FOOD AND DRINK POLICY.

See also Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Allergy Policy, Health and safety policy, administration of medicines

Guidance: Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance May 2025

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework – September 2026

Statement of Intent

Sharing snack/meal times together is an important part in the social life at our preschool. The time spent at snack/meals times reinforces the children's awareness of healthy eating, it encourages them to try different foods if those around them are, it develops their fine motor skills, control and self-esteem by allowing them to spread and pour, it helps develop a sense of responsibility and pride by being asked to hand out plates, cups, fetch jugs of milk and water, it encourages good table manners, sharing, compromise, enables choices and allows a relaxed flow of conversation. Children will be supported to develop a positive relationship with food.

Aim

- provide children with healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drink;
- promote positive attitudes towards food and healthy eating;
- support children's understanding of how food and drink contribute to health and wellbeing;
- provide safe and hygienic food preparation and eating arrangements;
- minimise the risk of choking;
- minimise the risk of allergic reactions and accidental exposure to allergens;
- identify and appropriately meet children's individual dietary requirements;
- respect children's cultural, religious, ethical and family dietary practices;
- support children to recognise and respond to their own hunger and fullness;
- encourage children's independence and participation at mealtimes;
- promote good oral health;
- work in partnership with parents and carers.

Food provided by the pre-school

Where food is provided by the pre-school, it will be planned and provided in accordance with the EYFS Nutrition Guidance.

Food and drinks will be selected to provide a varied and balanced diet appropriate to the age and developmental needs of the children.

We will provide a variety of foods, which may include:

- fresh fruit and vegetables;
- crackers and other suitable starchy foods;
- cheese and other suitable dairy foods;
- other nutritious foods appropriate to children's dietary requirements.

We will consider portion size, variety, balance, sugar, salt, saturated fat and the nutritional needs of young children when planning food.

We will not routinely provide foods or drinks that are unsuitable for young children.

We will ensure that staff responsible for food preparation and handling understand our food safety procedures.

Drinks

Fresh drinking water will be available and accessible to children throughout the session.

Children will be encouraged to drink water whenever they are thirsty.

Water will be the preferred drink between meals.

At snack and lunch times, we will provide plain water and plain milk where appropriate.

We will not routinely provide:

- squash;
- fizzy drinks;

- fruit juice;
- smoothies;
- flavoured milk;
- other sugar-sweetened drinks.

Where an individual child requires a different drink because of a medical, dietary, cultural or religious requirement, this will be discussed with the child's parents/carers and appropriate arrangements will be made.

Oral health

We recognise the importance of establishing good oral-health habits in the early years.

We will:

- ensure water is readily available;
- promote water as the preferred drink between meals;
- avoid routinely providing sugary foods and drinks;
- provide age-appropriate opportunities for children to learn about looking after their teeth;
- work with parents and carers to support good oral-health practices.

Safe eating and choking prevention

Children under five are at increased risk of choking. We will take all reasonable steps to reduce this risk.

Food will be prepared in a manner appropriate to children's age and developmental stage.

We will follow current safer-eating guidance, including:

- removing stones and pips from fruit before serving;
- cutting small round foods such as grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes lengthways and into quarters;

- cutting large fruits such as melon appropriately;
- cutting hard fruit and vegetables such as raw apple and carrot into suitable slices or otherwise preparing them safely;
- cutting cheese into strips rather than chunks;
- cutting sausages into thin strips rather than chunks and removing skins where appropriate;
- removing bones from meat and fish;
- not providing whole nuts or whole seeds to children under five;
- not providing popcorn as a snack;
- not providing marshmallows or packet jelly cubes;
- not providing hard sweets;

Other foods will also be assessed for choking risk and prepared appropriately.

We will take account of individual children's developmental needs and any relevant advice from parents/carers or health professionals.

Supervision during eating and drinking

Children will be safely seated while eating and drinking, using an appropriately sized chair where necessary.

Children will **never be left alone while eating**.

Children will always remain within sight and hearing of a member of staff while eating.

A member of staff with a valid full paediatric first aid certificate will be present in the room when children are eating.

Where possible, staff will position themselves so they can observe children eating and respond promptly to:

- choking;

- unsafe eating;
- food sharing;
- allergic reactions;
- other concerns.

Distractions during eating will be minimised.

Children will be supported to eat safely and develop appropriate eating skills.

Choking incidents

If a child experiences a choking incident requiring intervention by a member of staff, the incident will be recorded in accordance with our incident-recording procedures.

Parents/carers will be informed.

Records will be reviewed periodically to identify any patterns, common foods or circumstances that may require changes to our procedures.

Where appropriate, we will review food preparation, supervision and safer-eating arrangements following an incident. If the incident is serious and the child requires medical attention of hospitalisation OFSTED and RIDDOR will be informed.

Allergies, intolerances and dietary requirements

Before a child attends pre-school, we will obtain information about:

- food allergies;
- food intolerances;
- special dietary requirements;
- medical dietary requirements;
- cultural or religious dietary requirements;
- relevant health conditions affecting food or drink.

This information will be recorded and kept up to date.

Parents/carers are responsible for informing us promptly of any changes to their child's dietary requirements or allergies.

We will maintain an accessible system so that staff responsible for food preparation, handling, serving and supervision are aware of children's relevant dietary requirements.

Information will be communicated to staff in a manner that allows children to be kept safe while respecting confidentiality and privacy.

Allergy safety

We will work closely with parents/carers to minimise the risk of accidental exposure to known allergens.

For children with food allergies, we will obtain appropriate information about:

- the child's allergy;
- known allergens;
- signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction;
- how exposure can be avoided;
- action to be taken in an emergency;
- any prescribed medication or emergency treatment;
- any relevant allergy action plan or healthcare information.

Where appropriate, parents/carers will be asked to provide an allergy action plan or relevant information from a healthcare professional.

Staff will follow our Allergy Policy and any individual allergy action plan.

At each snack and mealtime, a member of staff will check that the food being served to each child is appropriate for that child's known dietary requirements and has been prepared safely.

We will identify allergens present in food provided by the pre-school.

Reasonable precautions will be taken to prevent cross-contamination and accidental exposure.

Food will not be shared between children where doing so could create an allergy or dietary risk.

Medical and special diets

We will make reasonable arrangements to meet children's medical and special dietary requirements.

Where a child requires a special diet for a medical reason, we will obtain appropriate written information from parents/carers and, where necessary, from a qualified health professional.

Information may include:

- foods to be excluded;
- foods to be included;
- suitable alternatives;
- nutritional requirements;
- any supplements required;
- any other relevant instructions.

Where appropriate, parents/carers will be encouraged to seek advice from a registered dietitian or other qualified health professional.

We will review children's dietary requirements regularly and whenever there is a change in their needs.

Cultural and religious dietary requirements

We respect children's cultural, religious and family dietary practices.

We will work in partnership with parents/carers to understand and appropriately meet requirements such as:

- halal diets;
- vegetarian diets;
- religious fasting where appropriate to the child's age and circumstances;

- other cultural or religious dietary practices.

No child will be disadvantaged because of their cultural, religious or dietary requirements.

Packed lunches

Children attending lunch should bring a healthy, balanced and nutritious packed lunch.

We will provide parents/carers with information and guidance about suitable packed lunches.

Parents/carers must provide accurate information about ingredients and allergens where relevant.

Packed lunches should be provided in a suitable insulated lunch bag with an appropriate ice pack where necessary to maintain food at a safe temperature.

We will follow its food-safety procedures when receiving, storing and handling packed lunches.

We will not knowingly serve food that is unsafe, unsuitable for the child or that presents a known allergy or dietary risk.

We does not have facilities to heat children's packed lunches. Parents/carers should therefore provide food that can safely be eaten cold.

Children's food will not be shared with other children where this could create an allergy or dietary risk.

Foods presenting a choking risk must be prepared appropriately before being brought into the pre-school. In particular, grapes, cherry tomatoes and similar small round foods must be prepared in accordance with our safer-eating procedures.

Parents/carers should not routinely include foods that are unsuitable for young children, including hard sweets and whole nuts.

Staff will encourage children to eat their lunch but will not force or pressure children to eat.

Uneaten food and packaging may be returned in the child's lunch box so that parents/carers can monitor what their child has eaten.

Food hygiene and safety

Food will be stored, prepared and served in a safe and hygienic environment.

We will maintain appropriate food-safety procedures, including arrangements for:

- safe food storage;
- cleaning and sanitising food-preparation areas;
- hand hygiene;
- safe preparation and serving of food;
- prevention of cross-contamination;
- appropriate temperature control;
- management of food waste;
- checking food is within its use-by date;
- dealing with food contamination or suspected food poisoning.

Staff involved in preparing or handling food will receive appropriate food-hygiene information or training and will be competent to carry out their responsibilities safely.

Children will wash their hands with soap and warm water before eating.

Children will be encouraged to follow appropriate hygiene practices.

Cooking activities

Cooking activities provide valuable opportunities for children to learn about food, health, mathematics, communication, physical development and independence.

Cooking activities will:

- be appropriately supervised;

- take account of children's developmental abilities;
- follow safe food-hygiene procedures;
- take account of allergies and dietary requirements;
- take account of choking risks;
- promote healthy attitudes towards food.

Staff will check ingredients and allergen information before using food in cooking activities.

Food used in cooking or sensory activities will be managed safely and appropriately.

Food brought into the pre-school for celebrations

Cakes, sweets and other high-sugar foods will not be routinely provided.

Where families wish to celebrate a birthday or special occasion, we may encourage alternatives such as:

- fruit platters;
- non-food celebrations;
- bubbles;
- stickers;
- books;
- other suitable activities.

Any food brought into the preschool for sharing must comply with our food-safety and allergy procedures.

We reserve the right to decline food where ingredient or allergen information is unavailable or where the food cannot be safely served.

No child will be excluded from a celebration because of an allergy or dietary requirement. Appropriate alternatives will be considered where necessary.

Food poisoning and reporting

We will follow food-safety procedures where food poisoning is suspected.

Where an incident meets a statutory notification requirement, we will notify the OFSTED within 14 days.

Any suspected outbreak or significant food-safety incident will be investigated and appropriate action taken.

Records will be maintained in accordance with our reporting procedures.

Partnership with parents and carers

Parents/carers are important partners in meeting children's nutritional and dietary needs.

We will:

- communicate with parents/carers about their child's dietary needs;
- provide information about healthy packed lunches;
- ask parents/carers to inform us of changes to allergies or dietary requirements;
- discuss concerns about a child's eating or dietary intake sensitively;
- work with parents/carers and relevant professionals where specialist dietary advice is required.

Parents/carers will be informed of any significant food-related incident involving their child.