



# Nutrition and mealtimes policy

Written in accordance with the Early years foundation stage nutrition guidance (2025)  
And the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2025):  
Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements: Food and drink.

**3.62** Where children are provided with meals, snacks, and drinks, these must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. To understand how to meet this requirement, providers must have regard to the 'Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance'. Fresh drinking water must always be available and accessible to children.

#### **Safer eating**

**3.63** Whilst children are eating there should always be a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate for a full course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A.

**3.64** Before a child is admitted to the setting the provider must obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and intolerances that the child has, and any special health requirements. This information must be shared by the provider with all staff involved in the preparing and handling of food. At each mealtime and snack time providers must be clear about who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child.

**3.65** Providers must have ongoing discussions with parents and/or carers and, where appropriate, health professionals to develop allergy action plans for managing any known allergies and intolerances. This information must be kept up to date by the provider and shared with all staff. Providers should refer to the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) allergy action plan. Providers must ensure that all staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis, the differences between allergies and intolerances and that children can develop allergies at any time, especially during the introduction of solid foods which is sometimes called complementary feeding or weaning. Providers should refer to the NHS advice on food allergies: Food allergy - NHS ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) and treatment of anaphylaxis: Anaphylaxis - NHS ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)).

**3.66** Providers must have ongoing discussions with parents and/or carers about the stage their child is at in regard to introducing solid foods, including to understand the textures the child is familiar with. Assumptions must not be made based on age. Providers must prepare food in a suitable way for each child's individual developmental needs, working with parents and/or carers to help children move on to the next stage at a pace right for the child. The NHS has some advice providers should refer to: Weaning - Start for Life - NHS ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)).

**3.67** Providers must prepare food in a way to prevent choking. This guidance on food safety for young children: Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK ([education.gov.uk](http://education.gov.uk)) includes advice on food and drink to avoid, how to reduce the risk of choking and links to other useful resources for early years providers.

**3.68** Babies and young children should be seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair while eating. Where possible there should be a designated eating space where distractions are minimised.

**3.69** Children must always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. Choking can be completely silent, therefore, it is important for providers to be alert to when a child may be starting to choke. Where possible, providers should sit facing children whilst they eat, so they can make sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.

**3.70** When a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, providers should record details of where and how the child choked and ensure parents and/or carers are made aware. The records should be reviewed periodically to identify if there are trends or common features of incidents that could be addressed to reduce the risk of choking. Appropriate action should be taken to address any identified concerns. Food and drink facilities

**3.71** There must be an area adequately equipped to provide healthy meals, snacks and drinks for children as necessary. There must be suitable facilities for the hygienic preparation of food for children, if necessary, including suitable sterilisation equipment for babies' food. Providers must be confident that those responsible for preparing and handling food are competent to do so. All staff involved in preparing and handling food must receive training in food hygiene.

#### **Food poisoning**

**3.72** Registered providers must notify Ofsted, or the CMA with which a provider of CoDP is registered, of any food poisoning affecting two or more children cared for on the premises. This must be done as soon as is reasonably practicable, but, in any event, within 14 days of the incident. A registered provider who, without reasonable excuse, does not meet this requirement commits an offence.

At our nursery, we recognise the importance of healthy eating and positive mealtime experiences in supporting children's growth, development, wellbeing, and learning. We are committed to promoting healthy lifestyles in line with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

We provide nutritious, balanced meals and snacks while encouraging children to develop healthy eating habits, independence, and positive social skills.

### Healthy Eating

We will:

- ♥ Provide a variety of healthy foods from all food groups, including 2 snacks a main meal and tea.
- ♥ Limit foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fats.
- ♥ We use an early years catering company 'red hen' catering who provide the children's main meal.
- ♥ Offer fruit and vegetables daily.
- ♥ Ensure portion sizes are suitable for children's ages and stages.
- ♥ Encourage children to try new foods without pressure.
- ♥ Avoid using food as a reward or punishment.
- ♥ Promote healthy eating through activities, discussions, and role modelling.

### Snacks and Drinks

- ♥ Healthy snacks such as fruit, vegetables, breadsticks, crackers, or yoghurt will be provided.
- ♥ Milk and water will be offered throughout the day.
- ♥ Sugary drinks, fizzy drinks, and excessive sweets will not be provided.
- ♥ Fresh drinking water will be accessible to children at all times.

### Mealtime Procedures

Mealtimes are viewed as valuable social and learning opportunities. Staff will:

- ♥ Sit with children and encourage conversation.
- ♥ **Snack time is a choice**; children do not need to have snack if they are not hungry. Snack will be a rolling snack meaning they can come and serve themselves when they wish.
- ♥ Promote good manners and social interaction.
- ♥ Encourage children to feed themselves where developmentally appropriate.
- ♥ Support children in using cutlery and pouring drinks safely.
- ♥ Respect children's appetites and individual eating patterns.
- ♥ **Never force children to eat.**

The environment will be calm, welcoming, and inclusive.

### Allergies and Dietary Requirements

The nursery will:

- ♥ Obtain written information regarding allergies, intolerances, dietary requirements, and preferences before admission.
- ♥ All allergies will be clearly labelled on food using a photo of the child and the allergy.
- ♥ Allergy information will be clearly displayed for all staff to see.
- ♥ All kitchen staff to have allergy awareness training as well as food hygiene.

- ♥ Ensure all staff understand allergy procedures and emergency responses.
- ♥ Prevent cross-contamination during food preparation and serving.
- ♥ Keep care plans and medication accessible where required.

Parents must inform the nursery immediately of any changes to dietary or medical needs.

### **Food Hygiene and Safety**

We are committed to maintaining high standards of food hygiene by:

- ♥ Following current food safety and hygiene regulations.
- ♥ Ensuring food is stored, prepared, and served safely.
- ♥ Maintaining appropriate cleaning procedures.
- ♥ Ensuring staff handling food have appropriate training.
- ♥ Recording and monitoring fridge/freezer temperatures on daily risk assessment.

### **Working with Parents**

We believe partnership with parents is essential. We will:

- ♥ Share menus with families.
- ♥ Discuss children's dietary needs and preferences.
- ♥ Inform parents of any concerns regarding eating habits.
- ♥ Encourage healthy eating practices at home and nursery.

### **Choking Prevention and Response**

The nursery recognises the risks associated with choking in young children and is committed to providing a safe eating environment at all times.

We will:

- ♥ Ensure children are supervised by staff at all mealtimes and snack times.
- ♥ Encourage children to sit down while eating and drinking.
- ♥ Promote calm and safe eating practices.
- ♥ Cut food into age-appropriate sizes and shapes to reduce choking risks.
- ♥ Avoid serving foods considered high risk for choking unless prepared appropriately.
- ♥ Ensure staff are aware of foods that may present choking hazards, including:
  - Whole grapes
  - Cherry tomatoes
  - Large pieces of fruit or vegetables
  - Sausages cut into rounds

High-risk foods will be modified appropriately, for example:

- Grapes and cherry tomatoes will be cut lengthways.
- Hard fruits or vegetables may be cooked, grated, or cut into small pieces.
- Sausages will be cut lengthways and into small pieces.

Staff will:

- Hold current paediatric first aid training in line with EYFS requirements.
- Know how to respond appropriately in the event of a choking incident.
- Follow the nursery's emergency procedures if a child is choking.
- Record and report all choking incidents in accordance with nursery procedures.

Parents will be informed immediately of any choking incidents involving their child.

### **Special Occasions and Celebrations**

Celebrations involving food will be managed carefully to ensure inclusivity, allergy awareness, and healthy choices. Parents will be informed of any restrictions regarding bringing shop brought food into the nursery.

### **Food poisoning**

- ♥ In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days.
- ♥ We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

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Policy updated by Kylie Jones and the Little Squirrels team **May 2026**.