



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 2, 2015

U.K. Education Minister: Schools May “Confiscate” Unhealthy Foods

Teachers in British public schools may search students’ lunch boxes and “confiscate, keep or destroy” any items they find that violate school food policies, declared U.K. education minister Lord Nash.

“Governing bodies are responsible for their school meals service including their packed lunch policies and whether to ban certain products to promote healthy eating,” Lord Nash [wrote](#) in response to a written question from a peer of the House of Lords.



“Schools have common law powers to search pupils, with their consent, for items,” he explained. “There is nothing to prevent schools from having a policy of inspecting lunch boxes for food items that are prohibited under their school food policies. A member of staff may confiscate, keep or destroy such items found as a result of the search if it is reasonable to do so in the circumstances.”

The minister suggested that schools wishing to adopt such policies do so in consultation with parents, have students present during searches, and have “a second member of staff ... present if any items are to be confiscated.” Those schools concerned about the legality of such searches, he said, “should seek their own legal advice.”

Lord Stoddart of Swindon raised the question after parents reported a number of incidents in which food items they had packed for their children were confiscated by school officials.

Cherry Tree Primary School in Colchester, for instance, has deemed scotch eggs, a traditional English food consisting of “a hard-boiled egg wrapped in sausage meat and coated in breadcrumbs,” and Peperami, a sausage snack, “inappropriate,” according to [The Telegraph](#). The newspaper reports that the banned foods “are being confiscating [sic] until the end of the day, at which point the teacher replaces the item, adding an explanatory note for parents.”

Vikki Laws, mother of six-year-old Tori, told [The Telegraph](#) her daughter “felt victimized” when her Peperami was snatched from her lunch, which otherwise consisted of fruit, yogurt, and sandwiches. The sausage, she said, is Tori’s “favorite thing and she was told she couldn’t eat it — and there were other people around her having cakes provided by the school as part of the dinners.”

Indeed, as the paper pointed out, “the school lunch menu showed that children are usually served meat or fish and vegetables for a main meal, sometimes accompanied by chips [fries], with handmade cookies or flapjacks [crepes] for desert [sic].”

Manchester’s Manley Park Primary School confiscated kids’ cereal bars and fruit chews — even those made without added sugar — “despite offering pizza, chocolate fudge cake and fish fingers on its lunch menu,” reported the [Daily Mail](#). School policy also forbids pizza, chocolate, and cake in packed lunches.

“We make no apology for advocating genuine healthy food for children, and are working in line with government directives,” the school said in a statement.



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A preschool in Basingstoke, Hampshire, went these schools one better and issued an outright ban on packed lunches, according to the *Daily Mail*. A letter informing parents of this new policy suggested they were incapable of packing nutritious lunches for their children.

“We recognize the impact of diet on the children’s ability to learn and we feel that it is essential that children eat a nutritionally balanced lunch,” read the letter. “Therefore from September 2015 we would like all children in the school to take advantage of the free hot school meal each day.”

All this is being done in the name of combating childhood obesity, which is undoubtedly a problem. In a country without socialized medicine, it would be a problem for parents to handle. In the United Kingdom, however, it has become the state’s problem because it has to pay for the extra medical care that obese people require. Thus, according to the *Express*, “a top [National Health Service] boss warned that many children are being failed by parents, with one in 10 obese by the time they begin primary school.” The implication, of course, is that the state must step in to “save” children from their parents.

As the United States has moved ever closer to socialized medicine, Americans’ health has also increasingly become the state’s business, and similar policing of schoolchildren’s lunch boxes has occurred, albeit more sporadically. In 2012, a four-year-old North Carolina girl’s lunch was [confiscated](#) and replaced with a school lunch, which she mostly wasted. (Like the British schools, that one, too, rewarded students with pizza and ice cream.) In April, a Colorado preschool stole a five-year-old girl’s Oreo cookies and sent a note home to her parents informing them that her lunch must meet with their approval.

“What the school thinks is healthy for her is not what I think is healthy for her,” the girl’s mother told [9News.com](#). “That’s between me and her and our doctor — not the school.”

As Douglas Carswell, a Member of Parliament, put it, “Government should get out of people’s lunchboxes and focus on trying to fix the big things like immigration and the deficit.”

“With Britain tumbling down the international league tables and with a generation entering the work force with less literacy and numeracy than the generation retiring, you would have thought that teachers might have better things to do than rummaging through children’s crisps [chips] and fruit,” said MP Iain Austin.

Sadly, in 21st-century Britain and America — nations that gave birth to the classical-liberal order — the state is determined to have every last morsel of liberty for lunch.



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