

03.5a Packed Lunch Policy

Policy Review

- Alongside associated procedures in 03.1-03.6 Food safety and nutrition
- The Little Bumblebee will review this policy **annually**. In cases of relevant legal or procedural changes, we will review this policy accordingly. The policy should be made available on the Nursery website, with paper copies provided by the Nursery upon request.
- The policy should be provided to and followed by all staff and volunteers.

General

- Parents/carers who provide packed lunches must ensure food is appropriate for under-fives and complies with our **strict no-nut and no-sesame policy**.
- Packed lunches must be clearly labelled with the child's full name and brought in an **insulated lunch bag with an ice pack**. We cannot refrigerate or reheat packed lunches.
- Lunch boxes are stored safely away from direct heat/sunlight. Staff promote healthy eating and will advise on suitable items.

Healthy packed lunches

Parents/carers are encouraged to include a variety of foods from the four main food groups to provide a balanced meal:

- **Starchy foods:** bread, wraps, rice, pasta, couscous, or crackers (wholegrain preferred).
- **Protein foods:** chicken, turkey, tuna, eggs (well cooked), beans, lentils, or hummus.
- **Dairy foods:** cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, or calcium-fortified alternatives.
- **Fruit and vegetables:** fresh, tinned (in juice), or cooked vegetables cut into small pieces.
- **Drinks:** water or milk (water is available throughout the day).

Foods must be ready to eat and cut appropriately to reduce the risk of choking, e.g. grapes and cherry tomatoes must be sliced lengthways.

Foods that must not be included

- Food containing nuts, nut pastes, nut oils, sesame or products labelled "may contain traces of nuts".
- Whole nuts or seeds of any kind.
- Sweets, chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits, or confectionery.
- Crisps or other foods high in fat or salt.
- Fizzy drinks, squash, flavoured waters, or fruit juices with added sugar.
- Processed meats such as pepperoni or salami is limited to once a week.
- Foods requiring refrigeration once brought into the setting.
- Items that may pose a choking hazard (e.g. whole grapes, large pieces of raw carrot, popcorn).

Food hygiene and storage

- All food should be freshly prepared on the day it is eaten.
- Lunch bags must be cleaned and sanitised daily by parents/carers.
- Staff ensure that tables are cleaned before and after lunchtime using a suitable food-safe cleaning product.
- The nursery does not refrigerate packed lunch items.

Allergies and cross-contamination

- Parents/carers must inform the nursery of any food allergies, intolerances, or dietary requirements on registration and update this information immediately if any changes occur.
- Parents/carers providing packed lunches that contain **homemade food** (e.g. sandwiches, baked goods, or cooked items) must provide a **written list of all ingredients** used in that lunch. This information is held with the child's allergy and dietary records in accordance with the *Food Information Regulations 2014*.
- Staff check the ingredients list and lunch boxes for prohibited items (such as nuts or sesame) and may remove any items that pose a risk to other children.
- Lunches are stored separately from nursery-prepared meals to minimise cross-contamination.
- All containers, utensils, and surfaces used during packed-lunch times are kept separate from those used for nursery food preparation.
- Staff remain vigilant during mealtimes to prevent food sharing.
- Any incident involving a suspected allergic reaction or unsafe food is recorded and managed in line with procedures *04.4 Allergies and Food Intolerance* and *04.5 Recording and Reporting of Accidents and Incidents*.

Choking hazard prevention

- In line with NHS and FSA guidance:
- Grapes, cherry tomatoes, and olives must be **cut lengthways and halved**.
- Sausages and hot-dogs must be **cut into thin batons**, not discs.
- Hard fruit and vegetables (carrots, apples) should be **grated or sliced**.
- Avoid popcorn, marshmallows, melon balls, and sticky foods.
- All choking incidents are recorded and reviewed under **04.5 Poorly Children**.

Storage, hygiene, and serving

- All packed lunches must be clearly labelled and include an **ice pack**.
- Lunches are stored safely away from direct sunlight or heat sources.
- The nursery does **not refrigerate or reheat** packed lunches.
- Staff sanitise tables before and after meals and ensure handwashing routines are followed.
- Any leftover food is returned to parents for review.

Mealtime practice

- Mealtimes are calm, sociable occasions where children and staff eat together.
- Children are encouraged to try new foods but are not forced to eat.
- Any uneaten food is returned in the lunch box so parents/carers can see what has been eaten.
- Staff model positive eating behaviours and reinforce healthy food choices.

Milk provision

- The Little Bumblebee Nursery participates in the **Cool Milk Scheme** (Nursery Milk Scheme) to ensure that all children under the age of five receive a daily portion of milk free of charge, in line with the *Welfare Food Scheme*.
- Milk is offered as part of snack and mealtime routines, supporting children's nutritional needs and the *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS 2025)* requirement to provide access to healthy drinks.
- Children attending the setting for two hours or more are eligible to receive 189ml (⅓ pint) of milk each day.
- Parents/carers are informed of this provision on registration.
- The nursery ensures that all milk is pasteurised, stored in accordance with *Safer Food Better Business* guidance, and served at a safe temperature.

- For children who are lactose-intolerant or allergic to cow's milk, suitable dairy-free alternatives (such as oat or soya milk) will be provided in consultation with parents and recorded in the child's *Allergy and Dietary Needs* form.

Monitoring and communication

- Staff monitor lunch boxes for compliance and record any issues.
- Parents receive reminders or healthy-lunch guidance where needed.
- Persistent concerns are addressed through direct communication or a meeting with the Nursery Manager.
- Information about healthy eating is shared through newsletters, displays, and parent meetings.

Non-compliance procedure

- Inappropriate or unsafe items are removed and recorded.
- Parents are informed verbally and given written reminders if necessary.
- Ongoing non-compliance triggers a meeting and written warning.
- Parents will also be contacted to bring an alternative for the child, at the point of contact.
- Serious breaches (e.g. inclusion of nut products) or consistent disregard for the policy may result in suspension of packed-lunch permission.

Legal and statutory framework

- Statutory Framework for the EYFS 2025 – Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements.
- Food Information Regulations 2014.
- Regulation (EC) 853/2004 – Hygiene of Foodstuffs.
- Food Standards Agency: Safer Food, Better Business.
- NHS Healthier Families Lunchbox Guidance (2024).
- Birth to Five Matters (2021) – Healthy lifestyles and self-care.

Further guidance

- NHS – Healthier Lunchboxes for Children: <https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes/>
- Food Standards Agency – Safer Food, Better Business: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-sfbb>
- Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance (2025): <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/food-safety>