



Healthy and Safe Eating Policy

Policy Version: 1
Last Updated: December 2025
Review Date: December 2026

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1. Policy Statement and Aims

The safety and wellbeing of children while eating is paramount. This policy is designed to ensure that all children enjoy healthy, balanced, and nutritious meals and snacks in a safe, supervised environment that minimises the risks of choking and allergic reactions, in compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for group and school-based providers.

2. Key EYFS Compliance Requirements

This policy specifically addresses the EYFS requirements regarding:

- **Supervision:** Ensuring adequate supervision and the presence of a paediatric first aid (PFA) trained staff member.
- **Information Gathering:** Obtaining and acting on information about special dietary needs, preferences, allergies, and intolerances.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Taking all necessary steps to prevent choking and allergic reactions.
- **Staff Competence & Training:** Ensuring staff are competent and trained in food hygiene, allergy awareness, and emergency procedures.
- **Healthy Eating:** Provision of healthy, balanced, and nutritious food and drink.

3. Allergy and Intolerance Management

3.1 Information Gathering and Record Keeping

- **Prior to Admission:** Information regarding all known or suspected **food allergies, intolerances, and special dietary requirements** (e.g., medical, cultural, religious) must be obtained from parents/carers and recorded on Nursery in a Box.
- **Individual Plans:** A plan will be developed, in consultation with parents/carers and, where appropriate, healthcare professionals, for every child with a diagnosed allergy requiring medical intervention.
- **Data Access:** All staff will have immediate access to a clear, up-to-date record of all children's dietary needs. This will include a visual prompt displayed discreetly in the food preparation and serving areas.

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- **Review:** Dietary information and plans will be reviewed and updated with parents/carers at least every six months or immediately following any change or incident.

3.2 Risk Prevention and Cross-Contamination

- **Dedicated Staff:** A **nominated staff member** will be responsible at each mealtime for checking that the food and drink provided to a child with a known allergy or intolerance is safe for them to consume.
- **Meal Preparation:** Strict food preparation procedures will be followed to prevent cross-contamination.
- **Food Labels:** All food brought into the nursery (including ingredients) will be checked for allergens listed on the child's plan.
- **No Food Swapping:** Children will be actively supervised to prevent the sharing or swapping of food, which is particularly dangerous for those with allergies.

4. Choking Prevention and Safe Food Preparation

4.1 Safe Preparation of Food

All food will be prepared in an age and developmentally appropriate manner to minimise the risk of choking. Staff will adhere to the following safety guidelines for foods with a higher risk of choking:

- **Round/Spherical Foods:** Firm, round foods (e.g., grapes, cherry tomatoes, blueberries, olives, large peas) will be cut into **quarters or segments lengthways**.
- **Cylindrical Foods:** Sausages, hot dogs, and carrot/cucumber sticks will be cut into **thin strips or matchsticks**, *not* coin shapes.
- **Hard Foods:** Raw apple, carrot, and other hard vegetables/fruits will be grated or steamed/cooked and cut into small, manageable pieces.
- **Small, Hard Foods:** Whole nuts and seeds are **not permitted** for children under five.
- **Sticky/Squishy Foods:** Marshmallows, hard sweets, and jelly cubes (from a packet) are **never permitted** as they can obstruct the airway.
- **Bones:** All meat and fish served will be completely boneless.

4.2 Mealtime Environment and Supervision

- **Supervision:** All children will be under the **close supervision** of a member of staff while eating and drinking. Staff will sit with or facing the children to observe them closely.
- **PFA Requirement:** At any time when children are eating, there must be a staff member with a current, full course **Paediatric First Aid (PFA) certificate** present in the room/area.
- **Seating:** Children will be securely seated in highchairs or appropriately sized low chairs while eating and drinking. They will be actively discouraged from walking, running, or lying down while food is in their mouth.
- **Distractions:** Mealtimes will be a calm, social time with minimal distractions to allow children to concentrate on chewing and swallowing properly.

5. Emergency Procedures

5.1 Choking

- Staff trained in PFA will respond immediately to any suspected choking incident following the approved PFA procedure.
- The incident will be recorded on an accident/incident form, detailing the food involved, the actions taken, and the outcome.
- Parents/carers will be informed as soon as possible, and all records will be reviewed to identify any necessary changes to the policy or individual risk assessment.

5.2 Allergic Reaction/Anaphylaxis

- Staff trained in PFA and allergy awareness will respond immediately to the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction or anaphylaxis, following the child's plan and emergency action plan.
- If prescribed, the adrenaline auto-injector will be administered immediately, and emergency services will be called.
- The incident will be recorded, parents/carers informed immediately, and the plan reviewed.

6. Staff Training and Competence

- **Food Hygiene:** All staff involved in the preparation and handling of food must receive **training in food hygiene.**
- **Allergy Awareness:** All staff must complete training to recognise the signs and symptoms of allergic reactions and anaphylaxis, including the correct emergency response and the administration of adrenaline auto-injectors.
- **Weaning/Infant Feeding:** Staff supporting infants will be trained in safe weaning practices, including appropriate food textures and preparation for babies at different developmental stages.

7. Food Brought from Home (Packed Lunches/Birthday Cakes)

- **Risk Mitigation:** Parents/carers providing packed lunches will be given clear guidance on prohibited items, including high-risk choking foods and common allergens present in the nursery.
- **Food Safety:** Staff will ensure packed lunches are stored appropriately (e.g., refrigerated) to maintain food safety and hygiene.
- **Celebrations:** Any food provided for celebrations must be pre-approved by the Manager to ensure it is compliant with all children's allergy and dietary needs.

8. Healthy Eating

- At St Francis Nursery we aim to provide healthy, balanced, varied and nutritious food and drink at snack time, to meet the child's needs and encourage them to develop and promote healthy lifestyles and well-being throughout their life.
- We provide a positive social experience around food and ensure that snacks are varied and children are encouraged to try familiar and unfamiliar food.
- Parents/carers providing packed lunches will be given information and support on providing healthy and nutritious packed lunches.
- Children (and staff) have access to drinking water at all times throughout the session. Children can independently access water from their water bottles and are encouraged and support children to drink water throughout the session.