



Safer Eating

Statement of Intent

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 Allergies and Special Dietary Requirements

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 nursery by parents and carers on the setting 'Registration Form' when a child starts at the nursery.

- 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 6 months.
- 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 are encouraged to provide emergency medication where applicable.

Policy Author: Nursery Managers

Review Date: Michaelmas 2025

Next Review Due: Michaelmas 2026



Safer Eating Practices

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

- Supervision: 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.
- 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/food-safety> 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.

- 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.
- Mealtime Environment: 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.

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Healthy Eating and Nutrition

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 healthy packed lunches during each child's induction to Bluebell Nursery.
- **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.

Mealtime 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.

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

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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.

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.

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Early years food choking hazards

Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

| Vegetable and fruits | Advice |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Pips or stones in fruit | Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit. |
| Small fruits | Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters). |
| Large fruits and firm fruits | Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering. |
| Vegetables | Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering. |
| Skin on fruit and vegetables | Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily. |
| Cooking fruit and vegetables | Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons. |
| Meat and fish | Advice |
| Sausages and hot dogs | Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily. |
| Meat or fish | Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat. |
| Cheese | Advice |
| Grate or cut cheese | Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible. |
| Nuts and seeds | Advice |
| Chop or flake whole nuts | Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old. |
| Bread | Advice |
| White bread and other breads | White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips. |
| Snacks and other foods | Advice |
| Popcorn | Do not give babies and young children popcorn. |
| Chewing gum and marshmallows | Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows. |
| Peanut butter | Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread. |
| Jelly cubes | Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes. |
| Boiled sweets and ice cubes | Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes. |
| Raisins and other dried fruits | Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces. |

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/>

It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/> and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>

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