



Mealtime Policy October 2025

Mealtimes at the Nursery are encouraged to be a happy and social occasion for the children and staff. Staff will be expected to set good examples of table manners and role model a positive attitude towards food.

Staff will respect cultural differences in eating habits and any special dietary requirements arising through preferences, clinical diets and religious/cultural backgrounds.

At all times when children are eating, there will be a staff member with a valid Paediatric First Aid qualification on duty, this includes on outings where any foods are consumed.

At mealtimes a **nominated staff member** will be assigned and be responsible for checking that all meals and snacks are safe for each child and take action to prevent children from contamination from allergens.

The Nursery follows the national EYFS nutrition guidance. We provide nutritionally sound meals and snacks which promote health and reduce the risk of obesity and heart disease that may begin in childhood.

We follow the main advice on dietary guidelines and the legal requirements for identifying food allergens when planning menus based on the four food groups:

- meat, fish, and protein alternatives
- milk and dairy products
- cereals and grains
- fresh fruit and vegetables.

Mealtimes are an opportunity for staff to encourage children to:

- Eat healthily and learn about nutrition.
- Develop a positive attitude towards food and nutrition.
- Use good manners and be helpful to others.
- Take their turn in being served food.
- Self-serve to promote independence.
- Help serve and pass food round.
- Say “please” and “thank you”.
- Remain seated.
- Engage in conversation; shouting is discouraged.
- Finish their food. Slow eaters will be given time and not rushed, and under no circumstances will food be ‘force-fed’.
- Use cutlery. Children are offered support when needed.
- Try different types of foods.

Staff must:

- Ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and cultural or ethnic preferences, as well as their parent’s wishes.
- Ensure fresh drinking water is available throughout the day.
- Record how much of their meal each child has eaten.

Staff must not:

- Take away from a child who is slow to eat before they have finished.
- Use any method of ‘force feeding’.
- Use puddings as a reward or as a form of punishment.

Staff work in partnership with parents to support them with children who are showing signs of 'faddy or fussy eating' and sign post them to further advice, for example, How to Manage Simple Faddy Eating in Toddlers (Infant & Toddler Forum) <https://infantandtoddlerforum.org/health-and-childcare-professionals/factsheets/>