



Wild Things - Droitwich

Packed Lunch Policy

Rationale

Following advice from the latest DfE 'Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance' (04.2025) we provide food for children to complement what they are eating at home. This means ensuring our menus are balanced and nutritious. If parents are sending in food from home, we need to be sure they are eating healthily to comply with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework.

Procedure

All foods brought from home should be checked for potential allergens so that the risk of cross contamination is reduced.

All food served to children must be prepared in a way to prevent choking. There are posters about safe food preparation and minimising choking on the Foundation Years website: <https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2021/09/food-safety-advice-on-choking-hazards-in-settings/>

If parents or carers are providing food from home, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to

- Ensure the food is suitable for your child's individual developmental needs and prepared in a way to prevent choking.
- For perishable items that should be kept cool, pack food in insulated sealed bags with a frozen ice pack. If ice packs are unavailable, we will be unable to serve food that should be kept cool (for example rice, pasta, meat) due to the '4-hour rule'. This rule allows food to be stored outside of chilled conditions for up to 4 hours, but this should only be done once during the entire storage. However, as we will not be eating lunch within 4 hours of your child's arrival with us, we will be unable to serve food that should be kept cool at your child's lunchtime unless an ice pack has been included.
- Clearly label your child's name on the lunch bag and detail the contents.

- Pack foods that can safely be kept at room temperature as we do not have refrigeration facilities available to store all of the children's lunches brought from home at our setting. The Food Standards Agency provides advice on Listeria which has examples of ready-to-eat foods that should be eaten within 4 hours of removing them from the fridge.

Listeria guidance from FSA - <https://www.food.gov.uk/listeria>

- As we are unable to reheat food brought from home., please make sure your child's food is all ready to eat without the need for refrigeration or reheating.

Special dietary requirements

To support children with allergies, please be aware of the potential risk of foods brought from home for other children.

Nutritional requirements of packed lunch boxes

Over the course of each day, including food they receive at home, children should be provided with a minimum of:

- 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables.
- 4 portions of carbohydrates.
- 3 portions of dairy or plant-based alternatives.
- 2 portions of protein.

A child's portion is approximately the size of their clenched fist.

The Department for Education (DfE) have provided guidance on menu planning, which is available here: <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/nutrition/menu-planning>

Please note that your choice of food in your child's lunchbox will directly impact on our setting's Ofsted inspection outcome.

The DfE guidance on preparation and provision of lunchbox contents

The Department for Education (DfE) has provided information for the safe provision and preparation of food to children. Please read this carefully and bear the guidance in mind when preparing food for your child's lunchbox:

<https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/food-safety>

This document links to the EYFS Framework, which we are required to follow as an Ofsted registered setting. The EYFS Framework states that there is a statutory requirement for us to ensure that food eaten by children in our setting is healthy and nutritious.

Please pay particular attention to the '**Food preparation**' section of the DfE guidance in order to protect your child against choking risks, for example slicing grapes and other circular food into strips, not circles or cubes.

Please make sure the contents of your child's lunchbox comply with the '**Food and drinks to avoid**' section of the DfE guidance – for example, not sending your child with foods high in salt, saturated fat or sugar.

We will share with you any particular specific allergy information that may affect the food you pack in your child's lunchbox. For the avoidance of doubt, please note that we cannot accept any food that contains nuts, including both tree nuts (hazel nuts, almonds etc) and ground nuts (peanuts).

If it is age and stage appropriate for your child, please read the '**Safe weaning**' and '**Preparing bottles**' sections of the DfE guidance.

Food will be stored on a counter top or in our cloakroom area. We are unable to provide refrigeration for children's lunchboxes so please pack an ice pack in with the lunchbox in an insulated bag, or make sure all food can safely be stored at room temperature for longer than 4 hours. Please see the '**Hygiene**' section of the DfE guidance for further information.

We are unable to reheat any food that has been brought in from home. Please only provide food that can be eaten at room temperature.

Food and the Equality Act

Our packed lunch policy must comply with equality legislation.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that early years settings make reasonable adjustments to ensure children with protected characteristics are not discriminated against or disadvantaged, for example –

- Our healthy food / snacks policy must allow a child with diabetes, who needs a carefully timed intake of calories through the day, to eat high calorie snacks between meals. This will ensure that we do not put the child at a disadvantage or risk a health crisis.
- When we take on a child with an allergy, we need to implement an allergy action plan, inform anyone providing food for the child, ask other parents not to send that food for their child, ensure the child with the allergy has support from a named staff member who checks their food before serving, sit with the child to ensure they are not having a reaction or food sharing etc.

References

Please find below some links to help you to make your decision about food provision:

- EYFS 2024 – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>
- EYFS 2025 update – <https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2024/10/Summary-of-EYFS-changes-for-publication-PDF.pdf>
- BSACI Allergy Action Plan – <https://www.bsaci.org/patients/food-allergy-and-food-intolerance/>
- EU food allergen legislation from Anaphylaxis UK - <https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/business/guidance-on-food-regulation/>
- FSA allergen record keeping – <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses>
- DfE Help for early years providers 'Food safety' page – <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/food-safety>
- DfE Help for early years providers 'Healthy plate' page – <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/nutrition/a-healthy-plate>
- Disabled children and the equality act 2010 - <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/about-cdc/media-centre/news-opinion/disabled-children-and-equality-act-2010-what-early-years>
- Ofsted early years inspection handbook – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif>

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