

Food From Home Policy

Purpose:

This policy supports children's health, safety, and wellbeing by ensuring that any food brought from home meets UK Early Years nutritional standards and aligns with the nursery's approach to healthy eating. It also ensures that all food is stored, labelled, and managed safely while children are in our care.

Introduction:

To grow and stay healthy, children need to eat a nutritionally well-balanced diet. According to Public Health England Guidance it is clear that early years settings contribute significantly to improving the health and well-being of children. Good nutrition in childhood can help to prevent a variety of health problems, both in the short term and later in life. There is increasing concern that many children are consuming too much fat, sugar and salt and too little fiber, fruit and vegetables. Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly food intake and therefore, need to be balanced and nutritious. Packed lunches need to adhere to our no nut in settings policy as some children could have severe allergies to nuts and other foods.

Aim: To ensure that packed lunches (brought in from home) reflect the new standards for healthy meals in early years.

Rationale:

- Settings are required to positively promote the health and wellbeing of children.
- Work around healthy eating is a high priority of the Every Child Matters agenda.
- The content of lunchboxes needs to reflect the requirement of our setting to meet minimum food and nutrition standards for nursery meals.
- The contents of some lunchboxes can be extremely unhealthy, our recent audits of lunchboxes have shown that in the main they contain foods with high levels of fat, sugar and salt, and very few fruit and vegetables.



- To encourage healthy eating habits from an early age and improve the overall nutrition of children.
- The short-term effects of unhealthy packed lunches and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anemia, constipation, poor concentration and behavioral problems which may have an impact on a child's learning.
- The longer-term effects of a poor diet in childhood can be an increased risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes in adulthood.

Pre-prepared or shop bought packed lunches are **NOT** acceptable as they do not comply with healthy and nutrition guidelines. The nursery will send all pre-prepared/ shop bought packed lunches back home and a charge for all meals will be applied.

Please note for the safety of all children, we are a strict no-nut nursery.

Labelling and Allergen Requirements

To keep all children safe:

All food from home must be clearly labelled with the child's full name and date/time prepared.

All food must be provided in safe containers in a labelled cool bag to ensure freshness and safety.

Allergens must be clearly listed on the label, even if the food is homemade.

Families must follow nursery guidance on allergen-safe foods to protect children with allergies or intolerances.

Please note this allergen list is not exhaustive, as some children may be affected by other foods differently.

Food that is not labelled or poses an allergy risk may not be served.

The common allergens to be listed include:

- Cereals containing gluten (e.g., wheat, barley, rye, oats)
- Crustaceans (e.g., prawns, crabs, lobsters)
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Fish
- Soybeans
- Milk (including lactose)
- Nuts (e.g., almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, cashews, pecans, Brazil nuts, pistachios, macadamia nuts)
- Celery
- Mustard
- Sesame seeds
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites (at concentrations above 10mg/kg or 10mg/litre)
- Lupin
- Molluscs (e.g., clams, mussels, oysters, scallops)

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Storage and Time Limits

To ensure food safety:

- Food from home will be stored in cool bags out of **the fridge** and **kept for a maximum of four hours**.
- Any food not eaten within this time will be disposed of in line with food safety guidance.

Second Meals

For children who require a second meal later in the day:

- Parents/carers must **bring the second meal after lunchtime**, ensuring it is fresh and safe to serve.
- Second meals must also follow all labelling and allergen requirements.

Snacks

- All snacks provided must consist of fruit and vegetables only, supporting our commitment to promoting healthy eating.

Please note that grapes, raisins, blueberries, and pineapple chunks present a choking hazard and are therefore not permitted in food brought from home. These items are also not served or grown anywhere within our premises.

For all other fruits, please ensure they are cut into small, non-chokeable pieces before being included in packed lunches or snacks.

When Food Provided Is Not Appropriate

- If food brought from home does not meet the requirements of this policy—for example:
- It does not meet nutritional standards
- It is not labelled correctly
- It contains allergens that pose a risk
- It is unsafe or unsuitable to serve

The nursery reserves the **right to provide an appropriate alternative meal** and **apply a charge** to cover the cost.

Nursery-Provided Meals

All nursery-provided meals are freshly prepared on site by our experienced nursery chefs, who will be more than pleased to share the weekly menus or recipe ideas.

Benefits of Children Eating the Same Food and Promoting Inclusion

- Encouraging children to eat the same or similar foods helps promote a sense of community and belonging within the nursery.
- Sharing meals supports social development and helps children learn about different foods in a positive, inclusive environment.
- Promoting inclusion through shared food experiences respects cultural diversity and supports children with dietary needs by normalising safe and healthy eating habits.
- This approach helps reduce feelings of exclusion or difference among children, fostering empathy and understanding from an early age.
- It also simplifies food management and safety protocols, ensuring all children receive nutritious and allergen-safe meals consistently.

We appreciate that some SEN children may need flexibility around our Food From Home policy. If your child has specific dietary or sensory needs, please talk to your Nursery Manager and we'll work with you to find a safe and appropriate solution.

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Partnership With Parents

We aim to work collaboratively with families to support healthy eating habits. If you are unsure what to provide, please speak with a member of the team—we are always happy to help.

Summary

This policy ensures that all food brought from home or provided by the nursery supports children's health, safety, and wellbeing. It promotes balanced nutrition, clear allergen labelling, safe food storage, and inclusive eating practices. Our nursery chefs prepare fresh meals on site, and we work closely with families to maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all children. Please contact the nursery team if you have any questions or need guidance on food provision.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed Biannually to ensure it remains up to date with current nutritional guidelines and nursery practices.

This policy was adopted on 13th July 2026

Date for review
July 2028

