

Chatham Nursery School Nutrition & Safer Eating Policy

Mission Statement

Our nursery school community is dedicated to teaching every child to be a happy, confident and independent learner. We create a caring, inclusive and enriching environment where each child feels safe, supported and valued.

This policy defines Chatham's commitment to physical health, safety, and nutritional well-being. We believe that meals and snack times represent key learning opportunities. We aim to protect children from food-based hazards while actively nurturing lifelong healthy habits.

We make sure children eat a balanced diet while they are in Nursery, covering the 4 main food groups. We avoid foods and drinks high in salt, sugar and saturated fat. Milk and water are the only drinks we offer. We ensure children get a variety of fruit and vegetables to eat to access different vitamins and nutrients.

Statutory and Legal Framework

This policy is constructed to satisfy and exceed all relevant statutory national requirements in England, including:

- **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2026:** The Department for Education (DfE) statutory framework, governing safeguarding, welfare, and medical care requirements.
- **Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance (May 2025)** The EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements are given legal force by Regulations¹ made under section 39(1)(b) of the Childcare Act 2006.
- **Benedict's Law Standards (Effective September 2026):** The definitive benchmark standard for allergy risk management, medical care emergency protocols, and preventative staff readiness.
- **Food Information Regulations & Food Standards Agency (FSA):** Strict compliance regarding allergen labels, tracking cross-contamination risks, and reporting requirements.

Approved Snack Provision

At Chatham Nursery School we do not prepare meals on site. We provide a snack, free of charge for the children. We provide nutrient-dense, wholesome snack options. Sweets, confectionery, added sugar items, or high-salt foods are given only occasionally and during special occasions such as celebrations. Our snack menu consists of:

- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetables:** A varied daily rotation of seasonal whole fruits and raw vegetables.
- **Carbohydrates:** Whole-meal bread, crackers, breadsticks
- **Dairy or Dairy Alternative:** Yoghurts, cheese, milk
- **Proteins:** Greek yoghurt, eggs

We provide children with **access to water** throughout the day. We provide filtered tap water and plain milk to drink, unless there are special occasions such as school parties.

Benedict's Law: Statutory Allergy Management Framework

In strict adherence to Benedict's Law, our setting implements a zero-compromise approach to life-threatening allergies (anaphylaxis) through four pillars:

- Stand-alone Allergy Policy
- Annual Staff Training
- Emergency Back-up Medication (Spare AAls)
- Individual Healthcare Plans (IHCP)

Designated Allergen Lead: Francesca Turner

What should parents include in a healthy packed lunch?

Packed lunches should contain a balanced selection of foods from the main food groups, including:

- Fruit and vegetables.
- Starchy foods such as bread, wraps, pasta or rice.
- Protein foods such as meat, fish, eggs, beans or dairy products.
- Water is the preferred drink.

We discourage:

- Fizzy drinks, squash and energy drinks.
- Sweets and confectionery.
- Foods high in salt, sugar and saturated fats.

We cannot reheat food brought from home. All food from home must be clearly labelled and stored safely.

Lunch time Environment

Lunchtimes are social, calm, and inclusive. Children are encouraged to feed themselves and try new foods, but are never forced to eat. We model positive eating habits and use appropriate language around food. Cultural and individual preferences are respected and celebrated.

Education and Food Activities

Food and nutrition are taught through our curriculum through cooking, growing food activities, and sensory exploration. We aim to develop children's understanding of where food comes from and how to make healthy choices.

Food Safety and Hygiene

All food is prepared and served in line with food hygiene regulations. Staff are trained in food safety and choking prevention. We use safe preparation techniques and appropriate portion sizes based on age and development.

Children are encouraged to wash their hands before eating and after handling food as part of developing good hygiene habits and reducing the risk of illness and contamination.

Safer Eating Guidelines for Early Years Children

At Chatham, we recognise that young children are at an increased risk of choking due to their developing chewing and swallowing skills. We are committed to providing a safe eating environment and following best practice guidance to minimise risks.

To support safer eating, we will:

- Before the child enters the setting, information must be gathered about special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies and intolerances and other health requirements. All staff must have access to this information, and each child should have a nominated staff member responsible for checking any food and drink offered is safe for them to eat.
- Ensure children are always supervised while eating and drinking. **Children will be closely observed and listened to while eating and drinking.** Supervising staff should face the children during mealtimes; this allows them to react quickly in the case of choking or allergic reactions. It also enables them to watch for children swapping their food - especially dangerous for children with allergies and intolerances.
- Encourage children to **sit down calmly during meals and snacks** and discourage walking, running, playing, or lying down while eating.
- Cut food into **age-appropriate sizes and shapes to reduce choking risks**. Guidance on food preparation safety is available at <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/food-safety>. We will avoid serving foods that present a significant choking hazard unless suitably prepared, including whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, large blueberries, hard sweets, whole nuts, popcorn, and large chunks of raw vegetables.
- Ensure grapes, cherry tomatoes and similar round foods are cut lengthways into quarters before being offered to children.
- Adapt food preparation and presentation according to individual children's developmental needs and any identified medical conditions.
- Maintain up-to-date paediatric first aid training, including responding to choking incidents.
- Share safer eating information with parents and carers to promote consistent practices between home and nursery.
- Any choking incidents will be recorded as an incident and the parents / carers will be made aware. We will review records of any near miss incidents or accidents often to identify any patterns or common issues that need to be addressed.

Supporting Positive Eating Habits

We encourage children to explore new foods at their own pace within a relaxed and positive environment. Staff model good eating behaviours, support children to develop independence during mealtimes, and promote an understanding of healthy food choices while ensuring safety remains paramount.

We support children to:

- Recognise hunger and fullness cues.
- Develop independence during mealtimes.
- Explore new foods without pressure.
- Learn about healthy choices through play, cooking, growing and discussion.
- We do not use food as a reward or punishment.

Celebrations and Special Occasions

We recognise that food may form part of celebrations throughout the year. Where food is provided for special occasions, we aim to offer healthier options and consider the dietary, allergy and cultural needs of all children before sharing food.

Food Sustainability

We encourage children to develop an awareness of sustainability by:

- Reducing food waste where possible.
- Growing fruits, vegetables and herbs.
- Learning where food comes from.
- Encouraging responsible use of resources during snack and mealtimes.

This policy was ratified on **30th September 2026** and will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is **September 2028**.