



Nutrition and Mealtimes Policy

At Little Explorers, we believe that mealtimes should be happy, safe, sociable occasions for children and staff alike. We promote shared, enjoyable interactions and encourage positive attitudes towards healthy eating from the earliest age.

We are committed to providing healthy, balanced and nutritious meals, snacks and drinks that meet children's individual needs, dietary requirements and stages of development. Our approach is informed by the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, the DfE Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance, and relevant food safety guidance.

From September 2025, early years providers must have regard to the EYFS Nutrition Guidance and should follow it unless there is a clear reason not to.

Our Mealtime Commitments

- A balanced breakfast, midday meal, tea, and two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at nursery.
- Menus are planned in advance, rotated regularly, and reflect seasonal availability and cultural diversity. They are displayed for families in the nursery and published on our website.
- All allergens are clearly displayed alongside the menus in line with food safety requirements.
- We provide nutritious meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of salt, sugar, saturated fats, artificial additives, preservatives, and colourings.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables are included daily in all menus.
- Parents and children are encouraged to contribute ideas and feedback as part of the menu planning process.

Drinks and Hydration

- Only milk and water are offered to children to support oral health.
- Fresh drinking water is accessible at all times and is regularly offered by staff.
- Water intake is monitored throughout the day, especially in warmer weather when staff actively encourage children to drink more.

Dietary Needs and Safety

- Individual dietary requirements are respected, including medical needs, allergies, religious beliefs, and parental preferences.

- Information is collected from parents prior to the child starting nursery and reviewed regularly.
- Where allergies or health conditions exist, risk assessments and individual dietary plans are created in partnership with parents.
- Staff are trained in allergy awareness and appropriate responses to allergic reactions.
- Children are sensitively supported and never made to feel different or singled out due to their dietary needs.
- Seating arrangements may be considered to prevent cross-contamination, and staff supervise all mealtimes to ensure safety.

Mealtime Practices

- Children are never left unattended while eating or drinking, in line with EYFS statutory requirements.
- Staff model good table manners and eat with the children, making mealtimes a calm, sociable experience.
- Children are encouraged to use polite language, such as "please" and "thank you."
- Children are supported to develop independence by making choices, self-serving when appropriate, and learning to feed themselves.
- Conversations around food choices and healthy eating are encouraged as part of everyday learning.
- A wide range of cultural foods is offered so that all children can enjoy familiar dishes and explore new tastes.
- We respect cultural differences in eating habits and are sensitive to each child's background and preferences.

Safer Eating and Supervision

Children are always supervised closely while eating and drinking and must remain within sight and hearing of a member of staff at all times.

Where possible, staff sit facing children while they eat so they can monitor safe eating, reduce choking risks, prevent food sharing and respond quickly to any signs of an allergic reaction.

A member of staff with a valid full paediatric first aid certificate will be present in the room whenever children are eating.

Children are seated safely and appropriately for their age and stage of development, for example in a highchair, low chair or suitable table and chair arrangement.

Food is prepared and served in a way that reduces choking risks. This includes cutting small round foods such as grapes, cherry tomatoes and strawberries lengthways into quarters; removing stones, pips and bones; avoiding whole nuts, whole seeds, popcorn, hard sweets, marshmallows and jelly cubes; and adapting food textures for babies and younger children.

Any choking incident requiring staff intervention, including back blows, will be recorded. Parents/carers will be informed, and incidents will be reviewed to identify any patterns or further actions needed to reduce risk.

Managing Food Refusals and Preferences

- If a child shows distress at a meal, it will be removed without pressure or fuss.
- If a child does not eat their main meal, they may still be offered a healthy dessert option, such as fruit or yoghurt, to maintain a positive mealtime experience.
- Children who refuse to eat at mealtime may be offered an alternative healthy snack later in the day.
- Children are given sufficient time to eat without being rushed.
- Portion sizes are age-appropriate and aligned with government guidelines for babies and young children.
- Children not on specific diets are encouraged to try small portions of everything.

Special Celebrations

- In the case of special celebrations, we offer non-food-based alternatives such as:
 - Special helper roles
 - Favourite songs or stories
 - Stickers and badges
 - Dancing or games
- We do not allow external food such as cakes from home. Instead, we celebrate with nursery-provided alternatives and shared joy.

Staff Training and Food Safety

All staff involved in preparing or handling food receive appropriate food hygiene training and are expected to follow safe food preparation, storage and serving procedures.

Food hygiene training is refreshed regularly, and at least every three years as part of our nursery good practice.

Staff are made aware of allergy procedures, cross-contamination risks, choking prevention, safe weaning and safer eating expectations.

Any food-related incidents or accidents are recorded and reviewed to ensure continued safety.

Reporting Food Poisoning

In the rare event of suspected food poisoning affecting two or more children, we will:

- Notify Ofsted within 14 days (or as soon as reasonably practical)
- Inform relevant health protection teams
- Follow all advice and guidance from local authorities and public health professionals

Monitoring and Communication

- Parents of children under two receive a daily written record of feeding and hydration routines.
- The policy is reviewed annually and updated in line with new government guidance, parental feedback, health advice, or as needed.

This policy supports our overall commitment to children's health, wellbeing, and learning through positive food experiences.

Policy to be read in line with our:

Food Provision Guidelines Policy, Safer Eating Policy, Allergy and Anaphylaxis Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Medication Policy and Infection Control Policy.

This policy was adopted on	Reviewed
24/01/2022	4th May 2026