Food Policy

Policy Statement

This policy has been developed in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements and with regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance, April 2025. It recognises that good nutrition is fundamental to children's health, development, and learning outcomes.

Our Aims

Our primary aim is to provide nutritious, balanced meals and snacks, supporting children's optimal growth and development during the Early Years. We are committed to creating positive mealtime experiences, not only supporting children's physical development, but also promoting lifelong healthy eating habits through enjoyable, social dining experiences. The safety and wellbeing of all children remains paramount during all aspects of food preparation, serving, and consumption, with robust procedures in place to protect every child in our care. We work collaboratively with parents and carers as partners to meet each child's individual dietary needs, recognising that consistency between home and school supports the best outcomes for children. We view food experiences as valuable opportunities for holistic learning and development, incorporating nutrition education naturally into our curriculum.

Staff Supervision and Safety Requirements

Staff positioning during meals:

All staff members are required to see pupils whilst eating, ensuring continuous visual supervision and the ability to respond immediately to any situation that may arise, particularly choking incidents.

First Aid requirements when children are eating:

At least one member of staff holding a current Paediatric First Aid qualification is present. This essential safety requirement applies to all meal and snack times without exception, ensuring that should any emergency arise, particularly choking incidents which can occur silently and require immediate intervention, appropriately trained staff are immediately available to respond. Staff rotas are carefully arranged to ensure this requirement is consistently met, with first aid qualified staff clearly identified and their qualifications maintained through regular updates and renewal programmes.

Essential information required:

Before any child joins the school community, we obtain comprehensive information about their dietary requirements, which may stem from cultural, religious, or personal family requirements that are integral to their identity and wellbeing. We gather detailed information on food preferences and familiar foods that enable children to feel comfortable and secure in their new environment. Critical to child safety, we collect thorough documentation, details regarding any food allergies, including medical information and emergency procedures that must be followed in the event of an adverse reaction. Additionally, we record information about food intolerances, documenting associated symptoms and the specific management strategies that have proven effective for each individual child. We also gather information about any special health requirements that may impact nutrition or feeding practices, ensuring we can provide appropriate care that supports each child's individual needs

Meal and Snack Provision

Nutritional standards:

The nurseries have regard for the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance, April 2025, and follows these guidelines unless there are documented reasons for alternative approaches.

Meal scheduling:

Meals and snacks are thoughtfully provided at regular intervals throughout the day, with careful attention to children's natural rhythms and nutritional needs. Portion sizes are carefully calibrated to be age-appropriate while allowing children the opportunity to request additional servings, supporting their natural ability to self-regulate their intake. Our mealtimes are deliberately designed to be relaxed, calm occasions, encouraging shared conversation and social interaction, creating positive associations with food and eating that will benefit children throughout their lives. Our twice daily bread stick sessions are part of our carefully considered and planned routine. Children share in a carbohydrate fuelled snack whilst they engage in a mathematical and problem-solving learning experience

Meals from home:

It is possible to provide meals (and in Pastures, snacks) from home. We ask that these are carefully chosen and prepared to ensure the safety of your child and others. There should be no nut products. Fruit and vegetables should be chopped following the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance, April 2025. We ask that foods are nutritionally sound and that sugary foods and drinks are avoided.

Packed meals cannot be refrigerated or heated. Parents are asked to provide items in the appropriate containers to remain at safe temperatures. Containers should be named.

Responsibility and Monitoring

Designated responsibility:

At each mealtime and snack time, the staff team are responsible for checking that the food being provided by the setting meets all requirements for each child.

If packed lunch/meals are provided from home- parents and carers' are responsible for ensuring these are safe and appropriate.

Daily checks include:

Our comprehensive daily monitoring ensures that each child's special dietary requirements are met with accuracy, consistency, and careful attention to individual needs. Allergenic foods are robustly managed through appropriate separation, labelling, and handling procedures that eliminate cross-contamination risks. Additionally, we check that portion sizes are suitable for each child's age, developmental stage, and appetite patterns, supporting healthy growth while respecting individual differences in nutritional needs.

Record keeping

We prioritise regular, meaningful communication with parents about their child's eating patterns, sharing both successes and any areas where additional support might be beneficial. As children become more accustomed to nursery routines and mealtimes, any changes to their consumption of or interaction with mealtimes are shared with parents. Throughout this process, we maintain up-to-

date dietary requirement records that are easily accessible to all relevant staff members, ensuring consistent and safe care across all interactions.

Allergy and Special Dietary Management

Allergy management:

We develop comprehensive individual care plans for children with food allergies, working closely with parents and healthcare professionals to ensure all aspects of the child's condition are understood and managed appropriately. Clear labelling and physical separation of allergenic foods is maintained throughout our food preparation, storage, and serving processes, with dedicated equipment and preparation areas used where necessary to prevent cross-contamination. All staff receive thorough training on recognising the early signs of allergic reactions and responding appropriately, including when and how to seek emergency medical assistance.

Emergency medication:

Emergency medication prescribed for individual children is kept readily available in designated, easily accessible locations, with multiple staff members trained in its proper administration and emergency protocols clearly posted and regularly reviewed. In addition, prescribed anti-histamine and two auto-injectors are kept onsite for use if advised by paramedics in the case of an emergency.

Special diets:

We are committed to accommodating medical and dietary needs and, as far as reasonably possible, respecting religious and cultural practices, recognising that food is often central to family identity and wellbeing. Through regular review meetings with parents, we ensure that our understanding of each child's special dietary needs remains current and accurate as children grow and family circumstances evolve. When complex medical dietary requirements are involved, we actively seek consultation with healthcare professionals to ensure our approach is both safe and nutritionally appropriate. For every child with specific dietary needs, we provide suitable alternative options that are equally nutritious, ensuring no child feels excluded or different during mealtimes.

Drinks Provision

Healthy drink options:

Water and milk serve, recognising these as the healthiest options for supporting both dental health and overall physical development in young children. Water is available throughout the nursery day. Milk is offered at breakfast, morning and afternoon snack time and at tea club.

Child Involvement and Independence

Active participation:

Children are actively involved in age-appropriate food preparation activities supporting their development while building positive relationships with food and cooking. These meaningful opportunities extend to table setting, food serving, and clearing activities, helping children develop independence and understanding of mealtime routines. Food exploration activities are thoughtfully incorporated into our broader learning programme, using cooking and food preparation as natural opportunities to develop fine motor skills, mathematical concepts, scientific understanding, and cultural awareness.

Choice and autonomy:

We maintain a firm policy that food is never used as a reward or punishment, recognising that such practices can create unhealthy relationships with eating that may persist throughout life. Children's

individual preferences are respected and accommodated where possible, while gentle encouragement is provided to try new foods and expand dietary variety. We trust in children's natural ability to self-regulate their appetite and nutritional intake, allowing them to eat according to their hunger cues rather than imposed adult expectations about portion sizes or food combinations.

Celebrations and Special Occasions

Celebrations:

Cultural and religious celebrations are thoughtfully recognised and incorporated in ways that respect diverse traditions while maintaining a commitment to healthy eating practices. We understand that some families like to send food to share with their peers on these days, and welcome offerings of fruit, vegetables or breadsticks.

Health and Safety

Food safety:

All aspects of food preparation, storage, and serving are conducted in strict accordance with current food safety regulations, with regular monitoring and documentation to ensure consistent compliance. Temperature monitoring of refrigeration equipment is conducted regularly and systematically, with records maintained to demonstrate ongoing food safety management. All staff involved in food handling receive comprehensive training in food hygiene principles, with regular refresher training provided to ensure knowledge remains current with evolving best practices. Throughout all food-related activities, we maintain a clean and hygienic eating environment that supports both health and the enjoyment of mealtimes. All Early Years staff hold a Level 2 qualification in Food Hygiene.

Choking prevention:

Continuous, attentive supervision is maintained during all eating times, with staff positioned to observe all children clearly and respond immediately to any signs of difficulty. All staff receive thorough training in choking response procedures, including recognition of choking signs and appropriate emergency interventions. Seating arrangements are deliberately planned to ensure clear visibility of all children and enabling rapid response to any emergency situation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular review:

This policy undergoes comprehensive review annually or more frequently, as required by changes in regulatory guidance, best practice recommendations, or specific needs identified within the school community. Our commitment to continuous improvement is demonstrated through our willingness to adapt practices based on emerging research, best practice developments, and the evolving needs of our school community.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT):

Mealtimes are monitored as part of the SLT's termly audits. These are to ensure that the policies and procedures are followed and that mealtimes continue to be warm, welcoming and enjoyable learning experiences.

In addition, the SLT monitor the health and safety checks in place each month. This includes fridge temperature, cleaning charts and dietary boards.

Training and development:

Regular, comprehensive staff training programmes cover all aspects of nutrition, food safety, and management of special dietary needs, ensuring all staff members have the knowledge and skills necessary to support children's nutritional wellbeing effectively. When guidance or regulations change, immediate updates are provided to all relevant staff members, with additional training sessions arranged as needed, to ensure smooth implementation of new requirements.

This policy demonstrates our commitment to providing the highest standards of nutrition and food safety for all children in our care, while supporting overall development and wellbeing.