



Christchurch Pre-School Nursery  
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## **FOOD & NUTRITION POLICY**

The EYFS sets the standards that Early Years providers must meet to ensure that children learn, develop well & are kept healthy & safe.

From September 2025, there is a new requirement in the safeguarding & welfare requirements of the EYFS that providers should have regard to the nutrition guidance. It states, “where children are provided meals, snacks & drinks these must be healthy, balanced & nutritious”. These requirements are given legal force by Regulations made under Section 39 (1) (b) of the Childcare Act 2006.

Providing healthy, balanced & nutritious food ensures all children get the right amount of nutrients & 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 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 & good oral health.

The Early Years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities & set the foundations for a lifetime of good health.

Our policy is developed in partnership with parents, children & our staff & takes into account what is important to us, to provide a healthy, balanced & nutritious offering for snacks & hot dinners (a few times a year) & breakfast. We ensure we give support & guidance to parents for lunch boxes that are in line with our policy. This ensures food that is provided by parents is healthy & balanced & that children are receiving consistent messages about nutrition. We ensure mealtimes are a social event, where children are comfortable & enjoy eating with their friends & the Aunties.

We place management of food allergies & dietary preferences high on our list of priorities & ensure we cater for the cultural & dietary needs of all children in our care.

We have topic weeks on healthy eating across the Nursery, talking to the children & creating opportunities to learn about foods that are healthy & not healthy. We look at oral health, having a visit from a dental nurse & exploring resources & books on teeth brushing & it’s importance.

We have a strong NO NUT policy as we have a member of staff with a severe nut allergy who carries an EpiPen. We check lunch boxes on arrival to ensure they are adhering to any allergy requirements, also reducing the risk of cross contamination.

### **SNACK TIMES / HOT DINNERS –**

We provide snack time in all rooms twice a day. We offer a breakfast club for those families who need it. We provide guidance for parents when packing their children’s lunchboxes, by

sending them food suggestions in their starter packs. They receive a poster, a healthy eating document & awareness on allergies – we are a NUT FREE Nursery.

We cook the children hot dinners a few times a year, mainly in Sunshine Room. Parents are made aware of the allergens & ingredients of each meal.

We encourage parents to pack lunch boxes by taking into consideration the four main food groups (fruit & vegetables, potatoes, bread, rice, pasta & other carbohydrates, dairy & alternatives & beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat & other proteins).

We have an allergy folder kept with food preparation equipment in both rooms – detailing the allergies children have – this information is obtained in registration paperwork.

We prepare food safely to prevent the risk of choking. Food is cut into narrow batons rather than round shapes. Children are always seated up right at the table at meal & snack times. Children are supervised at all meal times by several members of staff. Children are encouraged to chew well.

### **CHOKING HAZARDS –**

- \*Pips & stones are always removed from fruits.
- \*Small fruits, like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries & cherry tomatoes are cut lengthways & then again in halves.
- \*Large fruits, like melon & firm fruits like apples are cut into slices instead of chunks.
- \*Vegetables, like carrots, cucumber & celery are cut into narrow batons.
- \*If children struggle with skin on fruit & vegetables this can be peeled.
- \*Cocktail sausages are cut into short strips.
- \*Meat & fish may be used in hot dinners. Boneless varieties are purchased.
- \*Cheese is cut into short strips as narrow as possible.
- \*Bread can form a ball shape with a dough like texture at the back of a child's throat if not chewed properly. We prepare toast for most snack times. Bread / toast is cut into narrow strips.
- \*We DO NOT give – popcorn, chewing gum, marshmallows, peanut butter, jelly cubes, boiled sweets, ice cubes.

### **FOOD WE PROVIDE, LIMIT & AVOID –**

- \*We follow the guidelines as to what foods to provide, limit & avoid.

**PROVIDE** – when giving children food for snack or hot dinners these are foods we provide.

**LIMIT** – we try to limit certain foods to decrease the amount of sugar, salt & saturated fats in children's diets & increase the variety of foods we are offering.

**AVOID** – we try avoiding these foods when planning snacks & hot dinners.

**FRUIT & VEGETABLES** – We provide more than one portion of fruit & vegetables in breakfast, snacks or hot dinners, & provide an excellent variety across the week. We avoid dried fruit for snack, we do not have tinned fruit in syrup & do not have tinned vegetables. If we do have tinned sweetcorn in hot dinners, we ensure it is a no added salt / sugar option.

**STARCHY CARBOHYDRATES** – We provide a portion of starchy food as part of each main meal during hot dinner weeks (e.g. potato, sweet potatoes, or another starchy root vegetable, pasta, noodles or rice). We provide cereals for breakfast & provide crackers / bread (often toast) as

part of at least one snack each day. We limit sugar & salt in the breakfast cereals provided. In hot dinners we do not offer fried food. We avoid cereals labelled as high (red) in sugar, such as sugar coated or chocolate flavoured & avoid flavoured rice, pasta (e.g. pot noodles or instant pasta).

**DAIRY & PLAIN FORTIFIED PLANT BASED ALTERNATIVES** – We provide a portion of milk or dairy foods each day (which include those provided at home) & provide non-dairy alternatives if needed. We provide full fat dairy foods, e.g. cheese, unsweetened yoghurts. We avoid sweetened yoghurts. ALLERGIES APPLY.

**PROTEINS** – (e.g. beans, meat, fish, eggs, meat alternatives). We provide a portion of proteins for each hot dinner. We provide vegetarian / vegan options.

**ALL FOODS** – We avoid food high in saturated fat, salt and / or sugars.

**DRINKS** – We provide children with access to water at all times. We provide full fat milk to drink (ALLERGIES APPLY). We avoid offering squash & fruit juice.

### **FOOD LABELS** – Red, Amber & Green.

We check the food labels of food we are offering – choosing foods with a green label & those that are low / medium in saturated fats & sugars & low in salt.

### **PORTIONS** -

\*Portion size refers to one part of the meal. For hot dinners we provide one portion of vegetables, one portion of carbs and one portion of protein – this equates to one meal. Portions should be appropriate to a child's body size & appetite.

\*For toddlers (e.g. Raindrops Room & Rainbow Room), portion size is usually the size of their clenched fist. About half a piece of fruit, cut correctly for snack, is appropriate.

\*All children's food intake at snack time & hot meals, plus how much they are eating from their lunchboxes provided by parents is monitored. We often start snack with small portions, then they can always ask for more.

\*We avoid making children eat everything on their plate if they don't want to, but we are aware of children who may need encouragement if distracted by toys or things around them. We avoid offering rewards to children for finishing everything on their plate, e.g. dessert, but we do encourage them to try everything, even if it's just a small taste.

\*When eating from their lunchbox we ensure they eat their savoury foods first, e.g. sandwiches, wraps, before eating the likes of crisps & crackers, then fruit & yoghurt. If they do have sweet foods, e.g. chocolate bars in their lunch boxes we ensure they save them until last & if more than one sweet food we ask them to choose just one to eat.

### **FOOD STANDARDS** –

\*The School Food Standards (SFS) regulate the food & drink provided in school settings. Whilst these requirements must be followed by schools, academies, maintained Nurseries & Nursery units in Primary Schools, there are other requirements in the EYFS that go beyond specific food groups that be must be served.

Therefore as a private Nursery setting, we take the following into consideration when planning meals –

\*\*portion sizes

\*\*considering dietary requirements in Early Years.

- \*\*communicating with parents & carers & providing detailed guidance about the most nutritious, healthy items to include in their lunchboxes.
- \*\*developing a food & nutrition policy.
- \*\*planning food activities, e.g. cooking.
- \*\*meeting the needs of all children, including children with additional needs & other special diets, e.g. children fed through an NG tube or PEG / Mickey Button.
- \*\*allergies, intolerances & coeliac disease – an allergy list/ medical list is held in all three rooms, easily accessible & information shared with staff at children's taster.
- \*\*food for religious, faith & belief reasons.
- \*\*safely managing specialist dietary requirements.

### **WORKING WITH PARENTS & CARERS –**

Keyworkers develop a strong, ongoing relationship with both their key children & their parents and / or carers to ensure the child's needs are met. Ongoing discussions about the child's cultural & dietary needs are crucial in creating a safe & inclusive environment for all children to eat. Keyworkers play a central role in facilitating these conversations, helping to meet the dietary requirements of all children & supporting them in their development.

We communicate via food posters / emails about how to cut & prepare food for lunchboxes to avoid choking. We are unable to keep food in the fridge, therefore advise food to be packed in insulated sealed bags with cool packs. The Food Standards Agency suggests food can be kept out of chilled conditions for up to 4 hours to avoid the likes of Listeria developing.

Lunch boxes or bags must be clearly labelled with the child's name.

We are not required to provide refrigeration or required to reheat food brought in.

### **CELEBRATIONS –**

Many of our families like to celebrate their child's birthday & we are more than happy to make their birthday at Nursery a lovely one. We discourage sweets, but suggest a cake would be suitable so that children can have a small slice if they wish. This must follow our guidelines so all children can be included, therefore must be NUT and possibly dairy free, depending on which children are in on that day. It is checked for allergens before serving.

### **COOKING –**

We love cooking with the children in both Rainbow Room & Sunshine Room & find it to be a great experience that helps create a positive relationship with food. Some of our children may have limited opportunities to cook or learn about food at home. We enjoy baking scones & bread & making vegetable soup, where the children can use child safety knives to cut up the vegetables themselves. We plan fun activities & give food & cooking ideas to do at home.

### **FOOD ALLERGIES –**

Food allergies can be life threatening for some & need to be taken seriously. Food allergies develop when the body's immune system reacts against food proteins which it sees as invaders, then releasing chemicals to attack.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction, include –

- \*coughing, wheezing, breathlessness, noisy breathing or a hoarse voice.
- \*a red raised rash (hives).
- \*tingly or itchy, runny or blocked nose.
- \*stomach pain.

- \*feeling or being sick.
- \*swelling of face, lips, tongue or eyes.
- \*difficulty swallowing.
- \*diarrhoea.
- \*feeling dizzy or lightheaded.
- \*pale or floppy.
- \*suddenly sleepy.
- \*collapse or unconscious.

A severe reaction, called anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock can occur. All staff, as part of Paediatric First Aid training have done training on anaphylactic shock. Children who may likely have an anaphylactic shock reaction will carry an Epipen & have a care plan provided by a medical professional. Staff have all had Epipen training as part of their Paediatric First Aid course.

We are a NUT FREE Nursery. We also have allergies in Nursery at the time of writing to eggs, fish & tree nuts (hazelnuts & walnuts). We ask parents to provide details of any allergies on their child's starter & registration information.

We have ongoing discussions with parents about their child's allergy & develop necessary action plans & risk assessments for managing them, e.g. ensuring parents do not pack nut or nut products or eggs & egg products in their lunch boxes. This information is kept up to date & shared with all staff.

### **FOOD INTOLERANCES –**

These occur when the body has difficulty digesting certain foods or ingredients. They do not involve the immune system & are not life threatening. They can cause abdominal pain, diarrhoea, bloating, rash, itching. Intolerances can include – lactose intolerant, gluten intolerant & intolerances to some food additives & chemicals.

We work with parents to monitor these, keeping a food diary is necessary.

### **COELIAC DISEASE –**

A common autoimmune disease that can develop at any age. Children must strictly avoid gluten, e.g. wheat flour, bread, breakfast cereals, crackers, biscuits, pastries & pasta. We would be able to provide food that was gluten free for this child.

### **FOOD FOR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS / FAITHS –**

Children may have specific food preferences according to cultural or religious beliefs, e.g. cooking them in a specific way or being prepared in a specific way.

### **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT / SPECIAL DIETS –**

Some children may have specific dietary needs because of physical or developmental issues. We currently, at the time of writing have a child who is PEG fed & have recently had a child fed formula milk by an NG tube. We support these children at snack & meal times, using a plan made with parents, medical professionals & community nurses. These care plans & any training needed is made & updated regularly & communicated to all staff.

### **SAFER EATING –**

The EYFS framework states that we must ensure staffing arrangements meet the needs of all children & ensure their safety. Therefore, we arrange our staffing so that children are adequately supervised at snack times & lunch time.

We have a suitable area to prepare food & all staff have relevant training in food hygiene.

Children are never left alone when eating. In Raindrops Room & Rainbow Room all staff join in with snack & sit with the children or serve them food. In Sunshine Room we operate a rolling snack, with one staff member to 4 children at any one time. At lunch time there are 2-3 members of staff on lunch cover in Rainbow Room & 3-4 members of staff in Sunshine Room. In both snack time instances & at lunch time, staff sit facing the children while they eat so as to reduce the risk of choking & be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.

As per guidelines from September 2025, our setting ensures there is a member of staff with a valid Paediatric First Aid Certificate in the room when the children are eating – in fact, we are over this requirement, as at the time of writing, all but one member of staff in the whole Nursery have this.

### **HYGIENE –**

Food is stored, prepared & preserved in a safe & hygienic environment. Children are also taught hygiene, in that we always wash our hands before eating or after using the toilet & we do not eat food that has fallen on the floor.

All surfaces for preparing & eating food are cleaned thoroughly with antibacterial spray before use & all bowls, plates & cutlery washed after each meal time in hot, soapy water. All tea towels are washed daily & cloths & sponges disposed of after use.

This policy was agreed and reviewed at a meeting of Nursery Committee held in June 2025.

Signed:

Manager

Committee member