

Food, Nutrition and Safer Eating Policy

Introduction

In our setting we are committed to supporting children's health, development, and well-being through the provision of nutritious, balanced, and age-appropriate food. We follow the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2026 and the 2025 Nutrition Guidance for Early Years Providers to ensure the food and drink we provide meets the highest standards.

Providing healthy, balanced and nutritious food ensures that all children:

- Get the right amount of nutrients and energy they need while they are growing rapidly, which is especially important for children who might not have access to healthy food at home. This can help prevent children from becoming overweight or obese.
- Develop positive eating habits early on. Children's early experiences with food can shape future eating habits. This can impact children's long-term health including maintaining a healthy weight, and good oral health.

The early years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities and set the foundations for a lifetime of good health.

Aims:

- Promote lifelong healthy eating habits from an early age.
- Provide meals and snacks that meet children's nutritional, cultural, and dietary needs.
- Comply with statutory guidance on food and drink for children under five.
- Partner with families to support and respect children's individual food requirements.
- Encourage a positive, inclusive, and sociable dining experience.

We provide:

- Healthy, balanced meals and snacks based on the four food groups: fruit and vegetables, starchy foods, proteins, and dairy. Our food provision reflects the guidance in 'Example Menus for Early Years Settings' and supports healthy growth and development.
- Age-appropriate portion sizes.
- Water freely available throughout the day, and milk at designated snack times.



- Menus that change weekly and rotate every three weeks.

We avoid:

- Foods high in sugar, salt, or saturated fats.
- Artificial sweeteners and sugary drinks.

Guidance for children aged 1 to 5 years

We encourage children to eat a balanced diet containing a wide variety of foods. We plan meals and snacks that include a variety of food and drinks from the four main food groups every day. The more children try new foods, the wider the range of nutrients they will get from their meals. We will have children eat together in our setting. This encourages them to try foods that they might not try at home.

We take food safety seriously and recognise that children can choke on anything, so we look to minimise the risk for choking by ensuring:

- Cut small round foods will be cut lengthways and into quarters, e.g. grapes, cherry tomatoes, strawberries and raspberries.
- Large fruits, e.g. melon and hard fruits and vegetables, e.g. carrots will be cut into slices rather than into chunks.
- Bread will be cut into strips for younger children.

Paediatric first aid

A qualified paediatric first aider will be present at all times in the room during all snack and meal times.

Supervision when eating

An adult will always supervise children closely when they are eating. Staff, where possible, will sit facing children while they eat to monitor for choking hazards, prevent food sharing and quickly identify any allergic reactions.

If a choking incident occurs that requires adult intervention, such as back pats, details of the incident will be recorded and the parents informed. Choking incidents will be reviewed to spot any trends with the types of food that may be causing choking incidents and appropriate action taken.

Special Dietary Needs and Allergies

- We maintain a current list of children's allergies, intolerances, and cultural dietary needs.
- Allergen information is displayed and followed in food preparation areas.
- All staff receive training in allergy management and emergency response.

- We work closely with parents and healthcare professionals to develop individual care plans as needed.

Learning and Mealtime Environment

- Mealtimes are a key learning opportunity and are used to teach children about healthy food, hygiene, and manners.
- Children are encouraged to try new foods and take part in preparing simple snacks or meals.
- We support children to serve themselves where appropriate, promoting independence.
- Positive role modelling and discussions about food and health are encouraged.
- Mealtimes are social, inclusive, and calm.
- Children sit together with staff who model positive eating behaviours.
- Independence is promoted by encouraging children to serve themselves where age-appropriate.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

- Menus are shared regularly with families and feedback is welcomed.
- We provide information on healthy lunchbox choices (for children bringing food from home).
- Families are consulted about dietary needs, food preferences, and cultural or religious requirements.
- We signpost parents to external guidance and support where appropriate.

Sustainability

- We aim to reduce food waste and promote recycling in food-related activities.
- Our menus favour seasonal, locally sourced, and sustainably produced ingredients where possible.

Cooking with Children

- Cooking and food preparation activities are part of our curriculum.
- These activities promote fine motor skills, maths, science, and cultural learning.
- Health and safety guidelines are followed at all times.



Celebrations and Special Occasions

- We celebrate in healthy and inclusive ways.
- Families are encouraged to share culturally significant foods that meet our nutrition and allergy guidelines.

Cultural and Dietary Preferences

- We respect and accommodate dietary needs related to religion, culture, and ethical beliefs.
- Parents are consulted to ensure inclusive meal planning.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- This policy is reviewed annually or in response to updated statutory guidance.
- Menus and food practices are reviewed regularly and adapted based on feedback and nutritional standards.
- Compliance is monitored by the leadership team through periodic audits.
- All staff are kept informed of any updates to guidance or training requirements.

Date: September, 2026

Key References

- Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2026
- Nutrition Guidance for Early Years Providers (DfE, 2025)
- Example Menus for Early Years Settings (Public Health England, 2025)
- Food Safety: Help for Early Years Providers (DfE)
- Food Standards Agency: Safer Food Better Business
- Eat Better, Start Better (Public Health England / Action for Children)
- Start for Life - NHS