



Safer Eating Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that children in our care are provided with a safe eating environment that supports healthy eating, minimises food-related risks, and ensures compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, including the changes introduced in September 2025.

Key Principles

- Ensure all meals and snacks are nutritious, well-balanced, and cater to the individual dietary needs of children.
- Promote healthy eating habits from an early age.
- Safeguard children from food-related risks, including choking hazards and food allergies.

Food Allergies and Special Dietary Requirements

We recognise the importance of catering to children's dietary needs, including food allergies and intolerances. All food allergies or special dietary requirements must be disclosed to the setting by parents and carers on our 'New Starter Form' when a child starts.

- Record Keeping: We maintain up-to-date records of children's allergies, intolerances, and dietary preferences. This information is shared with all relevant staff members and stored securely. We will prompt parents to update the information we hold regarding special dietary needs at the start of each term.
- Reasonable adjustments to accommodate individual children's eating needs will be made. Any adjustments to be agreed with the child's parents/carers prior to the child starting and documented on a signed Individual Health Care Plan.
- Risk Assessment: A thorough risk assessment is carried out for children with food allergies, ensuring appropriate precautions are taken, including avoiding allergens in meals and snacks.

Safer Eating Practices

To minimise the risk of choking and ensure safe eating environments for young children, the following practices are implemented:






- Supervision: All children are supervised during mealtimes and snack time. Children will be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. Where possible, staff will sit facing children whilst they eat so they can be sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.
- Choking Hazards: Parents carers are advised to prepare food in a way to prevent choking and staff are vigilant to ensure foods sent in snack pots and packed lunches have also been prepared safely. Firm, spherical foods like grapes and cherry tomatoes must be sliced into quarters or segments. Cylindrical foods such as cucumber, bananas, carrots and cocktail sausages must be cut according to the table below. This guidance on food safety for young children – <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-and-welfare/foodsafety> includes advice on food and drink to avoid, how to reduce the risk of choking and links to other useful resources. If a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, staff will record details of where and how the child choked and parents and/or carers are made aware immediately via telephone and the choking incident form signed on collection of the child (please see attached incident form). The records will be reviewed and risk assessed alongside other accidents / incidents at nursery on a half-termly basis. Appropriate action will be taken to address any identified concerns.

Snack and lunch pots/boxes will be checked by a member of staff daily by 9:30am. Any prohibited items will be removed and a note, along with the item will be returned to the parent/carer detailing the reason for the removal. If this item forms a large part of the child's meal, the parent/carer will be contacted to provide an alternative item.



Where food has not been prepared safely and according to guidelines, this will be removed and where possible, will be cut according to our safety guidelines. A note will be placed into the child's lunch or snack container advising that this has occurred and to ensure any future items are prepared correctly.

• **Age-Appropriate Food Types:** Foods are served in a manner suitable for the child's developmental stage (e.g., food will be cut into small, manageable pieces for younger children). Popcorn, marshmallows, jelly cubes and hard sweets and unsuitable foods as guided by <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/safeguarding-and-welfare/foodsafety> are never permitted for children under 5.

• **Mealtime Environment:** Children will sit down and remain seated while eating and be given time to chew and swallow their food properly. If a child is observed walking with food, the food will be removed and the child encouraged to sit down. Children are discouraged from talking loudly at mealtimes / snack time. Food sharing is not allowed.

<u>FOOD</u>	<u>Choking Hazard</u>		<u>Method of Preparation</u>
	<u>Cylindrical</u>	<u>Spherical</u>	
	✓		<u>ONLY SKINLESS OR SAUSAGE MEAT TO BE USED</u> <u>Cylindrical foods should be cut length ways first and then sliced creating semi-circular pieces</u>
	✓		
	✓		
		✓	<u>Spherical foods should be sliced into half then sliced again into quarters/ segments.</u>
		✓	

Fruits

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Remove all peel and "stringy bits"</u> • <u>Ensure each segment is PIP free</u> • <u>Cut each segment into smaller 1/3's. This Prevents choking on large bits or skin.</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Ensure CORE & PIP free</u> • <u>Ensure sliced ½ then ½ again CONTINUE to ½ each segment until FINLY cut into THIN Segments</u> • <u>PEEL SKIN FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN AND ANYONE ELSE WHO IT MAY BE APPROPRIATE FOR</u>

Healthy Eating and Nutrition

We aim to support the health and wellbeing of all children by promoting healthy eating habits:

- **Snack Time:** We offer the children a mid-morning snack during their session, provided by the parents and/or carers of each child and consisting of fresh fruits and/or vegetables, yoghurt and fruit and/or vegetable purees. We will always encourage the children to eat healthily.
- **Packed Lunches:** Parents are advised about safe storage of packed lunches in accordance with our Food Safety and Nutrition Policy and given information about providing healthy packed lunches during each child's settling in.
- **Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school is a nut free zone.** Any food items that contain nuts, may contain nuts or are manufactured in a nut environment will be removed from snack or lunch boxes and sent home for consumption. A note is added to the food item, advising of the reason for removal.
- **Educational Opportunities:** We will engage children in learning about food, nutrition, and healthy eating through age-appropriate activities and discussions.
- **Support:** Staff will have regard for children's food intake and work with parents and/or carers to provide healthy food options.

Mealtime Hygiene and Safety

To ensure the safety and hygiene of food, the following procedures will be followed:

- **Food Storage and Preparation:** All food will be stored in compliance with food safety regulations. Food preparation areas will be kept clean, and staff will adhere to strict handwashing procedures before handling food.
- **Safe Utensils and Equipment:** All kitchen utensils and eating equipment will be safe and age-appropriate for the children. Any broken or damaged items will be immediately replaced.
- **Hand Hygiene:** Children will wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet. Staff will ensure that all children have clean hands before meals and snack are served.

Training and Awareness

Staff will receive regular training in paediatric first aid, food hygiene and safe eating practices. This includes:

- **First Aid and Emergency Procedures:** All staff will be trained in first aid procedures specific to food related incidents, including how to handle allergic reactions and choking. All staff are paediatric first aid trained. Paediatric First Aid will be updated at least every three years as a minimum.
- **All staff are required to complete training as part of their induction covering food hygiene.** All staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis, the differences between allergies and intolerances and that children can develop allergies at any time
- **Ongoing Training:** Staff will undergo refresher courses on food hygiene every two years as a minimum.

Parent and Carer Involvement

We believe that parents and carers play a key role in the nutritional care of their children. We encourage parents to share any concerns or preferences related to their child's diet, and we will maintain open lines of communication regarding food and mealtimes.

- **Special Occasions:** For special occasions or celebrations (e.g., birthdays), we will work with parents to ensure that any treats brought in align with our safer eating and allergy policies.

This policy was adopted by Acorn Playgroup and Pre-school on 01 September 2025