

Birdhurst Day Nursery

Nutrition and Meal-Time Policy

At Birdhurst Day Nursery we believe that mealtimes should be a happy and social occasion for both children and staff. We promote shared, enjoyable positive interactions at these times. Birdhurst Nursery is committed to providing and offering healthy, nutritious, well-balanced meals and snacks which meet individual needs and requirements, following the Department for Education nutrition guidance¹.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Allergies and allergic reactions policy.

We will ensure that:

- A balanced and healthy breakfast, midday meal, tea and two daily snacks are provided for children attending the Nursery for a full day.
- Menus are planned in advanced and in line with guidance produced by the Department for Education. These are rotated regularly and reflect cultural diversity and variation. These are displayed in the main corridor for children and parents to view and can be emailed to parents upon request.
- We provide nutritious food at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives, and colourings.
- Fresh drinking water is constantly available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and babies and intake is monitored.
- Quantities offered take account of the ages of the children being catered for, in line with recommended portion sizes for babies and young children.

Individual dietary requirements are respected. We gather information on the initial registration form from parents regarding their child's dietary needs including any special dietary requirements, food allergies and intolerances, and preferences that a child has. Where appropriate we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies, and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary plan for their child. The Cook is given a list of the children with special diets and requirements and the sessions that they attend.

Staff will show sensitivity in providing for each child's diets and allergies and do not use them as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of his/her diet or allergy.

No child is ever left alone when eating or drinking to minimise the risk of choking, and a qualified paediatric first aider is always present during meal and snack times

¹ https://bit.ly/EYFS_nutrition_guidance

Meals and snack times are organised so that they are social occasions between children and staff. Good manners are encouraged with 'please' and 'thank you' and conversation is encouraged, especially about the food on their plate and the links to healthy eating.

All children are encouraged, not forced, to try a variety of fruit and vegetables. We provide foods from around the world providing children with familiar foods and introduce them to new ones. Cultural differences in eating habits are respected. Staff use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drinks, and feeding themselves. Any child who shows signs of distress at being faced with a meal he/she does not like will have their food removed without any fuss. If a child does not finish their first course, they will still be given a small helping of dessert. Children, not on special diets, are encouraged to eat a small piece of everything on their plate.

Children are given time to eat at their own pace and are not rushed.

Quantities offered take account of the ages of the children being catered for.

Only milk and water are provided as drinks to promote oral health

Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible. It is frequently offered to children and babies, and intake is monitored

In hot weather staff will encourage children to drink more water to keep them hydrated.

Babies

Young babies from the age of nine to eighteen months are most open to new food and taste. The Cook will offer lots of interesting foods, both in the form of purees and partially blended foods and finger foods. Babies will eat together in their room group. They learn by watching and listening and will copy what and how others eat.

Babies who have developed the strength and co-ordination to sit unsupported begin to gain good control of their arms. At this stage they hold principally with the palmer grasp, using the whole hand to grasp and manipulate an object. They enjoy picking things up and putting them in their mouth. The provision of finger foods and a spoon to hold, support this developmental stage.

We follow babies' individual feeding patterns following conversations with parents. We regularly review these to ensure they continue to meet the baby's needs

We feed babies responsively according to their needs and support mothers with breastfeeding, through providing suitable places to breastfeed in the setting and making provision for expressed breastmilk

We prepare infant formula milk if required, following NHS guidelines

Weaning is introduced in collaboration with parents, including discussions about the stage their baby is at, the types of foods and textures their baby is eating at home and how these are presented to the baby; no assumptions are made based on the age of the baby

The nursery provides parents with daily written records of feeding routines for children under three.

Babies will be closely supervised at all times.

Management of food allergies and dietary needs

- All allergens are displayed alongside the menus to show the ingredients of each meal

- Individual dietary requirements are respected. Before a child joins the nursery, we gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs, including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has, and any special health requirements. All information is shared with staff involved in preparing and handling food
- Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual dietary/allergy plan for their child. This will be regularly reviewed and any changes shared with all staff
- We give careful consideration to seating to avoid cross contamination of food from child to child. Where appropriate, an adult will sit with children during meals to ensure safety and minimise risks
- At each meal and snack time, we ensure a nominated practitioner is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child
- Where appropriate, discussions will also take place with children about allergies and potential risks to make them aware of the dangers of sharing certain foods
- Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. They do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of their diet or allergy.

Provision for cultural and dietary preferences

- Where possible, we provide foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones
- Cultural differences in eating habits are respected.

Learning about food and cooking with children

- Staff support children to make healthy choices and understand the need for healthy eating
- We promote positive attitudes to healthy eating through play, growing, shopping and cooking opportunities and discussions.

Celebrations and special occasions

- We will sometimes celebrate special occasions with treats such as cake, sweets or biscuits. These will be given at mealtimes to help prevent tooth decay and not spoil the child's appetite
- We **do/*do* not allow parents to bring in cakes on special occasions
- We consider celebrating with alternatives such as stickers and badges, bubbles, fruit platters, choosing a favourite story, becoming a special helper, playing a party game, dancing and/or singing their favourite song, and so on
- We ensure that all food brought in from parents meet health and safety requirements and that ingredients are listed, following the Food Information for Consumers (FIR) 2014.

Food safety and hygiene

- All staff who prepare and handle food are competent to do so and receive training in food hygiene which is updated every three years

- All staff are trained in preparing foods safely to avoid the risk of choking, following the Foods Standards Agency guidelines
- All staff are aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis
- All staff are aware of the differences between allergies and intolerances, including that they need to maintain vigilance as children can develop allergies at any time
- In the very unlikely event of any food poisoning affecting two or more children on the premises, whether or not this may arise from food offered at the nursery, we will inform Ofsted as soon as reasonably practical and in all cases within 14 days. We will also inform the relevant health agencies and follow any advice given.

Food brought from home

- We **do/*do* not allow children to bring packed lunches into the setting. We provide parents with guidelines for nutritious content and signpost to the NHS packed lunch guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>
- We share the Food Standards Agency choking hazards guidance to support parents to prepare foods to reduce choking hazards
- We **provide* appropriate storage in allocated fridges/**request* parents use ice packs
- We **do/*do* not provide reheating services for children’s packed lunches
- Children’s lunch boxes are checked prior to giving the contents to the children to ensure any risks from potential allergens or choking hazards are managed.

Our policy is developed in partnership with parents, staff and children and reviewed on a regular basis.

| This policy was adopted on | Signed on behalf of the nursery | Date for review |
|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| <i>September 2025</i> | Ugonna Orji – Nursery Manager | <i>September 2026</i> |