



Healthy Packed Lunch/Tea and Snacks Policy

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.

Overall aim of this policy

To ensure that all packed lunches, teas and snacks brought from home and consumed in nursery provide the child with healthy and nutritious food for growth and development.

Objectives

- To make a positive contribution to children's health
- To make a positive contribution to children's learning and development
- To encourage a happier and calmer population of children and young people

Support & Guidance

This policy was formed with support from an NHS Startwell nutritionist. Startwell menu guidelines are based on Public Health England's recommendations for early years menus.

Our nursery facilities

- The nursery will provide facilities for children bringing in packed lunches/teas/snacks and ensure that free, fresh drinking water is available throughout the day. Milk is also provided during morning snack.
- The nursery will work with parents to ensure that packed lunches, teas and snacks abide by the standards listed below.
- As fridge space is not available children are advised to bring packed lunches and snacks in insulated bags with freezer blocks where possible to stop food getting warm.
- We do not have the facilities to heat food up, so all packed lunches must be ready to eat.

What to Bring

Packed lunches/teas should always include the following on a daily basis:

- A minimum of 1 portion of fruit or vegetables for vitamins and minerals
- A starchy food for energy and concentration e.g., any bread, wrap, chapatti, pasta, rice, noodles, potatoes. Do not bring flavoured dried rice, pasta, and noodle products e.g., packets and pots of instant noodles, pasta, and rice.
- Meat, fish or another plant-based source of iron and protein e.g., lentils, kidney beans, chickpeas, hummus for cognitive development.

Best practice:

- Dairy (alternative) food e.g., cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, rice pudding or custard for growth of bones and teeth. Please note that we have children with dairy allergies so we prefer that food brought in is dairy free where possible.

Drinks:

- Water and milk will be provided by the nursery throughout the day and during lunch time, so you do not need to send any other drinks.

Processed foods:

- Processed meats e.g., ham and salami are high in fat and salt, try to limit to once a week and choose a healthier sandwich filling such as cheese, tuna, hummus or chicken instead.

- Foods high in fat e.g., sausage rolls, pasties, fried samosa are not suitable for your child to bring in their packed lunch.
- Crisps are high in salt and fat. If you choose to include crisps limit to no more than twice a week and swap to low salt, low fat or baked crisps and only give a child sized hand full and not a full packet.

Desserts:

- One sugary dessert is allowed once a week e.g., Plain biscuit (e.g., digestive, rich tea, malted milk), small un-iced cake / cake bar / malt loaf, cereal bar without chocolate.
- Foods high in sugar e.g., chocolate bars, chocolate coated biscuits and sweets are not suitable for your child to bring in their packed lunch.
- Healthy dessert options include:
 - Fresh fruit
 - Dried fruit
 - Tinned fruit in juice
 - Fruit and custard
 - Fruit and plain yogurt
 - Sugar free jelly

Snacks

All snacks must be similar to that nursery provide so children do not feel singled out and can enjoy the social aspect of our rolling snack. Please check our snack menu to ensure you can provide something similar for your child. General guidance is that children have a starchy food plus fruit/veg for am snack, fruit/veg only for pm snack.

Guidance on portion sizes

Children should be eating 'me size meals'. Toddlers and children have smaller stomachs than adults so it is important they eat smaller amounts of food. Putting too much food in lunchboxes can be overwhelming and stop children enjoying mealtimes. It can also lead to overeating and fussy eating.

Special Diets and Allergies

Due to the high risk of nut allergies we do not allow children to bring foods containing **nuts**. We also ask that food is **dairy free, egg free and soya free** due to other allergies in the nursery.

The nursery also recognises that some children may require special diets that do not allow for the guidelines above to be met exactly. In these cases parents are urged to be responsible in ensuring that packed lunches are as healthy and close to the guidelines as possible. For these reasons children are also not permitted to swap food items.

Monitoring & Review:

Packed lunches will be regularly reviewed by staff.

Unhealthy food items will not be permitted to be consumed within the nursery and replaced with healthy options. Any additional charges to replace food items will be added to parent's invoice. If a child regularly brings a packed lunch that does not conform to the policy the nursery will contact the parents to discuss this.

Promotion of the Policy:

The nursery will inform all parents and carers of the policy via the parent newsletter, display boards, parent workshops, parent evenings, induction paperwork and one to one conversations.

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