EDITION October Half-Term 2026
From your school's caterer Taylor Shaw

BALANCED TRAY

More than just lunch



Free School Meals

Are you newly eligible?

Food Standards

Prioritising nutritious food



Chef's Corner

Simple recipes to make at home



Activity Ideas

Get crafty this autumn





Getting Ready for the New School Food Standards

You may have heard that new School Food Standards are on the way.

The updated standards will place an even greater focus on providing children and young people with healthy, nutritious food throughout the school day.

The proposed changes include more fruit, vegetables and fibre, alongside reductions in foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt. New standards for breakfast provision are also planned.

We're already working towards them

At Taylor Shaw, providing tasty, nutritious and well-balanced meals has always been at the heart of what we do.

Our food and nutrition teams are already hard at work reviewing and developing our menus. Our aim is not only to meet and exceed the current School Food Standards, but to take a phased approach towards the new requirements ahead of their planned introduction.

We're looking carefully at our recipes, ingredients and menu choices to make sure we continue to offer food that is nutritionally balanced, varied and, importantly, something pupils want to eat.

The new standards are currently expected to take effect from September 2027, subject to Parliamentary approval, with some secondary school requirements being phased in from September 2028.

Healthy food that pupils enjoy

For us, great school food isn't just about meeting standards. It's about creating meals that give pupils the nutrition and energy they need while making lunchtime something to look forward to.

We're excited to continue evolving our menus and bringing pupils delicious, nutritious choices every school day.

More Choice

We'll introduce the new standards gradually, giving pupils time to discover new foods and flavours.

The Evolution

As the new standards are introduced, we'll evolve our menus gradually, giving pupils plenty of opportunities to discover and enjoy new foods and flavours along the way.

Tasting sessions will help pupils become familiar with new dishes and ingredients, while also helping us understand what they enjoy.

With many of the principles already reflected in our approach to food, we expect the transition to feel gradual and familiar, building on the tasty, nutritious meals pupils already enjoy.

Eat Intuitively

Making every small change count and eating better, together!

Taylor Shaw has a long-standing commitment to supporting healthy eating and wellbeing through nutrition education and healthier choices.

We understand that wellbeing isn't one-size-fits-all. By listening to our bodies and making small changes that work for us, we can build healthier habits together.

Eatuitive is our wellness initiative, designed to help you make informed choices and become more intuitive about what your body needs to live a healthier, more fulfilled life.

From bite-sized videos and healthy eating tips to simple meal swaps, Eatuitive provides practical resources to support you along the way.

Look out for our Eatuitive posters for more tips, information and links to our educational videos.

eatuitive
EAT INTUITIVELY



FREE SCHOOL MEALS: Are You Newly Eligible?

From **September 2026,** Free School Meal eligibility expanded. If your household receives **Universal Credit,** your child could now be entitled to a free school meal, regardless of household earnings.

Please note, Universal Credit is not the only way to qualify for Free School Meals. To find out more about the full eligibility criteria, speak to your school office or visit the *government website.

And remember, **Free School Meals** can be about more than the meal itself.

For families meeting the relevant criteria, registration can also help schools access additional funding and may provide access to other support and activities.

Don't miss out. Check your eligibility today.

**www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools-and-local-authorities/free-school-meals-guidance-for-local-authorities-local-authority-maintained-schools-academies-and-free-schools*





Our New Menus!

When you come back from the half-term break, get ready to enjoy our new menus!

We've been busy creating exciting new dishes and flavours for you to enjoy at break and lunch. Don't worry, some of your favourites are staying, including marinated chicken with rice and our popular vegan and marinated chicken-topped flatbreads.

Look out for a great selection of pop-up food counters, including our tasty Asian Rice Bowls.

From our kitchen to yours



Hi, I'm Nik, Craft & Development Chef. I've worked for Elior for over 30 years and during that time I've honed my skills in the kitchen and developed a real passion for sharing my knowledge with others.

Today, I lead a team of eight Craft Training Chefs who regularly visit our schools, supporting our catering teams and sharing their skills and expertise.

Each term, either myself or one of the team will be sharing some of our favourite recipes, handy cooking tips and answering questions you may have.

With the October half term approaching, I've chosen a few easy recipes that are perfect for making at home: a New Mexico Plant-Based Hot Dog with Seasoned Potato Wedges, followed by Chocolate-Dipped Fruit.

The great thing about these recipes is that they can easily be adapted to suit different tastes and dietary needs. For example, if you fancy a meaty hot dog, simply swap the plant-based sausage for your favourite meat alternative.

These easy, handheld dishes are perfect for enjoying outdoors if you're hosting a bonfire party or simply fancy making something a little different for tea.

Happy cooking!

Nik

Craft & Development Chef

Chocolate Orange Hug in a Mug (Serves 1)

Ingredients

- 200ml Semi-Skimmed Milk
- 30g Orange flavoured Chocolate, broken into segments
- 4g Cocoa Powder (approx. 1 tsp)
- 1 teaspoon Sugar (optional)

Method

1. **Pour the milk into a small saucepan** and gently heat over a medium heat.
2. Add the Chocolate Orange segments, cocoa powder and sugar, **stirring continuously** until the chocolate has melted and the drink is smooth.
3. Continue heating until hot, but **do not allow to boil**.
4. Pour into a heatproof mug.
5. **Serve immediately.**



Top Tip

Luxury Tip: For an extra indulgent treat, top with a generous swirl of whipped cream, a sprinkle of chocolate shavings, a little grated orange zest and a segment of Chocolate Orange on the side for dipping and stirring into the drink.

Is there a recipe you'd like to see in a future edition? We'd love to hear your ideas. Email us at UKmarketing@TaylorShaw.com and your suggestion could feature in one of our next newsletters.

New Mexico Plant-Based Hot Dog – Serves 6

Ingredients

- 6 hot dog rolls
- 6 plant-based hot dog sausages
- 60g spring onions
- 30g grated cheese (plant-based)
- 60g tortilla chips
- 60g BBQ sauce

Method

1. **Prepare the rolls.** Ensure the hot dog rolls are cut down the top, ready for filling.
2. **Cook the sausages.** Heat the plant-based hot dog sausages according to the manufacturer's instructions, ensuring they are thoroughly heated.
3. **Prepare the spring onions.** Wash the spring onions, pat dry and finely chop.
4. **Prepare the cheese.** Grate the cheese or use pre-grated cheese.
5. **Crush the tortilla chips.** Place the tortilla chips into a food bag, seal and gently crush on a flat surface.
6. **Assemble the hot dogs.** Place one heated plant-based sausage into each warmed hot dog roll.
7. **Sprinkle** over the **grated cheese** and drizzle with BBQ sauce.
8. Add the crushed tortilla chips and finish with the chopped spring onions.
9. **Serve immediately while warm.**

Top Tip

Add the tortilla chips just before serving so they stay crunchy and give the hot dog plenty of texture.



Equipment for both recipes

- Chopping board
- Knife
- Spoon
- Baking tray or suitable equipment for heating the sausages
- Baking paper
- Grater, if not using pre-grated cheese
- Small food bag
- Large mixing bowl
- Small bowls
- Spoon or sauce bottle for drizzling

Seasoned Potato Wedges – Serves 5

Ingredients

- 750g potatoes
- 1 tbsp vegetable or rapeseed oil
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- ½ tsp garlic granules
- ½ tsp dried mixed herbs
- Black pepper, to taste

Method

1. **Prepare the potatoes.** Wash the potatoes thoroughly and cut into evenly sized wedges. There is no need to peel them.
2. **Season the wedges.** Place the potatoes into a large bowl and add the oil, smoked paprika, garlic granules, mixed herbs and a little black pepper.
3. **Mix well** until the wedges are lightly and evenly coated.
4. Spread the wedges in a single layer onto a baking tray lined with baking paper.
5. **Bake at 200°C / 180°C** fan for approximately **30 to 40 minutes,** turning halfway through cooking.
6. Cook until the wedges are golden, crisp on the outside and soft in the centre.
7. **Serve warm alongside the New Mexico Plant-Based Hot Dog.**

Top Tip

Cut the wedges into similar sizes so they cook evenly. For a little extra flavour, sprinkle with fresh chopped spring onion just before serving.





Chocolate-Dipped Fruit

A simple, colourful treat combining fresh fruit with a little chocolate



Ingredients

- 150g chocolate, suitable for your dietary/allergen requirements
- 1 teaspoon coconut, vegetable or rapeseed oil
- Selection of fresh fruit, such as:
- ¼ small melon, cut into chunks
- ¼ fresh pineapple, cut into chunks
- 2 kiwis, peeled and cut into chunks
- 2 bananas, peeled and cut into chunks
- 2 satsumas, peeled and separated into segments
- 300g Greek-style yoghurt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract or 1 tablespoon honey, optional

Check the ingredient labels carefully for allergens and **may contain** warnings and substitute ingredients as needed.

Top Tip

Putting the fruit onto skewers makes it much easier to dip into the chocolate and keeps fingers a little less messy!

Equipment

1. Chopping board
2. Knife
3. Small saucepan and heatproof bowl, or microwave-safe bowl
4. Wooden spoon or spatula
5. Wooden skewers or sticks
6. Baking tray or plate
7. Greaseproof/baking paper
8. Small serving bowls
9. Spoon for yoghurt

Method

1. **Prepare the fruit.** Wash the fruit where required and cut larger fruits into bite-sized pieces.
2. **Melt the chocolate.** Gently melt the chocolate with a small amount of oil until silky and smooth. This can be done using a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of gently simmering water or carefully in the microwave.
3. Allow the chocolate to **cool slightly**.
4. Carefully thread the prepared fruit onto wooden skewers.
5. Dip the fruit into the melted chocolate.
6. **Gently shake off any excess chocolate.** This will help prevent a puddle of chocolate forming around the fruit when you place it on the tray.
7. Place the dipped fruit onto a tray lined with greaseproof paper.
8. **Refrigerate until the chocolate has set.**
9. Serve with creamy Greek-style yoghurt, either plain or flavoured with a little vanilla or honey.

What's in season?

Did you know that eating what's in season is not only good for the planet, but also for your taste buds and your wallet?

Seasonal fruits and veggies, like juicy berries in summer or crunchy root vegetables in winter, haven't travelled far to get to your plate, meaning fewer food miles and a smaller environmental impact.

Plus, they often cost less because they're plentiful, and they taste amazing because they're picked at peak ripeness. Why not check out your local greengrocer or farmer's market to see what delicious seasonal goodies they have on offer?

You might discover some exciting new ingredients to experiment with in your kitchen!

In season right now...

Apples, Beetroot, Brussels Sprouts, Butternut Squash, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Chestnuts, Chicory, Cranberries, Elderberries, Jerusalem Artichokes, Kale, Leeks, Onions, Parsnips, Pears, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Quince, Red Cabbage, Salsify, Savoy Cabbage, Swede, Swiss Chard, Turnips, Watercress, Wild Mushrooms, Winter Squash, White Cabbage.



Seasonal fruits and vegetables

Why Not Try Homemade Kale Chips This October?

With kale in abundance this autumn, it's the perfect time to make a super-healthy, crunchy snack that satisfies a crisp craving.

Dietitian's Tip

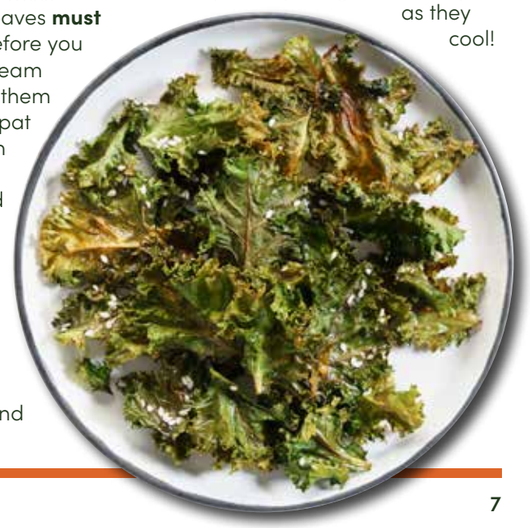
Kale is rich in vitamins A, C, and K, plus iron and calcium, which support the immune system, bone health, and may help reduce tiredness.

What You'll Need:

- 1 bunch of curly kale (ensure it's fresh!)
- 1 tbsp oil
- Pinch of salt (or try sprinkling over your favourite spice, like smoked paprika or peri peri)

Simple Steps:

1. **Prep the kale:** Wash the kale thoroughly. This is the most important step: the leaves **must be completely dry** before you add oil, or they will steam instead of crisp! Spin them in a salad spinner or pat them dry with a clean tea towel. Tear the leaves into chip-sized pieces, discarding the tough centre stems.
2. **Season and massage:** Place the dry kale in a large bowl. Drizzle with a small amount of oil and a pinch of salt. Use your hands to **gently massage** the oil into the leaves until every piece is lightly coated.
3. **Bake to perfection:** Spread the kale in a **single layer** on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake in a preheated oven at a low temperature (around 150°C) for about 15-20 minutes, rotating the tray halfway through.
4. **Cool and crisp:** The chips are done when they are crispy but still vibrantly green (avoid letting them turn brown, which can make them taste bitter). Let them cool completely on the tray — they will get even crispier as they cool!



Half Term Activity Ideas

Stuck for Half Term Fun? Try a DIY Autumn Leaf Bowl



Are you searching for a creative and low-cost activity to do this half-term? Why not embrace the beautiful colours of the season and try crafting!

This simple project is perfect for all ages and results in a beautiful, decorative keepsake.

You could even save the finished bowl to gift to someone over the festive period – it makes a wonderful, unique present!

What You'll Need

Gather these simple materials:

- **Fallen autumn leaves:** Ensure they are dry. The flatter they are, the better!
- **Crafting glue:** A standard PVA glue works best
- A small paintbrush or sponge brush
- **A balloon:** Inflate it to the size you want your bowl to be

Enjoy your crafting and have a safe and happy half-term!

Simple Steps to Create Your Bowl

Follow these four easy steps to craft your beautiful autumn bowl:

1. **Prepare your surface:** Lay down some newspaper or a plastic sheet to protect your work area – this can get a little messy!
2. **Glue the leaves:** Blow up the balloon to your desired bowl size and rest it, knotted-side down, in a cup or small bowl to keep it stable. Starting from the top, brush a layer of glue onto the balloon. Place your first leaf onto the glue, then brush a light layer of glue over the leaf.
3. **Build your bowl:** Continue layering leaves, overlapping them slightly, until you've covered about half of the balloon's surface. Make sure to glue the top of every leaf to seal and strengthen the structure. If you leave a small gap at the top (the very centre of the balloon), it will ensure the finished bowl has a flat bottom.
4. **Dry and reveal:** Let the bowl dry completely – this could take up to 24 hours. Once the glue is totally dry and the structure feels hard, carefully pop the balloon with a pin. The balloon will shrivel away, and you'll be left with your beautiful, unique decorative leaf bowl!



Competition Time

Simply create any of the recipes featured in this newsletter and ask a parent or guardian to email us at **ukmarketing@taylorshaw.com** with a photo of your dish or item.

Please also include a few words about whether you enjoyed making and/or eating (or drinking) your chosen recipe.

Make sure you include the following in your email:

- Pupil name
- Class/year group
- School name
- School postcode or town

The Prize

Secondary Schools – One winning entry will get the chance to choose a themed menu for their school for a day, with the winning pupil enjoying their lunch for free.

If you love the idea of having something like Korean Corn Dogs, Chicken Gryos, Chicken Katsu or another exciting dish on the menu, this is your chance!

Primary Schools – One winning entry will receive a cooking session with Nik, our Development Chef.

We will liaise with the school to deliver a session for a group of pupils from your class, where you will make and decorate cupcakes.

The prize is subject to school permission and may be adapted to accommodate medical diets.