

Provision of Food Policy

All-Inclusive Meal Package

We offer an all-inclusive meal package where lunch is provided by our **caterers** and other meals are prepared by our team members. These meals are **nutritionally balanced, cooked fresh daily**, and cater to a variety of dietary needs. We can also **supply alternatives to cow's milk** for children who require them. This package offers **great value for money** and ensures that children receive well-prepared, healthy meals without the need for parents to supply food from home.

Safeguarding, allergy control and consistency

In a group childcare environment, managing food safely is a core safeguarding responsibility. Children now present with a wide range of allergies and intolerances, some of which can be life-threatening even in very small quantities. National case reviews and coroners' reports have highlighted incidents where children have suffered severe allergic reactions in education settings when food brought from home contained undeclared allergens.

To minimise this risk, our strong expectation is that, wherever possible, children will receive meals provided by the nursery. This enables us to have full oversight of ingredients, preparation methods, storage temperatures and cross-contamination controls, and to ensure that all food complies with current Early Years nutrition and food safety guidance.

When children attend school they will typically be receiving **hot meals** as part of their daily routine. Our nursery meals follow a similar structure to help children feel comfortable and confident when transitioning to school settings.

Mealtime Experience and Child Development

Mealtimes are important to children's development. The food they eat at mealtimes gives the vitamins, minerals, and protein they need to grow and stay healthy. It gives them energy and makes them feel good. Eating habits and attitudes learned in childhood can last a lifetime.

We aim to make eating enjoyable and to create a complete dining experience that appeals to the children and encourages them to appreciate the food. Children are encouraged to make a positive contribution by helping to lay the table with placemats, plates, cups, and cutlery, as soon as they are able. Children also learn important **self-serve skills**, which are essential for building independence and preparing them for the routines and expectations of school.

Children can also contribute by creating their own centrepieces or laying the table with flowers.

Our mealtime routines are designed to encourage children's self-help, independence, and choice. Equipment used must be appropriate to the age and stage of development and designed to promote children's independence.

The opportunity for personal, social and emotional skills to be developed and the opportunities to provide dialogue to support language and communication skills is also very valuable.

Home-Packed Food

At our nursery, we aim to ensure that all children receive nutritious, safe and appropriate meals while in our care. For safeguarding and allergy-management reasons, our default position is that food is provided by the nursery through our all-inclusive meal package.

Parents who do not wish to purchase nursery meals for their child's funded hours may request to provide food from home. Any such arrangement will always be discussed with the Nursery Manager so that we can complete an appropriate risk assessment covering allergies, storage, preparation and cross-contamination. Examples of when this may be particularly appropriate include medically diagnosed dietary conditions or specific religious or cultural requirements that cannot reasonably be met through our catering arrangements. Where a home-food arrangement is agreed, the nursery will not charge for meals for the relevant funded sessions.

General Guidelines

All provided food will need to be checked by a member of staff before it can come onto the premises, so please be aware that this may delay your drop off.

1. **Healthy and Nutritious:** Parents must provide food that supports a balanced diet and is suitable for their child's age and stage of development.
2. **Packaging and Allergen Safety:** To be completely safe for all children attending we would request food provided **be shop bought, unopened, and in its original packaging** so that allergen information can be clearly checked by staff.
3. **We cannot accept home-prepared** mixed food that has been opened, repackaged or made into a meal, as we cannot verify ingredients, preparation methods or the risk of cross contamination. We can accept natural unprocessed (subject to any individual allergen identified in staff or children) such as
 - Cooked meat with no additions or sauces e.g. chicken, turkey, beef, pork

- Cooked fish e.g. cod, haddock
 - Cooked eggs with shell off
 - Fresh vegetables e.g. Carrot sticks, Cucumber sticks, Cherry tomatoes, Red/yellow/orange/green pepper strips, Sugar snap peas/mangetout, Celery sticks, Broccoli florets (raw or lightly steamed), Cauliflower florets (raw or lightly steamed), Sweetcorn (on or off the cob)
 - Fresh fruit e.g. Apple, Pear, Banana, Grapes, Blueberries, Plums, Orange/satsuma/clementine, Strawberries, Raspberries, Kiwi, Peach/nectarine, Melon (watermelon, honeydew, cantaloupe)
4. **Choking Hazards:** Natural foods must be cut into age-appropriate sizes to minimize choking risks. Natural foods do not need to be in original packaging.
 5. **Seating and inclusion at mealtimes**
To minimise allergy risks, we may, where indicated by risk assessment, organise seating in a way that helps reduce the likelihood of cross-contamination (for example, grouping children with home-provided food together). Any such arrangements will be age-appropriate, inclusive and time-limited, and all children will continue to share the same mealtime routine and social experience, regardless of whether their meal is provided by home or by the nursery.
 6. **Restricted Items:** Parents must not send in **chocolate, crisps, or any other unhealthy snacks** as part of their child's packed food.
 7. **Nut-Free Policy:** As part of our allergy management plan, **no nuts or nut-based products** should be included in packed meals.

Breakfast Provision

- We can only serve cold breakfast food, in the form of pre-packed cereals. For breakfast provided by yourselves the nursery can supply **only cow's milk**.
- We will not accept bread from home e.g. to make toast
- If a child requires an alternative milk or milk substitute, **parents must provide this daily**.

Snack Provision

Snacks must be healthy and able to be stored in your child's bag until needed. Two snacks per day should be supplied. These need to be in either in their original packaging so potential allergens can be checked for or a natural food that has been cut up if required.

Food Preparation and Storage

1. **No Refrigeration:** We are **unable to refrigerate** any food provided by parents. Therefore, parents must include **ice packs** in their child's lunch

box if food is needed to be kept at a safe temperature. According to health and safety rules ice packs are safe for 4 hours.

2. **No Heating:** We are **unable to heat** any food provided by parents.
3. **Ready-to-Eat Format:** All food and snacks must be sent in a **ready-to-eat format**, suitable for the child's age.
4. **Utensils & Containers:**
 - The nursery **will not wash or clean** any containers or lunchboxes.
 - The nursery **will not provide** utensils; parents must include necessary cutlery in their child's lunchbox.

Food Tasting

When we have food tasting we will try to advise you beforehand so that you may purchase suitable foods for your child to try.

Should you not be able to supply food or we have not advised you in enough time then your child will be excluded from the food tasting session and provided with a suitable alternative activity.

Access and affordability

We recognise that some families may not wish, or may feel unable, to purchase nursery meals every day. To ensure this does not become a barrier to accessing a free early education place, we are able to offer fully funded afternoon-only sessions (for example 1.15pm–5.45pm or 1:30-4:30pm) where the only food required is a simple, healthy snack such as a cut fruit brought from home, subject to the same allergen checks. This allows families to access their free entitlement without the cost of full-day meals, while still enabling us to maintain robust controls around main mealtimes for safeguarding and allergy management.

Liability & Responsibility

- The nursery **accepts no responsibility** for the quality, safety, or temperature of any of the food provided by parents.
- Parents are responsible for ensuring that the food remains fresh and suitable for consumption throughout the day.
- **Failure to Provide Food:** If parents fail to provide suitable food for the day:
 - They will be required to either **collect their child and take them off the premises** so they can source food, or
 - The nursery will **supply food and invoice the parent** at the **non-booked rate** of **£20 for a full day** and **£15 for a half day**, as opposed to the pre-booked or all-inclusive rate.

Additional Considerations

- **Food Sharing:** Children are **not permitted** to share food to prevent cross-contamination and allergic reactions.
- **Healthy Drinks:** Only water or milk is permitted in nursery; no fizzy drinks, fruit juice, or flavoured milk. Nursery will provide water and dairy milk to all children.
- **Monitoring & Compliance:** Nursery staff reserve the right to discuss concerns with parents if food provided does not comply with these guidelines.

Our approach balances inclusion and affordability with our overriding duty to safeguard children, particularly in relation to food safety and allergy management. We believe this is consistent with the EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements and current early years nutrition guidance.

By following this policy, we aim to create a safe and inclusive dining environment for all children. Thank you for your cooperation in supporting the health and well-being of our nursery community.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with a member of staff.

Policy review: Annually