



Safer Eating/ Weaning and Choking Policy

Policy Statement

At Little Explorers, we are committed to promoting the safe preparation, handling, and supervision of food for all children from birth to five years of age. This policy sets out how we ensure that all children are supported with their individual dietary needs and are kept safe during mealtimes in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and best practice guidance.

EYFS Compliance Statement

This policy is implemented in accordance with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and its safeguarding and welfare requirements relating to food and drink, safer eating, allergies, paediatric first aid and the health and wellbeing of children.

The nursery has regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance when providing meals, snacks and drinks and follows current government guidance on safer eating and weaning.

Dietary Requirements and Health Needs

- Prior to a child starting at the setting, we gather full information on any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies or intolerances, and any relevant health conditions.
- This information is documented and shared with all staff involved in food preparation, handling, and service.
- We work closely with parents/carers and relevant health professionals to create tailored allergy action plans where appropriate.
- Information is reviewed regularly and updated immediately upon notification of any changes.

Oral Health

We promote good oral health by limiting sugary foods and drinks, encouraging water and milk consumption, and supporting children to develop healthy habits in line with NHS guidance.

Allergen Control

We comply with applicable food information and allergen legislation and follow current Food Standards Agency guidance. Allergens are identified, communicated and managed appropriately, with procedures in place to minimise the risk of cross-contact.

Individual allergy and dietary information is clearly communicated to all relevant staff and is readily accessible wherever food is prepared, served or eaten.

Staff check children's individual dietary and allergy information before food is served. Where a child has a known allergy, an appropriate allergy action plan is in place and emergency medication is readily accessible.

Staff must never rely solely on memory when identifying a child's allergy or dietary requirements.

Procedures are in place to minimise the risk of cross-contact during food preparation, serving and eating.

Supervision & Ratios

Children are supervised at all times during eating, with staff deployed in line with EYFS ratio requirements to ensure active and effective supervision.

Hygiene & Safety

Food preparation and storage comply with Environmental Health standards, including temperature control, cleaning schedules, and infection prevention procedures.

Inclusion

We respect and accommodate cultural, religious, and ethical dietary requirements in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Bottle Feeding

Formula and breast milk are prepared, stored, and handled safely in line with NHS guidance.

Risk Assessment

Mealtimes and food-related activities are risk assessed and regularly reviewed to ensure children's safety.

Food Preparation and Individual Needs

- Food is prepared with full consideration of each child's dietary requirements and developmental stage.
- We work with parents/carers to understand each child's weaning journey and the textures they are familiar with. No assumptions are made based on age.
- Staff follow *Start for Life NHS Weaning Guidance* to support children moving safely and confidently through stages of solid food introduction.
- Foods are prepared in line with the child's chewing and swallowing abilities, using age-appropriate textures and ensuring foods are cut safely (e.g., grapes halved lengthways, no whole nuts).

- Parents/carers are asked to keep the nursery informed of foods already introduced at home and any known reactions. New foods and allergens are introduced in partnership with families and in accordance with current NHS and government guidance.

SEND/ Medical Swallowing Needs

Where a child has SEND, developmental delay, oral-motor difficulties, dysphagia, a medical condition or any other need that may affect their ability to eat or swallow safely, an individual risk assessment and/or healthcare plan will be implemented. Advice from appropriate healthcare professionals will be followed where required.

Choking Prevention

- We strictly follow guidance from *Food Safety - Help for Early Years Providers* and the *NHS advice on choking* to reduce risk.
- Children are appropriately seated and positioned safely for eating. Babies and younger children are supported to sit upright and securely. Children are not permitted to eat while walking, running, playing or lying down.
- Distractions are minimised in designated eating areas to help children focus during mealtimes.
- Staff are vigilant and always maintain sight and hearing of children during meals and snacks.
- Children are actively supervised to prevent the sharing or swapping of food, drinks, cups, bottles or utensils, particularly where children have allergies, intolerances or specific dietary requirements.
- Where appropriate, food is cut, mashed, or softened to ensure safe swallowing and chewing.

Staff understand that choking can be silent and remain positioned so that they can effectively observe children while they eat.

Food is prepared appropriately for the individual child's age, development and oral-motor abilities. Staff remain alert to foods that present an increased choking risk and prepare these appropriately in accordance with current government guidance.

Staff distinguish between gagging and choking and understand the appropriate response to each.

Following any choking incident requiring intervention, the child's wellbeing will continue to be monitored and appropriate medical advice or emergency assistance sought where necessary. The incident will be reviewed to determine whether changes are required to the child's food preparation, seating, supervision, care plan or risk assessment.

Staff Training and Responsibilities

- All staff involved in food preparation or serving receive training on food allergies, anaphylaxis, choking hazards, and safe weaning.

- Whenever children are eating, there will always be a member of staff in the room who holds a valid full Paediatric First Aid certificate that meets the criteria set out in Annex A of the EYFS.
- A named staff member is assigned at each snack and meal to ensure food served meets each child's dietary needs.
- All staff are aware of the differences between food allergies and intolerances and that children may develop allergies at any stage, especially during the weaning period.

Responding to Choking or Allergic Reactions

- Any choking incidents requiring intervention are recorded in full, including how and where the incident occurred.
- Parents/carers are informed on the same day, and the incident is reviewed by senior staff.
- Choking and allergy records are monitored to identify any patterns or common risks, and adjustments are made accordingly to minimise future risks.

Resources and Guidance

- Staff use and refer to:
 - *British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) Action Plans*
 - *NHS Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Guidance*
 - *Weaning - Start for Life NHS*
 - *GOV.UK Food Safety for Early Years Providers*

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually or in response to updated legislation, guidance, or following any serious incident. Staff are reminded of safer eating procedures regularly during supervision, team meetings, and safeguarding updates.

This policy was adopted on	This policy was reviewed on:
31/07/2025	10th August 2026