Early Years Safe Eating Policy and Guidance

2026-2027

Statement of Intent

Safer Eating Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that children in our care are provided with a safe eating environment that supports healthy eating, minimises food-related risks, and ensures compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, including the changes introduced in September 2025.

Key Principles

• Ensure all meals and snacks are nutritious, well-balanced, and cater to the individual dietary needs of children.

• Promote healthy eating habits from an early age.

• Safeguard children from food-related risks, including choking hazards and food allergies.

Food Safety/Safe Eating Policy

Sir James Knott Nursery School and the Nest is inspected routinely by North Tyneside Local Authority in line with national guidance from Food Standards Agency (FSA) to ensure that hygiene standards are being met for the storage, preparation and serving of food.

Sir James Knott Nursery School and the Nest follow the statutory guidance outlined for safer eating in the Early Years Statutory Framework (EYFS).

We make use of the "Safer Foods, Better Business" pack and guidance published by the FSA.

Sir James Knott Nursery School and the Nest have high standards for the handling and preparation of food; all staff who handle food are trained to ensure their practice is compliant in line with FSA guidelines, https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-hygiene-for-your-business

This policy should be read in conjunction with the statement of procedures for the preparation and handling of food.

https://www.food.gov.uk/search?keywords=statement+of+procedures+for+the+preparation+and+handling+of+food

Training and Awareness

Staff will receive regular training in paediatric first aid, food safety, allergy management, and safe eating practices. This includes:

• First Aid and Emergency Procedures: All staff will be trained in first aid procedures specific to food related incidents, including how to handle allergic reactions and choking. Whilst children are eating there will be at least one member of staff with a valid full paediatric first aid certificate present in the room. Paediatric First Aid will be updated at least every three years as a minimum.

• All staff are required to complete training as part of their induction covering food hygiene and allergy awareness. 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.

• Ongoing Training: Staff will undergo refresher courses on food hygiene and allergy awareness every two years as a minimum. As good practice staff have a refresher biannually.

Parent and Carer Involvement

We believe that parents and carers play a key role in the nutritional care of their children. We encourage parents to share any concerns or preferences related to their child's diet, and we will maintain open lines of communication regarding food and meal times.

Special Occasions

For special occasions or celebrations (e.g., birthdays), we will work with parents to ensure that any treats brought in align with our safer eating and allergy policies.

Healthy Eating and Nutrition

The policy emphasizes providing healthy, balanced, and nutritious meals and snacks to support children's growth and development. The guidance supports early years providers in England to meet the EYFS requirement that all meals, snacks and drinks must be **healthy, balanced and nutritious**. From **September 2025**, providers will be required to **have regard to this guidance**

Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance

We aim to support the health and wellbeing of all children by promoting healthy eating habits.

Snack Time

We offer the children a mid-morning snack during their session. This consists of fresh milk or water, a selection of fresh fruits and vegetables and toast or crackers. We will always encourage the children to eat healthily.

Packed Lunches

Parents are advised about safe storage of packed lunches and given information about providing health packed lunches during each child's induction to the setting.

Educational Opportunities

We will engage children in learning about food, nutrition, and healthy eating through age-appropriate activities and discussions.

Support

Staff will have regard for children's food intake and work with parents/carers to provide healthy food options.

Safe Eating

Safe Food Preparation

Food must be prepared in a way that prevents choking, and appropriate seating arrangements (like highchairs) should be used to ensure children's safety while eating.

Choking Hazards

Staff will prepare food in a way to prevent choking and be vigilant to ensure foods sent in packed lunches have also been prepared safely.

- Firm, spherical foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes must be sliced into quarters or segments.
- Cylindrical foods such as cucumber, carrots and cocktail sausages must be cut lengthways into thin batons.

This guidance on food safety for young children – https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-and-welfare/foodsafety includes advice on food and drink to avoid, how to reduce the risk of choking and links to other useful resources for early years settings.

If a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, staff will record details of where and how the child choked and parents and/or carers made aware. The records will be reviewed and risk assessed alongside other accidents / incidents at Nursery on a half-termly basis. Appropriate action will be taken to address any identified concerns.

In line with EYFS Statutory Framework to ensure safe eating, the following preventative measures are followed for the preparation of food:

- remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving
- cut small round foods, like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, lengthways and into quarters
- cut large fruits like melon, and hard fruit or vegetables like raw apple and carrot into slices/batons instead of small chunks
- do not offer raisins as a snack to children under 12 months – although these can be chopped up as part of a meal
- soften hard fruit and vegetables (such as carrot and apple) and remove the skins when first given to babies from around 6 months
- sausages should be avoided due to their high salt content, but if offered to children these should be cut into thin strips rather than chunks and remove the skins
- remove bones from meat or fish
- do not give whole nuts to children under five years old
- do not give whole seeds to children under five years old
- cut cheese into strips rather than chunks
- do not give popcorn as a snack
- do not give children marshmallows or jelly cubes from a packet either to eat or as part of messy play activities as they can get stuck in the throat
- do not give children hard sweets

Food	Cylindrical	Spherical	Method of preparation
Sausages/hot dogs	✓		Halved and then cut length ways in segments as thin as possible. Remove skin from sausages
Carrots	✓		
Bananas	✓		
Bread	If not chewed properly, white bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture in the throat. Try lightly toasting white bread, or use brown bread instead. Bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads should be cut into narrow strips.		
Grapes, cherries, berries.		✓	These foods should be cut into quarters
Tomatoes		✓	
Oranges	Remove all peel and stringy bits Cut each segment into 1/3's. This prevents choking on large bits or skin.		Ensure all segments are Pip free.
Apples	Ensure core free Cut in half and then half again. Half each segment until in thin segments. Peel skin for younger children and anyone who it is appropriate for.		

This policy should be read in conjunction with the statement of procedures for the preparation and handling of food.

https://www.food.gov.uk/search?keywords=statement+of+procedures+for+the+preparation+and+handling+of+food

Food Allergies and Special Dietary Requirements

Sir James Knott Nursery School and the Nest caters for children's specific dietary needs. This may include allergies or food intolerances which are confirmed in writing by a dietician/doctor, or because of religious, cultural, or ethical reasons.

We recognise the importance of catering to children's dietary needs, including food allergies and intolerances. All food allergies or special dietary requirements must be disclosed to the setting by parents and carers on the setting 'Registration Form' when a child starts at the setting.

Record Keeping

We maintain up-to-date records of children's allergies, intolerances, and dietary preferences. This information is shared with all relevant staff members and stored securely. We will prompt parents to update the information we hold regarding special dietary needs every term.

Risk Assessment

A thorough risk assessment is carried out for children with food allergies, ensuring appropriate precautions are taken, including avoiding allergens in meals and snacks.

Responsibility

At each mealtime and snack time, practitioners are clear about who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets the requirements for each child.

Communication

We will ensure that all staff are aware of the allergy needs of the children in their care. Parents/carers are encouraged to provide emergency medication where applicable.

Prohibited Foods

Nuts, nut products, sweets, bananas, chocolate bars and chocolate spreads are not permitted at the setting.

Care Plans

Children's individual care plans will capture this information at the point of registration with the setting and will be reviewed in line with the child's individual needs as directed by parents and the doctor/dietician. **Settings must develop and regularly update allergy action plans in consultation with parents and healthcare professionals. Staff should be trained to recognize symptoms of allergies and know how to respond to anaphylaxis.**

All staff are made aware of children's specialist requirements through the sharing of individual care plans and other information provided by parents.

To help us manage the risks associated with food allergies or intolerance the setting has the following in place.

- **Dietary Information**: Before a child starts at the setting, information regarding special dietary requirements, food allergies, and intolerances must be collected from parents or caregivers. This information should be accessible to all staff involved in food preparation
- Children's individual needs displayed in key areas for staff (i.e kitchen, food prep areas and dining areas)
- Kitchen checklists before food is served
- Food allergen risk assessment
- Excellent food hygiene practises

- Written procedures for children with food related conditions.
- Place mats with child's name and food restrictions
- Coloured allergy plates and cups
- Toothpick flags labelled for allergy, dietary, preference, cultural.

Food for Children's Stage not Age

Checks will be completed to ensure food is safe for individual children's stage of eating. This will check the following:

- Should their meals be blended?
- When should lumps be introduced? (How big are the lumps?)
- Has the parent introduced significant changes such as Lumps at home first and how did the child respond to the change?
- Is the baby fed using the baby led weaning method? If so, how can we continue this safely within the setting.

Safer Eating Practices

To minimise the risk of choking and ensure safe eating environments for young children, the following practices are implemented:

Supervision

A paediatric first aid (PFA) trained staff member must be present whenever children are eating to ensure immediate assistance in case of emergencies The ratio of staff will be under 2 years of age 1:3, Two- three year olds 1:5 and Three- four year olds 1:8.

All children are supervised during mealtimes and snack time. Children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. Where possible, staff will sit facing children whilst they eat so they can be 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.

Age-Appropriate Food Types

Foods will be served in a manner suitable for the child's developmental stage (e.g., food will be cut into small, manageable pieces for younger children). Popcorn, marshmallows, jelly cubes and hard sweets are never permitted for children under 5.

Meal/Snack time Environment

Designated spaces for meal times should be identified. Children should be seated in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair, based upon their age or stage of development. Children will sit down and remain seated while eating and be given time to chew and swallow their food properly. Children are discouraged from talking loudly at mealtimes / snack time. Other distractions such as toys at the meal table are, wherever possible, discouraged. Food sharing is not allowed.

Hygiene and Safety

To ensure the safety and hygiene of food, the following procedures will be followed:

• Food Storage and Preparation: All food will be stored at the correct temperature, in compliance with food safety regulations. Food preparation areas will be kept clean, and staff will adhere to strict handwashing procedures before handling food.

• Safe Utensils and Equipment: All kitchen utensils and eating equipment will be safe and age appropriate for the children. Any broken or damaged items will be immediately replaced.

• Hand Hygiene: Children will wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. Staff will ensure that all children have clean hands before meals and snack are served.