



Little Explorers Food Provision Guidelines for Parents

Introduction:

At Little Explorers, we are committed to ensuring that every child receives a healthy and balanced diet to support their physical and cognitive development. Our goal is to foster healthy eating habits that benefit your child's well-being both now and in the future.

Rationale: The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) places a duty on early years providers to promote children's good health, including supporting healthy eating.

- Be fitter and healthier now and later in life
- Learn at a faster pace and behave better

To grow and stay healthy, children need to eat a nutritionally well-balanced diet. The nursery setting plays a key role in contributing to the health and well-being of children.

Unhealthy food choices can lead to both short-term and long-term health problems:

- **Short-term effects** can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration, and behavioural issues that may impact learning.
- **Long-term effects** of poor childhood nutrition may increase the risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease, and diabetes in adulthood.

Packed lunches often contribute to a significant portion of a child's weekly food intake, and therefore must be balanced and nutritious.

Aims:

- To ensure that packed lunches meet minimum food and nutrition standards.
- To encourage healthy eating habits from an early age.
- To improve the overall nutritional quality of packed lunches.
- To raise awareness among children, parents, staff, and the wider community about the importance of healthy eating.
- To promote healthy eating habits that can influence health and well-being in later life.

Special Diets and Allergies:

- Please refer to the allergy policy for details.

- **No food containing nuts or any products that may contain nuts** is allowed in packed lunches due to life-threatening allergies within the nursery.
- Little Explorers understands that some children may have specific medical conditions requiring special diets. In these cases, parents are encouraged to ensure the packed lunches remain as healthy as possible. Please inform your child's key person if any foods on the "Not to Include" list need to be part of your child's diet.

Packed Lunch Facilities:

- Children bringing packed lunches may eat in a designated area to support allergy management and reduce the risk of cross-contamination.
- Free fresh drinking water and cold milk are available at all times.
- As fridge space is limited, parents are advised to use insulated lunch bags with freezer blocks.
- **Children must be provided with all meals for the full day.** Parents are expected to provide sufficient food for the duration of their child's session; this includes breakfast, snacks, lunch, dessert, and a picnic-style tea. Children cannot come with just a lunchbox for one meal; they must have all their meals packed to ensure they receive the full nutritional benefit throughout the day.
- **We are not able to heat up food** to avoid the risk of incorrect reheating that could cause illness.
- Children are only permitted to eat their own food to ensure allergies and dietary needs are safely managed.
- **If your child arrives without the appropriate food for the day,** Where packed lunches do not meet our guidelines, we will speak with parents to offer support and guidance. In some cases, unsuitable items may be returned home. We will contact you to request that you bring in a suitable alternative. Due to our meal planning and preparation, we will not be able to provide food on-site at short notice.

The 'Always, Sometimes, Never' Approach to Packed Lunches at Little Explorers

Packed lunches should 'Always' include:

- **At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables** each day (e.g., apple slices, carrot sticks). *Grapes and raisins are NOT permitted*, and cherry tomatoes should be halved for younger children.
- **Protein:** Meat, fish, eggs, or non-dairy protein like lentils, chickpeas, or hummus.
- **Oily fish** (e.g., salmon or tuna) **at least once every three weeks.**
- **Starchy food:** Bread (wholegrain, white rolls, pitta bread, wraps), pasta, rice, couscous, potatoes, or other cereals.

- **Dairy food:** Milk, cheese (e.g., cheddar or mozzarella), yoghurt, fromage frais, or custard.
- **Healthy snacks:** Pretzels, crackers with cheese, and vegetable sticks with dip.
- **All food should be prepared in a safe way** to reduce choking risk, for example grapes must be cut lengthways and cherry tomatoes halved.

Packed lunches can ‘Sometimes’ include:

- **A meat product** such as sausage rolls or individual pies (but limit processed meats).

Packed lunches should ‘Never’ include:

- **Confectionery:** Chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits, and sweets.
- **Crisps.**
- **Sugary soft drinks:** Including fizzy drinks (even if sugar-free or reduced sugar) due to their lack of nutritional value and contribution to tooth decay.

Waste and Disposal:

- **Uneaten food will be sent home** (as much as possible) so parents can monitor what their child has consumed and raise concerns if needed.
- It is our responsibility to encourage healthy eating. **Please ensure that your child’s packed lunch meets the nutritional guidelines.** If any processed or unsuitable foods are included, we will need to send them home and ask for an alternative, as we cannot substitute these items at short notice.

This includes chocolates, chocolate bars, chocolate biscuits, crisps, sweets, sugary drinks, cakes, and takeaway foods like burgers or kebabs.

This guidance is in line with recommendations from NHS and Public Health England on early years nutrition.

We appreciate your support in ensuring your child enjoys a healthy, balanced lunch each day. If you have any questions or need further information, please don’t hesitate to get in touch. We work in partnership with parents to support healthy eating habits and are happy to offer ideas and guidance where needed.

This policy was adopted on	Reviewed
28th March 2025	4th May 2026