Dear [teacher’s name],

Thank you for taking the time to reply to my previous email.

[Child’s name] has told me that [he/she] has been told not to eat certain foods in her lunchbox as they are [‘treats’ / ‘unhealthy’ / ‘red foods’ / ‘sometimes foods’]. I noticed that this has resulted in [insert name of food] returning home uneaten and my child has started to express worry about eating other foods that are part of our family’s regular diet. This is concerning for me as a parent trying to support my child to build a healthy relationship with food and their body.

Firstly, using labels like ‘green’ and ‘red’ foods, ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ foods, or ‘everyday’ and ‘sometimes’ foods can have unintended consequences, like believing that some foods are ‘good’ and some foods are ‘bad’. When a child hears a food is ‘bad’ they can internalise that eating the food will make them ‘bad’ too. It’s also tricky for them to comprehend what it means if someone they love and trust (like a parent or grandparent) gives them a ‘bad’ food.

Secondly, I am packing a lunchbox based on my child’s individual needs, challenges and sensory preferences, as well as bigger factors, like what’s available or affordable in the supermarket. Children are not responsible for food purchasing decisions and it’s not fair to judge them based on what someone else has packed in their lunchbox.

Guilt, shame and worry around eating is a precursor to the development of disordered eating. So not only do practices like these not directly help children to make ‘healthy’ choices, they have the potential to cause significant harm.

I appreciate that you have my child’s best interests at heart, and so I ask that you allow them to eat freely from their lunch box at mealtimes and avoid commenting (either positively or negatively) on the food they bring to school.

Again, I am happy to discuss this further with you by email or phone, or in person.

Thank you,

[Your name]