

Packed Lunch Policy

At Headstart Day Nursery we are committed to providing a nurturing and healthy environment for all children who attend our nurseries. It is our responsibility to ensure that children learn, develop well and are kept healthy and safe in accordance with the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Our nurseries offer children well-balanced nutritious meals and snacks daily, but we know some families prefer to provide their own home-prepared food.



In line with our Healthy Eating Policy and food safety standards, we operate a packed lunch policy. This policy has also been drawn in line with the DfE Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition guidance which came into effect on 1 September 2025. This policy is to ensure that all children bringing in prepared food from home are being offered healthy and nutritious food, to reduce choking risks and to prevent allergic reactions for children who may have airborne food allergies.

In line with the Nutrition Guidance, please do not include the following items in your child's packed lunch as they are high in saturated fat, salt and/or sugar and do not form part of a balanced nutritious diet:

- Sugary drinks
- Food containing artificial sweeteners
- Cakes and pastries
- Savoury pastries
- Crisps
- Chocolate spread, chocolate coated biscuits, chocolate bars or sweets
- Sweetened yoghurts
- Popcorn
- Items containing nuts are not allowed in our nurseries as they can trigger a severe allergic reaction in some children
- Leftover takeaway/fast food

In addition, we ask that the following food items are only provided in moderation, in your child's packed lunch:

- Processed meats, for example ham sandwiches – no more than 3 times in a week
- Homemade cakes – no more than twice in a week

Water and milk are the only permitted drinks at nursery. Water is readily available throughout the day, and we also offer children milk to drink at all snack and mealtimes.

As we have an obligation to ensure that our children are provided with balanced and nutritious meals, we will monitor packed lunches to ensure they meet our policy. If packed lunches do not meet our guidelines, we will contact you to discuss this. We can provide suggestions for alternative items if needed. Please consider the number of items included in your child's packed lunch and portion sizes. Information on this is available in the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance.

Food Safety

The safety and well-being of our children is of the utmost importance to us. Parents/Carers must notify us of any special dietary requirements, food allergies and/or intolerances before your child starts nursery and continue to update us of any changes. This will enable us to make sure all staff are aware of your child's needs and develop an appropriate allergy action, with the support of a healthcare professional if needed.

When parents/carers prefer to provide packed lunches for their children, the following processes will need to be followed:

- Packed lunches must be provided to the nursery in cool bag or lunchbox with an icepack, as we do not have enough refrigeration space available
- The food provided **must not** be food items that require heating or reheating
- To protect our children from possible allergic reactions and choking incidents, the following must be followed –
 - Honey and citrus fruits must not be provided for children 12 months or under
 - Carrots must be shredded finely or cut in thin strips or batons
 - Cucumbers must be cut in thin strips or batons
 - Do not provide nuts or nut derivatives like peanut butter, Nutella or nut oils
 - Remove any stones and pips from fruit
 - Cut small round foods, like grapes, strawberry and cherry tomatoes, lengthways and into quarters
 - Cut large fruits like melon, and hard fruit like apple into slices instead of small chunks
 - Soften hard fruit and vegetables (such as carrot and apple) and remove the skins when first given to babies from around 6 months
 - Cut cheese into strips rather than chunks
 - Remove bones from meat or fish
 - White bread can form a doughy ball in the throat, consider wholemeal or toasted bread and for very young children cut all types of bread into strips
 - Do not give popcorn as a snack
 - Do not give children marshmallows or jelly cubs from a packet either to eat or as part of messy play activities as they can get stuck in the throat
 - Do not give children hard sweets

There is more information available in the following useful publications:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance
- The Eatwell Guide – NHS
- Eat-Better-Start-Better1
- Help for Early Years Providers: Food Safety
- Online Food Safety training – Food Standards Agency

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
01/12/25		01/12/26