

Footsteps @ St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Gipsy Lane, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 9AP
Tel: (01344) 425246 Fax (01344) 305463



Early Years Food Policy

Adopted by the Resources Committee
at its meeting on: 11th November 2025
Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Kemp'.

Name: Stephen Kemp
Position: Resources Committee Chairs
Date: 11.11.2025
Review Date: November 2026
Responsibility: Resources Committee

If you would like help understanding or translating this policy, please contact the school office.

TEL: 01344 425246

EMAIL: secretary@stjosephsbracknell.co.uk

“Growing together with Jesus in our hearts, heads and hands.”

Statement of intent

At St Joseph's School/Footsteps Nursery we understand that the early years are a crucial time in a child's development and are aware that what children eat and drink and the habits they develop during this phase can impact their future health.

We value the importance of the EYFS in providing children with a nutritious, balanced diet that will encourage them to make healthy, informed choices. We work collaboratively with parents to promote healthy eating, identify health issues and highlight the risks of unhealthy eating practices.

We believe that food can be used in a variety of educational ways. Children are encouraged to celebrate holidays, religious festivals and special events with various foods associated with these activities.

The EYFS meets all statutory food safety and nutrition requirements for educational settings in England' and aims to maintain these standards across all meals provided.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Public Health England (2024) 'Example menus for early years settings in England'
- DfE (2023) 'School food in England'
- DfE (2013) 'The school food plan'
- DfE (2024) 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'
- Food Safety Act 1990
- The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014
- The Food Information (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019 (also known as Natasha's Law)
- DfE (2025) 'Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Early Years Policy

Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher and Governors are responsible for:

- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring that this policy does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture or religion.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy.
- Ensuring the setting uses reliable suppliers for the food purchased.

The EYFS lead, in conjunction with the headteacher, is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy.

- Reviewing mealtimes and snack time to ensure children's needs are being met.
- Ensuring equipment is suitable for its use.
- Ensuring all staff members are trained in basic food safety and hygiene.
- Ensuring parents are given adequate notice of any changes to meals, food choices or any other aspect of food provision.

Early years staff are responsible for:

- Sitting with children while they eat, where required, and being advocates of healthy eating.
- Ensure there is always at least one paediatric first aider present when children are eating e.g. snack time and lunchtime.
- Ensure children do not share or swap their food in order to protect those with food allergies.
- Treating all children equally, taking account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- Ensuring children are all supervised when they eat.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing the setting with information on their child's dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies.
- Providing specialist food for their child, where they may have an allergy, intolerance or medical need.
- Giving consent for their child to engage in different food tasting.
- Ensuring their children have nut free packed lunches.

Food and drink served

The school meal menus are displayed in the reception area for parents' information and are also available on our school website.

All meals will include a variety of foods from the four main food groups:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Starchy carbohydrates
- Dairy and plain, fortified plant-based alternatives
- Proteins

We share and display current information about individual children's dietary needs and most particularly allergies so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them. The kitchen staff are also aware of any dietary needs and ensure that these are met during lunch.

Foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar will be limited in line with guidance.

Portion sizes will be based upon the recommended intake for the age group of the children concerned.

Menus will reflect the diversity of the community, with a variety of flavours and textures. Fridges and store cupboards will be cleaned regularly to ensure they are clean. Food stored in the fridge will be kept at 5°C or lower. Food will be stored in sealed plastic containers, and tin cans will never be stored in the fridge.

Lunchtime menus will rotate on a three-week cycle.

Fresh drinking water will be available and accessible at all times and children will be encouraged to drink regularly.

Milk will be served with either the morning or afternoon snack and lunchtime, if children want it. Alternative milk options will be offered to those with an allergy or intolerance.

Full fat dairy foods (such as cheese and unsweetened yoghurt and fromage frais) will be limited for all children.

Milk or water will be the only drinks offered to children by the setting, except where children may have a specific need. This will be discussed with parents, dependent on circumstances and the needs of the children. .

Staff will not consume carbonated drinks in the presence of children.

Staff will ensure appropriate food is cut up to decrease risk of choking e.g. grapes, blueberries, cherries, apples etc.

Nutrition

The setting understands that the early years are a crucial time to reduce health inequalities and set the foundations for a lifetime of good health. Staff will ensure that food items prepared and consumed on the premises comply with statutory guidelines and are healthy, balanced and nutritious.

Children aged 1 to 5 years

Staff will encourage children to eat a balanced diet which contains a wide variety of foods, planning meals and snacks that include a variety of food and drinks from the four main food groups every day. In doing so the setting will follow the DfE's advice regarding:

- The food and drink that should be provided, limited or avoided.
- Portion sizes

Eating environment

The eating environment will be comfortable and relaxed. Children will be given plenty of time to feed themselves and hold feeding utensils.

Children will be provided with utensils that are appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Staff will sit with children while they eat and encourage interaction at each table. Children will be observed to ensure they are drinking and eating enough, and staff will be aware of the behaviour that may suggest a child is thirsty or hungry.

Children will be encouraged to develop good eating skills and table manners.

Meals times will be used to help children develop independence, through making food choices, serving food and drink, and feeding themselves.

Celebrations and special occasions

Whilst the setting will welcome gestures to celebrate children's birthdays or special events, it will request that parents avoid allowing their child to bring in food items such as sweets and cakes to share with their peers.

Parents will be advised to ensure any food brought in from home to celebrate a special event is balanced and meets the setting's food guidelines. Alternatively, children will be permitted to bring in non-edible options to celebrate.

Any food shared in the setting during special occasions will be checked for potential allergens. The setting will, instead, celebrate with activities such as the following:

- Craft activities
- Songs and stories
- Dressing up
- Decorating rooms
- Playing special games
- Encouraging children to find out about a wide range of events from a variety of cultures

Allergies and special requirements

The setting understands that food allergies can be life threatening conditions for some children and will ensure they are taken very seriously.

As part of the setting's ongoing CPD for early years practitioners, staff will be trained to understand:

- The common allergens in food.
- The symptoms of an allergic reaction and the steps to take should anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock occur.

Parents will be expected to make the setting aware of any allergies or intolerances their child has and the actions that need to be taken if a reaction occurs.

A protocol is in place so all staff are aware of a child's allergies and symptoms and how to ensure they receive the correct meal/food.

Where it is suspected that a child has an allergy, the setting will encourage the child's parents to seek advice and diagnosis from their doctor.

The setting will ensure children with allergies are not exposed to foods that trigger allergies. Appropriate alternatives will be identified to ensure the child still eats a balanced diet. All staff will be instructed, where necessary, to ensure they understand how to identify which allergens are present in every meal and snack provided.

All food that is pre-packed for direct sale (PPDS) will have the name of the food and the full ingredients list, with allergens emphasised, e.g. in bold, italics or a different colour, clearly displayed.

All preparation of food containing common allergens will be kept separate from other food preparation.

We are a nut free premises, therefore parents are asked to send food in which do not contain nuts. Food items containing bread and wheat will be stored separately.

Learning activities which involve the use of food will be planned in accordance with children's individual needs, taking into account any known allergies of the children involved. Children will be discouraged from sharing or swapping their food with other children. Appropriate provision will be made for parental preferences, including cultural and religious food sensitivities, e.g. providing halal and kosher food as appropriate.

Food brought in from home

Food that is brought into the setting from home will be expected to comply with this policy. Parents will be asked to comply with the healthy lunch box expectation. Any food that is not consumed during the day will be sent home with the child.

Eating habits

All children will be supported to manage their own personal needs as far as possible, including understanding the importance of healthy food choices.

At mealtimes, fussy eaters will be seated with children that are more adventurous with their food to encourage the adoption of different food preferences.

Children will be regularly exposed to new foods in order to increase their liking for, and consumption of, a variety of new foods (providing these foods meet their specific dietary requirements).

Favourite foods will not be used as a reward to encourage children to eat foods they do not like.

The setting is aware that some children will have allergies or different dietary requirements; this will be taken into account when encouraging children to try new foods.

Before a child is admitted, the setting will obtain information about any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies – this information will be recorded and acted upon as appropriate.

Children will never be forced to finish everything on their plate. Small servings will be given, with the opportunity to have second helpings if the first serving is finished.

Children will be encouraged to eat their meal before their desert.

Food safety and hygiene

Food will be stored, prepared and presented in a safe and hygienic environment which is adequately equipped to provide healthy meals, snacks and drinks for children.

Children will be taught basic hygiene, such as not eating food that has fallen on the floor and washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet.

All staff will receive training in food hygiene before preparing or handling food.

All staff involved in preparing food for young children, or helping them eat, will be aware of the requirements of the Food Safety Act 1990.

Communication

Staff will work alongside parents to ensure that children are provided with healthy, balanced and nutritious food in the setting and at home.

Each child's key person (or the Nursery Manager) and the Reception Class Teacher will be responsible for communicating with parents about the setting's approach to food provision.

The setting will agree with parents on the methods used to manage fussy eating, ensuring they are consistent with those used at home.

Parents will be encouraged to attend events to celebrate special and cultural occasions.

Meeting the needs of all children

Wherever possible, the setting will endeavour to cater for the cultural and dietary needs of all children in its care.

The setting is aware that children with special dietary requirements may need specific foods excluded or included; however, it will not exclude foods from a child's diet without a valid reason as this may lead to unnecessary restrictions in their diet. In meeting the needs of all children, the setting will take into account the following dietary requirements:

- Food allergies
- Food intolerances
- Vegetarianism
- Veganism or eating a plant-based diet
- Pescatarians
- Religious preferences, for example:
- Only eating halal foods.
- Avoiding pork or beef.
- Keeping kosher.
- Eating specific foods only on certain days.

The setting will create a safe and inclusive environment for all children to eat, and children with special dietary requirements will be included in mealtimes with other children as far as possible.

A child will only need to eat their meal separately to other children where a risk assessment concludes that a significant risk remains despite adequate training and supervision of meals and snacks times.

Staff will have ongoing discussions with parents about their child's dietary needs and encourage parents to assist the setting by sharing guidance from healthcare professionals. The setting will seek professional advice when needed.

We, as a registered provider, must notify Ofsted of any food poisoning affecting two or more children cared for on the premises. Notification must be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the incident.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the headteacher and EYFS lead.

Any changes to this policy will be communicated, by the headteacher and EYFS lead, to all staff members.