



Nursery Nutrition and Health Policy

We are committed to safeguarding and ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all pupils in accordance with safeguarding procedures and guidance for staff outlined in the schools' Health and Safety, Child Protection, Security and Safeguarding policies.

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1. Aims

This policy sets out how TOP Nurseries will provide and support healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drink, promote positive eating habits and oral health, and manage food safety, choking, allergies, intolerances and individual dietary needs. It applies to all food and drink provided by the nursery, food supplied by external caterers, food brought from home and food used in cooking, sensory or celebration activities.

- Provide food and drink that supports children's growth, development, wellbeing and readiness to learn.
- Create safe, calm and inclusive eating experiences that respect each child's developmental stage, appetite, culture, religion, medical needs and sensory profile.
- Ensure staff understand their responsibilities for safer eating, allergy management, food preparation, supervision and emergency response.
- Work with parents, carers, health professionals and caterers so that information is accurate, current and acted upon.

2. Legislation and Statutory Responsibilities

This policy is informed by the following statutory requirements and guidance:

- Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, dated 13 July 2026 and effective from 1 September 2026.
- Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance, Department for Education, May 2025.
- Food safety guidance for early years providers and Food Standards Agency guidance on food hygiene, allergens, labelling and choking prevention.
- The Childcare Act 2006 and Early Years Foundation Stage (Welfare Requirements) Regulations 2012.
- Food Safety Act 1990, food hygiene legislation, allergen information requirements and applicable School Food Standards.
- Equality Act 2010, Children Act 2004, Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and local safeguarding/public health procedures.

Where the policy uses "must", this reflects a mandatory requirement. "Should" means the guidance must be taken into account and followed unless there is a good reason not to do so.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- The Nursery Manager is responsible for implementing, monitoring and reviewing this policy, ensuring food provision is safe and nutritionally appropriate, and making sure required training and records are in place.
- A named senior member of staff will oversee allergy and safer eating arrangements, including current dietary information, allergy action plans, emergency medication and staff awareness.
- At every meal and snack time, a named member of staff will be responsible for checking that each child receives food and drink that meets their individual dietary, allergy, texture and developmental requirements.
- All staff must follow safe preparation and supervision procedures, check labels and records, prevent food sharing and cross-contact, and report concerns or incidents immediately.
- The Key Person will maintain ongoing communication with parents/carers about eating patterns, preferences, weaning stages, allergies, intolerances, cultural requirements and changes in need.
- External caterers and suppliers must provide accurate ingredients and allergen information and notify the nursery of substitutions or recipe changes before food is served.

4. Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

Children will be included in shared mealtimes wherever this can be achieved safely. Dietary requirements connected to allergy, intolerance, coeliac disease, disability, medical need, religion, culture, vegetarianism or veganism will be respected and supported with nutritionally suitable alternatives. A child will only eat separately where an individual risk assessment shows that a significant risk remains despite appropriate controls, training and supervision.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for children with SEND, sensory differences, feeding difficulties or physical needs. Staff will adapt seating, utensils, food textures, pace, noise and distractions, and will not pressure a child to eat.

5. Food and Nutrition Standards

All meals, snacks and drinks provided by TOP Nurseries must be healthy, balanced and nutritious. The nursery will have regard to the current Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance when planning, purchasing, preparing and reviewing food provision.

- Food will include a varied balance of fruit and vegetables; starchy carbohydrates; dairy or suitable fortified alternatives; and beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat or other proteins.
- Foods high in saturated fat, salt and/or sugar, including confectionery, cakes, biscuits, pastries and crisps, will not form part of routine provision.
- Added salt and sugar will be avoided. Products will be selected using nutrition labels, with lower-salt and lower-sugar options chosen wherever possible.
- Artificially sweetened drinks and foods will not be routinely provided.
- Portions will be appropriate to the child's age, body size, developmental stage and appetite. Staff will begin with small servings, offer more when requested and never require children to clear their plates or use food as a reward.
- Where School Food Standards apply to nursery meals, the setting and caterer will comply with those standards as well as the EYFS nutrition guidance.

6. Menu Planning and Food Provision

Menus for breakfast, snacks, lunch and high tea will be planned in advance and reviewed to ensure variety, nutritional balance, safe textures and suitability for the children who attend. Menus will normally cover at least one full week and should use a longer cycle where practicable so that children attending on particular days receive varied choices.

- Menus will include a variety of foods, tastes, textures and colours and reflect foods from different cultures.
- Food and drink will be spaced appropriately across the day. Children over 12 months will be offered regular meals and snacks in line with the length and pattern of their attendance. Children under 12 months do not require routine snacks; additional milk feeds will be discussed with parents/carers.
- Where lunch or high tea is provided as a main meal, it will include a main component and an additional component such as vegetables, soup, fruit or plain yoghurt.
- Breakfast cereals, bread and prepared products will be checked for sugar and salt content. Wholegrain and white starchy foods will be varied across the week.
- Recipes, brands and ingredients will be recorded. Any substitution or last-minute change must be checked against every child's dietary needs and added to the allergen record before serving.
- Termly menus and allergen information will be available to parents/carers. Staff should complete the allergen record when menus are prepared for the term and update it whenever a product, ingredient or recipe changes.

7. Drinks and Hydration

- Fresh drinking water will be available and accessible to children at all times, indoors and outdoors, and offered regularly.
- For children aged 1 to 5, the routine drinks provided will be fresh tap water and plain milk. Sugary drinks, squash, fruit juice and smoothies will not be provided.
- Whole or semi-skimmed cow's milk may be offered from 1 year. Skimmed and 1% milk will not be offered to young children. Unsweetened calcium-fortified alternatives may be used where appropriate and agreed with parents/carers.
- Babies aged 6 to 12 months will be offered breast milk, first infant formula and water in accordance with their individual feeding plan. Water will be offered from an open or free-flow cup where developmentally appropriate.
- During warm weather, illness, physical activity and outdoor play, staff will increase prompts and monitor children who may be at greater risk of dehydration.

8. Food Brought from Home

Food brought from home must support the nursery's healthy eating and safety expectations. Parents/carers will be given clear packed-lunch guidance and must provide accurate information about ingredients where requested.

- Lunch bags and containers must be clearly labelled with the child's name.
- Packed meals should include a balanced main item, fruit and/or vegetables, and a suitable dairy or protein item. Water or plain milk should be provided where a drink is included.

- Confectionery, fizzy drinks, high-sugar drinks and foods that present an avoidable choking risk must not be included.
- TOP Nurseries do not knowingly serve or permit foods containing peanuts or tree nuts as an ingredient. This reduces risk but cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment and does not replace individual allergy action plans and risk controls.
- Precautionary “may contain” statements will be considered against the individual child’s allergy action plan and risk assessment. Staff will not make assumptions about whether a product is safe.
- If packed food cannot be stored at a safe temperature, parents/carers will be asked to provide a suitable insulated bag and ice pack or choose foods that can be stored safely. The nursery will follow its food safety management procedures.

9. Safer Eating, Supervision and Choking Prevention

Whilst children are eating, there will always be a member of staff in the room who holds a current full paediatric first aid certificate. Children must remain within sight and hearing of a member of staff throughout eating and drinking.

- Children will be seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair. They will not eat while walking, running, playing or travelling unless a specific risk-assessed arrangement is in place.
- A designated eating area will be used where possible, with distractions minimised. Staff should sit facing children where practicable so they can observe eating, prevent food sharing and identify choking or an allergic reaction promptly.
- Food must be prepared to match each child’s age, size, developmental stage and familiar texture. Choking can be silent, so staff must remain attentive and must not rely on sound alone.

The following preparation controls will be followed:

- Remove stones, pips, skins and bones where these may present a risk.
- Cut small round foods, including grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, lengthways and then into quarters.
- Soften hard fruit and vegetables and serve in safe slices or strips rather than small hard chunks.
- Cut sausages into thin strips, remove skins and limit their use because of salt content.
- Serve cheese grated or in thin strips, and cut bread into strips for very young children.
- Do not offer whole nuts or whole seeds to children under five, popcorn, hard sweets, marshmallows or unprepared jelly cubes.
- Check all foods, including food used in play or cooking activities, for shape, texture and choking risk.

Any choking incident that requires staff intervention, including back blows, must be recorded using Appendix 2. Parents/carers must be informed and incidents will be reviewed periodically for patterns and further action.

10. Introducing Solid Foods and Individual Developmental Needs

The nursery will have ongoing discussions with parents/carers about each child’s current feeding routine, stage of introducing solid foods and the textures they can safely manage. Staff will not make assumptions based only on age.

- Food will be prepared in a way that is suitable for the child’s individual development, and progression to new textures will be agreed with parents/carers and introduced at the child’s pace.
- Babies and young children will be fed responsively. Staff will recognise hunger and fullness cues, allow time, and never force or pressure a child to eat.
- Potential allergenic foods should be introduced one at a time and in very small amounts. The nursery will not introduce a new allergen for the first time without clear discussion and agreement with parents/carers.
- Honey will not be given to children under 12 months. Salt and sugar will not be added to food prepared for babies.
- Expressed breast milk, formula, bottles and feeding equipment will be stored, prepared, labelled and sterilised in accordance with current NHS and food safety guidance and the child’s care plan.

11. Allergies, Intolerances and Special Dietary Requirements

Food allergies can be life threatening. Before a child is admitted, the nursery must obtain information about dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies, intolerances and special health requirements. This information will be recorded, kept current and shared with all staff who prepare, handle, check or serve food.

- Known allergies and intolerances will be managed through an up-to-date allergy action plan developed with parents/carers and, where appropriate, health professionals. The BSACI allergy action plan will be used where suitable.

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- All staff will know the difference between allergy and intolerance, understand that allergies can develop at any time, recognise symptoms of allergic reaction and anaphylaxis, and know how to access and follow the child's action plan.
- Prescribed adrenaline auto-injectors and other emergency medication will be readily accessible, stored safely and checked in line with the Medical and First Aid Policy. Trained staff will administer medication and call 999 in accordance with the child's plan and emergency guidance.
- The nursery will maintain accurate allergen information for every meal, snack and food activity, including all 14 regulated allergens and any other ingredient relevant to an individual child.
- Labels must be checked every time a product is purchased or opened because ingredients and precautionary statements can change. Brand or recipe substitutions must not be served until checked and recorded.
- Cross-contact will be reduced through safe storage, cleaning, handwashing, separate utensils and preparation areas where needed, and clear identification of each child's meal. Food sharing will be prevented.
- Foods or ingredients will not be removed from a child's diet without a valid reason. Nutritionally suitable substitutions will be planned, and qualified health advice will be sought for complex or medically restricted diets.
- Allergy controls apply to cooking, sensory play, play dough, pasta, birdseed, celebrations and any other activity involving food or food packaging.

12. Food Preparation, Hygiene, Storage and Training

- There will be an adequately equipped area for hygienic food preparation, with suitable sterilisation facilities where babies' food or equipment is handled.
- All staff who prepare or handle food must be competent and receive appropriate food hygiene training. Allergy awareness, choking prevention and safer eating will be included in induction and refreshed regularly.
- The setting will comply with local authority food business registration requirements and use an appropriate food safety management system, including records for cleaning, chilling, cooking, cross-contamination and management checks.
- Food will be stored, transported, reheated and served at safe temperatures. Fridge/freezer and food safety checks will be completed in line with the setting's procedures.
- Hands, surfaces, utensils and equipment will be cleaned effectively. Raw and ready-to-eat foods will be separated and use-by dates followed.
- Allergen information will remain available at the point food is served. Prepacked-for-direct-sale food will be labelled in accordance with applicable allergen labelling requirements.

13. Mealtime Environment and Positive Eating

- Mealtimes will be calm, social and unhurried, supporting conversation, independence and positive relationships with food.
- Adults will model healthy eating and appropriate table behaviour without making negative comments about food, weight, body shape or appetite.
- Children will be encouraged, but not pressured, to explore new foods. Repeated exposure may be offered sensitively and refusals respected.
- Children will be supported to serve themselves, pour drinks and use cutlery when safe and developmentally appropriate.
- Food will not be used as a punishment, bribe or reward, and dessert will not be made conditional on finishing another food.
- Staff will monitor eating patterns and raise concerns sensitively with parents/carers, particularly where there is persistent restriction, swallowing difficulty, faltering growth, dental pain or a sudden change in appetite.

14. Oral Health

The nursery will promote children's good oral health as part of the EYFS health requirement by:

- providing water and plain milk rather than sugary drinks;
- offering tooth-friendly meals and snacks and limiting the frequency of sugary foods;
- teaching children about caring for their teeth through age-appropriate play, stories and routines;
- sharing NHS-approved brushing and dental attendance information with parents/carers; and
- working with local oral health promotion services where available.

15. Food Activities, Celebrations and Special Events

- Cooking and food exploration will be planned as learning opportunities and risk assessed for allergies, choking, hygiene, developmental suitability and cross-contact.
- No child will handle or be exposed to an ingredient identified in their allergy action plan, including through sensory or messy play.
- Food brought in for birthdays, festivals or celebrations must be agreed in advance, have full ingredient/allergen information and meet the nursery's safety requirements.
- Celebrations will not routinely centre on foods high in sugar, salt or saturated fat. Non-food ways of celebrating will be encouraged.

16. Food Poisoning, Incidents and Emergency Response

- Suspected food poisoning, allergic reactions, choking incidents and food safety concerns will be reported immediately to the Nursery Manager and managed under the relevant first aid, medical, safeguarding and incident procedures.
- Where a registered provider is required to notify Ofsted, food poisoning affecting two or more children cared for on the premises will be reported as soon as reasonably practicable and within 14 days. School-based settings will also follow Trust, local authority and public health reporting procedures.
- Following a significant incident, the setting will preserve relevant packaging, ingredient and menu records, cooperate with health professionals and regulators, review risk assessments and update procedures before the food or activity is offered again.

17. Partnership with Parents and Carers

- Parents/carers will receive information about menus, packed lunches, drinks, allergy arrangements, choking prevention and food brought into the nursery.
- They must tell the nursery promptly about any change to allergies, intolerances, medication, feeding stage, texture needs, cultural requirements or medical advice.
- Staff will share relevant information about what and how much a child has eaten and drunk, particularly for babies, children with dietary plans or where concerns arise.
- Concerns will be discussed sensitively and professional advice sought where appropriate. The nursery will not diagnose an allergy or feeding disorder.

18. Monitoring and Review

- The Nursery Manager will review menus, allergen records, training, food safety checks, choking incidents, allergic reactions and parent feedback at least termly.
- The named senior lead will complete spot checks of safer eating practice, including the presence of a paediatric first aider, named meal checker, seating, supervision, food preparation and prevention of food sharing.
- This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner following a significant incident, change in provision, new child need or update to statutory guidance.

References

- Department for Education: Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, effective 1 September 2026.
- Department for Education: Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance, May 2025.
- Department for Education: Help for early years providers - Food safety; Nutrition; Food allergies and intolerances.
- Food Standards Agency: Allergen checklist for food businesses; allergen information and labelling; food business registration; Safer Food, Better Business.
- NHS / Start for Life: infant feeding, weaning, food allergies and anaphylaxis guidance.

Appendix 1

Daily Menu and Allergen Record

Complete this record when menus are planned and update it before serving whenever an ingredient, brand, recipe or substitution changes. Write all allergens present using the regulated allergen names and include any additional ingredient relevant to an individual child.

Setting:		Date / Week Commencing:	
Menu cycle / term:		Completed by:	

Date	Session	Food / menu item	Ingredients / brand / recipe	Allergens present and substitutions	Checked by
	Breakfast				
	Morning snack				
	Lunch				
	Afternoon snack				
	High tea				
	Other				
	Breakfast				
	Morning snack				
	Lunch				
	Afternoon snack				
	High tea				
	Other				

The 14 regulated allergens are: celery; cereals containing gluten; crustaceans; eggs; fish; lupin; milk; molluscs; mustard; peanuts; sesame; soya; sulphur dioxide/sulphites; and tree nuts.

Appendix 2

Choking Incident Record

Child's full name:		Date of birth:	
Date:		Time:	
Location / meal or snack:		Staff present:	
Lead paediatric first aider:		Parent/carer informed at:	

1. Food or drink involved (include brand, preparation, shape, size and texture):

2. What happened and signs observed:

3. Intervention provided (for example back blows, chest/abdominal thrusts, CPR, 999):

4. Outcome and any medical advice or treatment:

5. Immediate actions taken to prevent recurrence:

6. Parent/carer communication and follow-up:

Management review

Incident reviewed by:		Date:	
Trend / common feature identified:		Further action required:	
Risk assessment / menu / practice updated:		Staff briefed:	

Appendix 3

Daily Safer Eating and Allergy Check

Complete before the first meal or snack and update when staffing, children, food or arrangements change.

Date:		Room / group:	
Completed by:		Management lead:	
Check	Yes	No	Action / Notes
A member of staff with a current full paediatric first aid certificate is in the room whenever children are eating.	☐	☐	
The named person responsible for checking each child's food and drink has been identified for every meal and snack.	☐	☐	
Current dietary, allergy, intolerance, texture and medical information is available and has been checked.	☐	☐	
Allergy action plans and emergency medication are accessible, in date and understood by staff.	☐	☐	
The menu, ingredients, brands, substitutions and allergen record have been checked before food is served.	☐	☐	
Food has been prepared to prevent choking and is suitable for each child's developmental stage and familiar textures.	☐	☐	
Children are seated safely in appropriately sized seating and the eating area is calm with distractions minimised.	☐	☐	
Children remain within sight and hearing of staff and, where possible, staff sit facing them.	☐	☐	
Food sharing and allergen cross-contact are actively prevented.	☐	☐	
Fresh water is accessible and children are prompted to drink.	☐	☐	
Any concern, near miss, allergic reaction or choking intervention will be recorded and reported immediately.	☐	☐	

Manager sign-off:		Time:	
Action reviewed / completed:		Date:	