

03 Food safety and nutrition procedures

03.04 Menu planning and nutrition

The EYFS nutrition guidance 2025 states:

“Providing healthy, balanced and nutritious food ensures that all children:

- Get the right amount of nutrients and energy they need while they are growing rapidly, which is especially important for children who might not have access to healthy food at home. This can help prevent children from becoming overweight or obese.
- Develop positive eating habits early on. Children’s early experiences with food can shape future eating habits. This can impact children’s long-term health including maintaining a healthy weight, and good oral health. The early years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities and set the foundations for a lifetime of good health.”

Food provides a healthy, balanced diet for growth and development. Foods containing any of 14 allergens identified by the FSA are identified on menus. Dietary guidance to promote health and reduce risk of disease is followed. When planning menus, the setting manager and cook ensure that:

- Menus reflect cultural backgrounds, religious restrictions and food preferences of some ethnic groups.
- Menus are clearly displayed so that parents and staff know what is being provided.
- Foods that contain any of the 14 major allergens are identified on the menu that is displayed for parents/carers.
- Parents/carers must share information about their children’s particular dietary needs with staff when they enrol their children and on an on-going basis with their key person.
- Key persons regularly share information about the children’s levels of appetite and enjoyment of food with parents/carers.
- Staff refer to [Help for early years providers : Food safety](#) which includes:
[Example menus for early years settings in England: Guidance](#) and [Example menus for early years settings in England : Recipes](#)
- Eat Better, Start Better - Foundation Years.
- A record of children’s dietary needs is kept on the inside of the white snack cupboard and on a clipboard near the snack table.

Packed lunches

Where children have packed lunches, staff promote healthy eating, ensuring that parents/carers are given advice and information about what is appropriate content for a child’s lunch box. Parents/carers are also advised to take measures to ensure children’s lunch box contents remain cool i.e. ice packs, as the setting may not have facilities for refrigerated storage. This ensures we meet the EYFS nutrition guidance. We *Policies & Procedures for the EYFS 2025/26 (Early Years Alliance 2025)*

share information with parents regarding healthy eating on our notice board and through regular newsletters.

We ensure that:

- Tables are not overcrowded during mealtimes.
- **Children are always within sight and hearing of staff at mealtimes**
- **There is a Paediatric First Aider present at children's meal and snack times.**
- Children wash their hands and sit down ready to open their lunchboxes. Adults are always on hand to encourage independence and support children with opening their food items if help is requested.
- Children are encouraged to eat what they can from their lunch boxes and to pack them away, putting them back onto the trolley when they have finished.
- Staff have their lunch with children at the tables. Staff who are eating with the children role-model healthy eating and best practice, for example not drinking cans of fizzy drinks in front of the children.
- Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not hurried to fit in with adults' tasks and breaks. They are not made to eat what they do not like and are encouraged to try new foods slowly.
- To protect children with food allergies or specific dietary requirements, children are discouraged from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- If children do not eat their main course, they are not denied pudding. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.
- Mealtimes are relaxed opportunities for social interaction between children and adults.
- Information for parents/carers is displayed on the parent/carers notice board, including:
 - Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers
https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/media/upload/pdf-downloads/HR_toddler_booklet_green.pdf

Food for Celebrations

To ensure the safety of all children (including those with allergies, dietary requirements and cultural/religious restrictions) we kindly ask that families do not send in celebratory food items such as cakes, sweets or chocolates.

- If families wish to mark a special occasion such as a birthday, we welcome alternative gestures such as bringing in a small gift for the children such as bubbles, stickers, or a book to donate etc

- Staff will ensure that all children feel included and celebrated in ways that are fair and meaningful.