision of information to learners on the proper use of water fountains, including the importance of not touching the spout or nozzle with their mouths or hands.

#### **4.3 All teaching and Support staff**

The role of all teaching and non-teaching staff at St Ethelwold's VA School is to ensure:

- consistent messages are provided/ mixed messages are avoided in relation to diet, oral health and physical activity.
- Support implementation of the policy.
- Promote healthy eating and drinking lifestyles in accordance with school guidance.
- Help and encourage learners to select balanced food and drink choices and promote opportunities for them to be physically active during the school day.
- Allow and encourage learners to refill water bottles and access water coolers throughout the day.
- Ensure that appropriate drinking water signage is always visible.
- Clean up any spilt water to avoid risk of slips and falls.
- Support learners to develop the confidence, motivation, physical competence, knowledge and understanding that can help them lead healthy and active lifestyles which promote good physical health and well-being.
- Support learners to develop positive, informed behaviours that encourage them to care for, and respect themselves and others. These behaviours support learners' sense of self-worth, their overall mood and energy levels.
- Act as positive role-models.

#### **4.4 The role of Parents and Carers**

We ask that all Parents/Carers of St Ethelwold's VA School to support the policy by:



- Providing a clean refillable water bottle daily.
- Ensure the bottle contains fresh, plain water only.
- Promote healthy eating and drinking lifestyles in accordance with school guidance.
- Provide healthy packed lunches if food is brought in from home.

#### **4.5 Responsibilities of ALL Learners**

We ask all learners at St Ethelwold's VA school to support the policy by:

- Avoid touching the spout or nozzle on water coolers/fountains with their mouths or hands.
- Use re-fillable bottles where possible to reduce plastic pollution
- Report any faulty or broken water coolers to teachers
- Report any spilt water to a teacher to avoid slips and falls.

## **5. Ethos**

At St Ethelwold's VA School we recognise the significant impact of the whole school approach to personal, social, and emotional education of learners as well as their physical health and wellbeing.

We will engage with learners where appropriate in consultation on water related activities through groups such as the School Council, Healthy Schools Committee and SNAG (School Nutrition Action Group)

#### **School meals and food provision**

- All school meals should comply with The Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Wales) Regulations 2013.
- We will provide an enjoyable dining experience by developing welcoming aspects of the dining room environment including displays of food, promoting healthy eating, availability of free water and organising appropriate queuing arrangements.
- The regulations are in place for all food provided on the premises from 8am up to 6.00pm.

## **6. Equality and Diversity**

As an employer and provider of services St Ethelwold's VA school will not unlawfully discriminate on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or on the grounds of Welsh Language.

The Equality Act states that it is illegal for institutions to discriminate against people with disabilities. This can include access to water. As a result, schools must consider different heights for water coolers and fountains to ensure wheelchair users and other disabilities are catered for.

All learners, their parents and carers, volunteers, staff and school governors are valued and will be treated with dignity and respect. St Ethelwold's VA School will not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.

To make sensitive and well-informed professional judgments about a learner's needs and a parent's capacity to respond to their child's needs, it is important that school staff are sensitive to differing family patterns, and lifestyles and to child rearing patterns that vary across different racial, ethnic and cultural groups.

We will work across our school community to ensure our commitment to equality and fairness is shared and take steps to ensure that our school is accessible, welcoming and inclusive.

As a school we will ensure a Whole School Approach is taken to improve the well-being and equity of opportunity to all learners in relation to access to free drinking water.

## 7. Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every two-years. The headteacher will ensure that the findings from staff, parent/carer and learner evaluations contribute to our school's self-evaluation process and to the policy review process.

There is a duty on Governing Bodies of maintained schools in Wales to include in the governors' report information on the action taken to promote healthy eating and drinking by learners of the school.

## 8. References

Cactus Water Systems . Accessed from <https://www.cactuswatersystems.co.uk/guides/safe-drinking-water-uk-schools> on 15/12/2023

Think Water; Guidance for water in schools (2004). Accessed from <http://www.ysgolsarnbach.org/downloads/180515-think-water.pdf> on 15/12/2023

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