St Matthew's CE (Aided) Primary School and Nursery Centre

Early Years Food, Nutrition and Safer Eating Policy

2026 – 2027

Policy- Document Status			
Date of Policy Creation	September 2025	**Named Responsibility**	L Burns (Deputy DSL)
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Date of Policy Adoption by Governing Body		September 2026	
Next Review Date		September 2027	

1. Aims

This policy is based on the requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory framework and Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition guidance (2025) and will ensure that as a school staff we meet all requirements.

The policy aims to inform both school staff and parents/carers our approach to food provision and how we ensure safer eating is happening within our Early Years Foundation Stage.

This policy will be reviewed by Governors on an annual basis or when there are any changes to statutory requirements.

As a school we want to foster a culture of balanced and healthy eating and educating our children in their understanding of what this encompasses.

Our primary aim is to provide nutritious, balanced meals and snacks, supporting children's optimal growth and development during the early years. We are committed to creating positive mealtime experiences, not only supporting children's physical development, but also promoting lifelong healthy eating habits through enjoyable, social dining experiences.

The safety and wellbeing of all children remain paramount during all aspects of food preparation, serving and consumption, with robust procedures in place to protect every child in our care. We work collaboratively with parents and carers as partners to meet each child's individual dietary needs, recognising that consistency between home and school supports the best outcomes for children.

2. Food and drink provision

Our Nursery children have access to a rolling snack time within the morning and afternoon sessions. Within EYFS children are provided with a daily snack, in line with the nutrition guidance. Fruit, vegetables or starchy snack are offered throughout the week. Children have access to fresh drinking water throughout each day and are offered milk as part of their daily routine. Snacks are prepared in line with statutory guidance to ensure safer eating and minimum risk of choking.

Before any snack and mealtimes, children wash their hands with soap and water. Children who attend fulltime provision within school are offered the choice of a hot meal or may provide their own packed lunch. Hot meals are provided by our approved catering company and the meals provided by school meet the nutrition standards.

When children are eating, they are supervised by a member of staff who is paediatric first aid trained. Staff are provided with training on how to manage safer eating within the EYFS.

Children's dietary requirements and allergies are known to all staff, snack and meals are provided in line with any personal requirements.

2.1 The mealtime environment

Children access meals and snack at suitable tables and chairs. When children are eating, they are supervised by a member of staff who is paediatric first aid trained, and children remain in the sight and hearing of the supervising adult.

3. Celebrations and special occasions

For any celebration or special occasion that involves children accessing food at school this will be managed the same way as daily routines for food or drink.

4. Lunchboxes brought in from home

As a school we promote healthy, balanced eating habits from an early age. Early childhood is a vital time for developing lifelong eating habits. We want to support parents and children understand what makes a nutritious meal. It is important to provide nutritious and appropriate food for your children within their lunchboxes and at home. Staff at this setting know how important it is to support every child's nutrition and dietary needs.

4.1 What a healthy lunchbox should include:

The following is encouraged to include as key components to promote a balanced meal (Annex 1):

- Starchy food or carbohydrates – wholemeal bread, wraps, pasta, rice, couscous, potatoes.
- Protein – chicken, tuna, lentils, beans, hummus, boiled eggs, cheese.
- Vegetables – grated carrot, cucumber, cut cherry tomatoes (quartered), cooked peas, peppers.
- Fruit – apple slices, bananas, sliced grapes (lengthwise), melon, dried fruit (small amounts).
- Dairy or non-dairy alternatives – yogurt, fromage frais, cheese sticks, or fortified plant-based options.
- A healthy drink – water or milk, as per the EYFS requirements.

Water bottles can be filled up within the setting using fresh water.

4.2 Food not to be in lunchboxes

We ask that parents avoid packing the following in their child's packed lunch, in line with healthy eating and food safety guidance:

- Chocolate bars, sweets or confectionary.
- Fizzy, sugary, or artificially sweetened drinks
- Crisps and salty snacks – alternatives such as rice cakes are suggested.
- Cereals labelled as high in sugar, e.g. sugar coated or chocolate flavoured cereals.
- Flavoured dry rice, pasta and noodle products, e.g. pots of noodles.

Staff members would communicate with parents if a child's lunch was not suitable to meet the nutritional needs. If staff identify that a child brings food or drink items that are unsuitable for the children contact with parents will be made and an alternative drink and meal will be provided for the child.

4.3 Food Safety Guidelines regarding lunchboxes

As a school we communicate with parents and carers that it is important to:

- Follow the 'four-hour rule' where ice packs are unavailable – only allowing food to be stored outside of chilled conditions for up to four hours.
- Clearly label their name on the lunch box.
- Pack foods that can be safely kept at room temperature if cool bags or ice packs cannot be used as the setting cannot guarantee refrigeration space for children's packed lunches.

Lunchboxes will be kept off the floor and in an appropriate space away from the children until they are needed at lunchtime. Staff ensure that the named lunchboxes are given to the correct child at lunchtime.

We do not provide facilities for heating up food supplied in lunchboxes.

5. Provision for cultural and dietary preferences

Our cooked and cold lunches that are provided by the catering company meet all dietary and cultural requirements. The catering company are aware of any child with dietary requirements or food allergens, and suitable meals are provided.

5.1 Management of Special Dietary Requirements and Allergies: (3.65, 3.64)

Before a child is admitted to our EYFS nursery or reception we will obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and intolerances that the child has, and any special health requirements. This information will be

updated regularly and shared with all staff involved in the preparation and handing of food. Where a care plan is required, these are written in conjunction with parents/carers, school staff and health care professionals. At each mealtime and snack time there will be a named practitioner who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child.

5.2 Dietary needs and inclusion

The setting will recognise that children's lunchboxes may reflect a variety of dietary requirements and will work closely with families to support these.

In order to ensure inclusivity and safe eating, the setting will:

- Ensure a paediatric first aid trained staff member is present during mealtimes.
- Support cultural and religious dietary practices by respecting and accommodating foods brought in from home that follow cultural or religious dietary rules.
- Seek information from parents about any specific requirements to be aware of during mealtimes.
- Manage allergies and intolerances safely by following care plans for children.
- Support vegetarian and vegan diets by respecting food choices brought from home and encouraging positive discussions around diverse types or plant-based food and how to get all the nutrients required via plant-based diets.
- Ensure children follow any medically prescribed diets by following guidance from medical professionals and seeking written confirmation from a health professional regarding this.

This setting asks that parents inform staff of any dietary requirements and allergens so that staff members can monitor what children are consuming and that it is suitable for them.

It is essential that parents inform the setting of any known allergies. Staff members will also monitor lunch boxes to ensure that they do not contain high-risk items where allergies are present in the setting.

Staff members will constantly supervise and support all children to eat their packed lunches at all times, as well as those who have a school dinner.

5.3 Allergies: (3.65)

We will ensure that Paediatric First Aid Training includes allergy information and how to treat anaphylaxis and ensure that all staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis. We will work with parents and or carers and where appropriate, health professionals to develop allergy action plans for managing any known allergies and intolerances. This information will be kept up to date and

shared with all staff. All staff will be trained to understand that children can develop allergies at any time.

6. Food safety and hygiene

All EYFS have completed Food safety and Hygiene level 1 course which is completed annually.

6.1 Paediatric First Aid: (3.63)

All Early Years teachers and teaching assistants are paediatric first aid trained. Whilst children are eating there will always be a member of staff supervising eating with a valid paediatric first aid certificate (criteria set out in EYFS Statutory Framework Annex A). Paediatric First Aid training is completed every 3 years. Our schools training matrix identifies when this training needs to be updated.

6.2 Choking: (3.67, 3.68, 3.69)

We will risk assess and prepare food in a way to prevent choking. This will include using a choking tube (or similar) to check food sizes, cutting up food to appropriate sizes, not giving risky food. All staff will be trained in knowing how to support children if they are gagging or choking.

Children will always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff. Staff will sit or stand facing the children when they are eating, so they can make sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking, to prevent food sharing and be alerted to an unexpected allergic reaction.

All staff involved with the preparation, handling and supervising mealtimes and snack times will ensure food is suitable for their child's developmental needs and prepared in a way that prevents choking. Parents who send lunchboxes into school for their children are also asked to follow the same guidelines in the preparation of their child's food.

Small fruits: **Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes into small pieces – cut lengthways.**
Large fruits and firm fruits: **Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks.**
Vegetables: **Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons.**

6.3 Record Keeping: (3.70)

If a child experiences a chocking incident, this information will be recorded and shared with parents/carers the same day. These records should be reviewed regularly, and any themes or trends will be addressed to reduce the risk of choking. Appropriate action will be taken to address concerns.

7. Learning about food

Developing lifelong positive eating habits goes beyond just providing healthy food options for the children. Within both the nursery and reception curriculums we learn about food and where it comes from. The children take part in cooking activities and learn about a balanced diet by sorting different foods into groups.

Other activities the children take part in are:

- Growing fruit/vegetable plants with children so they can see how food is produced
- Preparation and serving so they can see the food process.
- Observation drawings of different fruit and vegetables.
- Fruit and vegetable tasting inspired by different stories, countries, celebrations and festivals.

8. Cooking with children

Cooking with children is a great way to introduce them to new foods and develop their understanding of how the food they eat is made. It can also help develop their fine motor skills.

During the year in nursery and reception the children take part in different activities such as making bread, sandwiches, smoothies and fruit salads. Before any cooking activities, a risk assessment will be written which will include consideration of children's dietary needs or allergens.

9. How the setting will support healthy choices

The setting will continue to uphold its regulatory obligation to provide healthy, balanced and nutritious food to children and encourage healthier food choices for packed lunches. Parents will be encouraged to ensure that food provided from home aligns with the healthy options offered by the setting, so that children receive consistent messages about nutrition (see Annex 1).

The setting will support parents in ensuring that children get the right amount of nutrients and energy they need while they are growing rapidly. Any parent who is

finding it difficult to incorporate healthy food into their child's diet will be welcome to seek advice from the setting about low-cost alternatives to unhealthy foods.

Whilst children are eating at the setting, they will be supervised and encouraged to eat any elements of their packed lunch they view less favourably, e.g. fruits and vegetables. Staff will support children to develop positive eating habits early on in order to help shape future eating habits.

Our setting promotes healthy eating through:

- Example lunch box menus and advice for parents and carers.
- Child-friendly learning on nutrition through play and stories.
- Using resources from NHS Change4Life and the Eatwell Guide.
- Staff will offer supportive guidance or signposting to families when needed.

10. Sustainability

Nursery and Reception receive seasonal fruit and vegetables through the school fruit and vegetable scheme.

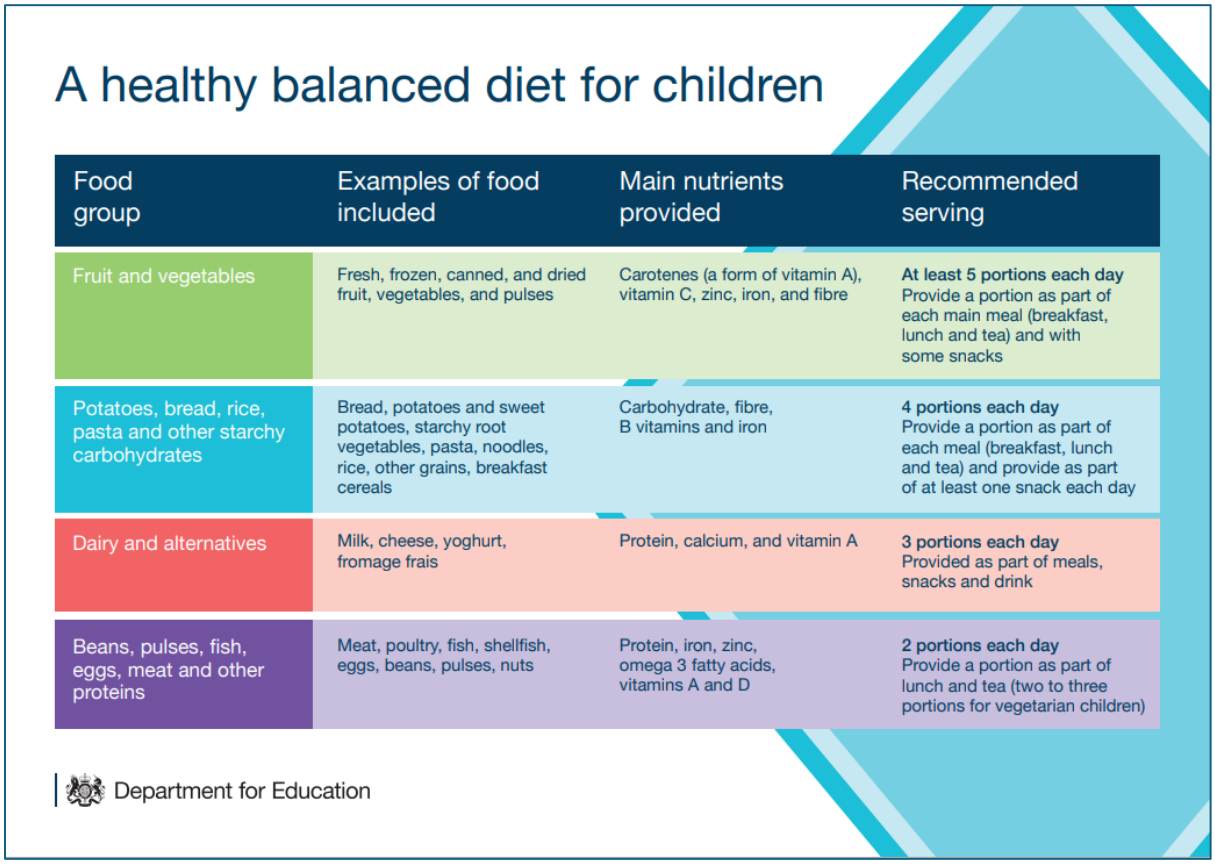
Children learn about food sources and sustainability throughout our curriculum.

11. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if:

- There are changes to statutory guidance or safeguarding legislation.
- National nutrition standards are updated.

Annex 1



A healthy balanced diet for children

Food group	Examples of food included	Main nutrients provided	Recommended serving
Fruit and vegetables	Fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruit, vegetables, and pulses	Carotenes (a form of vitamin A), vitamin C, zinc, iron, and fibre	**At least 5 portions each day** Provide a portion as part of each main meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and with some snacks
Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates	Bread, potatoes and sweet potatoes, starchy root vegetables, pasta, noodles, rice, other grains, breakfast cereals	Carbohydrate, fibre, B vitamins and iron	**4 portions each day** Provide a portion as part of each meal (breakfast, lunch and tea) and provide as part of at least one snack each day
Dairy and alternatives	Milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais	Protein, calcium, and vitamin A	**3 portions each day** Provided as part of meals, snacks and drink
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	Meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, eggs, beans, pulses, nuts	Protein, iron, zinc, omega 3 fatty acids, vitamins A and D	**2 portions each day** Provide a portion as part of lunch and tea (two to three portions for vegetarian children)

Department for Education

Portion sizes for children aged 5 and under



Food group	Portion size
A variety of fruit and vegetables (at least 5 portions each day)	
Cooked and raw	40g
Carbohydrates (4 portions each day)	
Cooked rice, pasta and potatoes	80g
Bread	25g
Average sized potato	1
Dairy and alternatives (3 portions each day)	
Milk	150ml
Cheese (sliced or grated)	15g
Cottage cheese	30g
Plain yoghurt	60g
Protein (2 portions each day)	
Baked beans	55g
Egg	55g
Meat, fish and poultry	40g
Most pulses and hummus	40g

Department for Education





Food Standards Agency
food.gov.uk

Early years choking hazards food safety advice

For babies and young children, food can be a choking hazard, especially when they do not chew their food well or they try to swallow it whole.

Choking can happen with any foods, but 'firm foods', bones and small round foods that can easily get stuck in the throat present a higher risk. Therefore, care givers should follow these five essential steps:

1. Make sure food is **suitably prepared and served** for babies and children under 5 years old. For suitable foods, see https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/ Introduce babies to solid foods from around 6 months of age.

2. **Think about size, shape and texture of food**. Cut food into narrow batons, avoid round shapes and firm foods. Firm fruit & vegetables can be softened by cooking.

3. Ensure that babies and young children are **alert and seated safely upright** in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair whilst eating.

4. **Babies and young children should be supervised at all times** while eating. You will be able to identify the early signs of choking and prevent harm.

5. **Encourage babies and young children to chew food well.** Teach children how to chew and swallow food properly, and ensure they take their time during meals. This will reduce their risk of choking.

Care givers and parents should be familiar with how to respond to a choking incident in line with guidance on first aid for children:

How to stop a child from choking: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/

How to resuscitate a child: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/

Early years food choking hazards

Food Standards Agency
food.gov.uk

Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	**Advice**
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Cheese	**Advice**
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
Nuts and seeds	**Advice**
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
Bread	**Advice**
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Snacks and other foods	**Advice**
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/

It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/

and How to resuscitate a child: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/

Annex 2

Useful information

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework – (effective 01 September 2025):

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/687105a381dd8f70f5de3ea9/EYFS_framework_for_group_and_school_based_providers_.pdf

Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/687105a381dd8f70f5de3ea9/EYFS_framework_for_group_and_school_based_providers_.pdf

British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology-BSACI allergy plan:

https://www.bsaci.org/resources/allergy-action-plans/

Food allergy:

https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/nutrition/food-allergies-and-intolerances

NHS: (www.nhs.uk)

Food safety-Help for early years providers: GOV.UK