

Packed Lunch Policy

Policy Statement:

At Childrens Learning Centre, we are committed to supporting children's health and well-being through nutritious, balanced meals and snacks. This policy outlines our approach to managing packed lunches brought in from home, ensuring they align with the latest EYFS Nutrition Guidance, and promote healthy eating habits from an early age.

Guiding Principles:

This policy reflects the updated guidance set out in the *Nutrition Guidance for Early Years Providers*, which emphasises the importance of:

- Age-appropriate portion sizes
- A balanced and varied diet including all food groups
- Avoiding foods high in salt, sugar, or saturated fat
- Safe and hygienic storage and handling of all food
- Promoting hydration, oral health, and positive food experiences

We work in partnership with parents to ensure children's packed lunches reflect these principles and meet their individual dietary needs.

What a Healthy Packed Lunch Should Include (Guidance-based):

Parents are encouraged to provide lunches that include a balance of the following:

1. Starchy foods (e.g. bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, chapati)
2. Protein-rich foods (e.g. beans, lentils, eggs, meat, fish, hummus)
3. Dairy or dairy alternatives (e.g. yoghurt, cheese, milk-based desserts)
4. At least one portion of vegetables (e.g. cucumber, cherry tomatoes, carrots, cut safely to avoid choking)
5. At least one portion of fruit (e.g. apple slices, bananas, grapes - sliced for safety)

Water bottles are topped up throughout the day and are freely available.

Foods to Avoid (Guidance- based):

To support the EYFS nutrition focus, we ask that parents do not include:

- Sugary snacks (e.g. sweets, chocolate bars, fizzy drinks)
- Crisps or other high-fat savoury snacks. (lower fat alternative crisps are allowed, but not the whole packet)
- Whole nuts (choking and allergy risk)
- Large or round fruits e.g. whole grapes or cherry tomatoes – these must be sliced lengthways or in quarters.
- Unhealthy processed foods high in salt or saturated fat

We will contact parents if unsuitable food is provided and offer support in making healthy swaps.

Children in different rooms

- Holly: Any weaning packed food must be appropriate to the stage of weaning for the individual child and discussed with us directly for tailored advice based on the EYFS guidelines.
- Mulberry & Willow: Small, manageable portion sizes that encourage independence, with foods cut appropriately to reduce choking risk.
- All age groups: Food items should be easy to handle and **not require re-heating**. We follow safe storage guidelines.
- Other than weaning foods, we are unable to store lunch boxes in the refrigerator, therefore parents **must** supply an insulated lunch box with an ice pack or alternative, inside and suitable internal storage for individual foods.

Breastfeeding and Formula:

If a parent is breastfeeding, they are welcome to provide expressed breast milk, which we will store and serve according to food safety and infection control guidelines.

If a child is formula fed, we will ask that measured formula powder and sterilised bottles are provided. Or you can provide a named, sealed formula tub, that we will store for the recommended opening times only. We will prepare feeds freshly and safely following NHS and EYFS hygiene standards.

Communication with Parents:

We will:

- Share examples of healthy lunchbox ideas
- Share the EYFS Nutrition Guidance
- Discuss children's eating habits regularly, including portion sizes and preferences
- Offer support and guidance on allergens, portion sizes, and food safety
- Work with families to adapt lunchboxes for cultural, ethical, or medical dietary needs
- Inform parents immediately of any food-related concerns or safety issues.

Food Storage and Safety:

- All packed lunches are stored safely in a clean, suitable location.
- All packed lunches must be in an insulated lunchbox, with an ice pack or something similar, as stated in nutrition guidance.
- All food is served with clean hands and in a hygienic environment.
- We follow strict protocols for allergy management and choking prevention.