

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Health

Food and drink

Policy statement

We recognise snack time and lunch club as essential parts of the daily routine, supporting children's health, wellbeing, independence, and social development. We are committed to providing nutritious, age-appropriate food and drinks that meet children's individual dietary, cultural, and medical needs, and to promoting healthy eating habits in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS 2024/25) and current Public Health England/UKHSA guidance. Parents providing packed lunches must follow our Healthy Eating Guidelines, supporting our whole-setting approach to good nutrition.

Procedures

1. Gathering and Recording Dietary Information

- Before a child starts, parents must provide detailed information about dietary needs, allergies, cultural or religious requirements, and food preferences.
- Dietary information is recorded on the Registration Form and must be checked and signed by parents.
- Dietary needs are reviewed at least termly and updated whenever circumstances change.
- All staff have access to up-to-date dietary/allergy information in accordance with our Managing Children Who Are Sick, Infectious or with Allergies Policy.

2. Meeting Individual Dietary Needs

- Food and drink offered will always meet children's dietary requirements and parental instructions.
- We never use dietary needs as a label or means of exclusion.
- We operate a nut-safe environment, avoiding all foods containing nuts or nut products.
- Staff remain vigilant when caring for children with allergies, including checking packaging and preventing cross-contamination.
- Parents of children with allergies may be asked to provide specific foods where appropriate.

3. Promoting Healthy Eating

We promote healthy eating through:

- Offering balanced, nutritious snacks, including fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Using meal times as opportunities for language development, social interaction, and learning about food.
- Encouraging children to explore new foods without pressure or force.
- Modelling positive eating behaviours.
- Providing culturally inclusive food options.

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- Ensuring snack portions are appropriate for age and development.

4. Snack and Mealtime Organisation

- Snack time and lunch club are run as calm, social, inclusive experiences where children and staff eat together.
- Children are supported to develop independence by:
 - Choosing snacks
 - Pouring drinks
 - Serving themselves where appropriate
 - Clearing their eating area
- Suitable age-appropriate utensils and tableware are provided for all children.

5. Food Safety and Hygiene

- All food preparation and handling follows Food Standards Agency (FSA) requirements and Safer Food, Better Business for Childcare Settings guidance.
- Staff handling food must have appropriate food hygiene training.
- Food is stored safely, with chilled items kept in refrigerators or insulated boxes.
- Water is available at all times, and children know how to access it independently.
- Milk is offered as an alternative drink at snack time.

6. Preventing Food Sharing

To protect children with allergies or medical needs:

- Children are not permitted to share or swap food at any time.
- Staff supervise all eating times to ensure food-sharing is prevented.

7. Lunch Club (Packed Lunches Provided by Parents)

Parents are expected to follow our Healthy Eating Guidelines:

Parents must:

- Provide a clearly labelled lunch in an appropriate container.
- Follow our guidance promoting healthy choices such as:
 - Sandwiches or wraps with nutritious fillings
 - Fresh fruit or vegetables
 - Yoghurt or other healthy dairy options
 - Water or milk

We discourage:

- Processed snack foods
- Chocolate, sweets, biscuits, cakes, pastries
- Sugary drinks
- Large portion sizes

If a packed lunch contains excessive unhealthy foods, the setting may, as a last resort, return the items to parents with a reminder of our policy.

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We will never shame or single out a child based on their lunch contents. All concerns are discussed privately with parents.

8. Cultural, Religious and Ethical Needs

- We respect and accommodate all cultural, religious, and ethical dietary practices, including vegetarian and vegan diets.
- Staff discuss any queries with parents to ensure clarity and compliance.

9. Water and Hydration

- Fresh drinking water is available at all times.
- Children are encouraged to drink regularly throughout the day.
- Staff monitor hydration, especially during hot weather or physical activity.

10. Communication with Parents

We keep parents informed by:

- Sharing our food and drink policy on induction
- Signposting families to healthy eating resources
- Providing updates on allergy management
- Offering support if parents need guidance on suitable lunchbox options
- Discussing concerns sensitively and confidentially

Legal Framework

- EYFS Statutory Framework (DfE 2024/25)
- Regulation (EC) 852/2004 on the Hygiene of Foodstuffs
- Food Safety Act 1990
- Food Information Regulations 2014 (Allergen Law)

Further Guidance

- *Safer Food, Better Business for Childminders and Childcare Settings (FSA)*
- *Startwell / Change4Life Healthy Eating Guidance for Early Years*
- *Eat Better, Start Better* (British Nutrition Foundation)
- *Healthy Early Years London* guidance (supported by London Boroughs, including Bromley)