Kenilworth Nursery School
&
Whitnash Nursery School

"Recognising and valuing the uniqueness of every child"

Safer Eating Policy

Maintained nursery school federation | 2026–2027

Policy owner	**Headteacher: Rachel Barber**
Effective from	September 2026
Review date	September 2027, or sooner following an incident or significant change
Version	1.1 | Revised 3 November 2026

Policy Statement

At Kenilworth and Whitnash Nursery Schools, we are committed to promoting the health, safety, and wellbeing of every child through safe and inclusive eating practices. We recognise that mealtimes are not only essential for nutrition but also for social development, emotional security, and learning. This policy ensures that all food and drink provided or consumed within our setting meets the highest standards of safety, hygiene, and nutritional value, in line with the **EYFS 2026 statutory framework** and the **Department for Education's nutritional guidance**.

This Safer Eating practices policy is linked with other policies for the setting, including:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy,
- Health and Safety Policy
- Inclusion and Equality Policy,
- Allergy Policy

This policy is guided by the following statutory and legal frameworks:

- Childcare Act 2006
- EYFS 2026 Section 3.63 – 3.72 Food and Drink and Safer Eating (Group and school-based providers)
- EYFS 2026 Section 3.62 – 3.71 Food and Drink and Safer Eating (Childminders)
- DfE Early Years Nutrition Guidance (2025)
- Food Safety Act 1990 and associated hygiene regulations
- Food Standards Act 1999

Policy Aims

We aim to:

- Protect children from risks such as choking, allergic reactions and foodborne illness.
- Support healthy growth and development through balanced, age-appropriate nutrition.
- Respect and accommodate individual dietary needs, cultural practices and parental preferences.
- Foster positive attitudes towards food and mealtimes in a nurturing and inclusive environment.
- Empower staff with the knowledge and training to uphold safe eating practices consistently.

Roles and responsibilities

At Kenilworth and Whitnash Nursery School, all staff understand and embrace their shared responsibility in maintaining safe eating practices. Senior Leaders play a crucial role in overseeing the implementation of this policy, ensuring staff are appropriately trained and that compliance is maintained across the setting.

Within our setting each Key Person is accountable for checking the safety of food provided to the children in their care, ensuring individual dietary needs are met. These needs may include allergies (e.g., nut, dairy), intolerances (e.g., gluten, lactose), cultural or religious requirements (e.g., halal, vegetarian) and medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, coeliac disease).

All staff are expected to be fully aware of children's dietary requirements and are be trained in allergy awareness and food safety procedures, fostering a culture of vigilance and care during all mealtimes.

Pre-Admission Procedures

We prioritise children's health and wellbeing by gathering detailed information from parents and carers before a child joins us, most commonly during the home visit and induction process. This includes any special dietary requirements, food preferences, allergies, intolerances and health needs. This information is shared with all relevant staff involved in food preparation and handling to ensure every child's needs are met safely and consistently. During every mealtime and snack time, a designated member of staff is responsible for checking that each child's food aligns with their individual requirements.

We maintain ongoing communication with families and where appropriate, health professionals to develop and regularly update allergy action plans. These plans are shared with all staff, who are trained to recognise the symptoms of allergies and anaphylaxis, understand the difference between allergies and intolerances and remain aware that new allergies can develop. We follow guidance from the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) BSACI Allergy Action Plan and refer to trusted NHS resources such as Food Allergy – NHS and Anaphylaxis – NHS to ensure our practice is safe, informed, and up to date.

Mealtime protocols

We ensure that a member of staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate is always present in the room while children are eating.

Children are always kept within sight and hearing of staff, as we understand that choking can be silent and requires constant vigilance. Staff are encouraged to sit facing the children during meals to monitor their eating habits, prevent food sharing, and quickly identify any signs of choking or unexpected allergic reactions.

In Kenilworth's Blueprints room, we prioritise children's safety by seating babies and young children securely in highchairs or appropriately sized low chairs during mealtimes.

At both schools, we uphold stringent hygiene measures during mealtimes by ensuring children thoroughly wash their hands before eating, table surfaces and seating (including highchairs) are cleaned appropriately, and all equipment used is sanitised and ready for use. We aim to provide a calm, designated eating space with minimal distractions to support a safe and positive mealtime experience.

Food Preparation and Hygiene

We ensure that our snack preparation areas are fully equipped to provide healthy snacks and drinks that meet the needs of all children in our care. We maintain suitable, hygienic facilities for food preparation.

All staff involved in preparing or handling food receive up-to-date training in food hygiene and are assessed as competent before taking on these responsibilities. Our team regularly refreshes their training and knowledge to ensure we continue to meet the highest standards of safety and care.

All food served to children is prepared with choking prevention in mind, and we refer to the Food Standards Agency's visual resources: how to prepare food safely to avoid choking and the latest guidance from the government's Food safety – Help for early years providers. This guidance helps staff understand

which foods and drinks should be avoided, how to safely prepare food for different age groups, and where to find additional resources to support best practice in food safety.

Nutrition Standards

We are committed to providing children with healthy, balanced and nutritious snacks. Fresh drinking water is always available and easily accessible to children, encouraging independence and healthy habits. All staff involved in food provision receive training in food hygiene and nutrition, ensuring they understand how to support children's health and wellbeing through safe and appropriate food choices. We regularly review our food practices to ensure they reflect current guidance and best practice**.**

Managing Choking Incidents

The safety and wellbeing of our children is our highest priority. In the event of a choking incident that requires staff intervention, we ensure that a detailed record is made (see appendix 1), including a description of the incident occurred, immediate actions taken, child's condition after the incident and follow up actions. Parents and/or carers are informed promptly and sensitively and the parent/ carer response is also recorded on the form.

These records are reviewed regularly by the leadership team to identify any patterns or recurring factors that may indicate a need for changes in practice or additional staff training.

Where concerns are identified, appropriate action is taken to reduce the risk of future incidents and to strengthen our approach to food safety and supervision during mealtimes.

Managing Allergies and Intolerances

At Kenilworth and Whitnash Nursery Schools, we take the management of allergies extremely seriously. Allergy Action Plans are created for all children with known allergies and are regularly reviewed and updated in partnership with parents and relevant health professionals (see Allergy Policy)

All staff receive training to recognise the signs of allergic reactions and anaphylaxis and are confident in responding swiftly and appropriately. If a food intolerance is suspected, we work closely with families to monitor symptoms and keep a food diary to support further investigation.

At Kenilworth and Whitnash Nursery Schools, lunchtime staff are responsible for checking that each child's food is safe and suitable, based on their individual dietary needs.

We actively prevent food swapping between children to reduce the risk of cross-contamination or accidental exposure. Any incidents, including allergic reactions or near misses, are thoroughly recorded and reviewed to identify any patterns or areas for improvement, ensuring we continue to provide a safe and inclusive environment for every child.

To ensure the safety of all children, we follow clear procedures, including:

- Making sure all staff are aware of each child's allergies and dietary requirements.
- Clearly labelling all foods with ingredients.
- Storing allergen-containing foods separately.
- Preventing cross-contamination through handwashing and labelled items (e.g. cups for children with milk allergies).

- Using separate preparation areas for allergen-free snack where needed.
- Having clear rules about food brought in by visitors.
- If a food intolerance is suspected, we work closely with families to monitor symptoms and keep a food diary to support further understanding and care planning.
- Ensuring all tables, highchairs and seating used for mealtimes are cleaned thoroughly before and after use.

Children with additional support needs and other special diets

We are committed to meeting the individual dietary needs of all children, including those with additional support needs or special diets. We recognise that some children may require food to be prepared in a specific way due to medical, developmental, or sensory needs and may need one-to-one support during mealtimes. We also consider sensory sensitivities, such as aversions to certain textures or smells, when planning a calm and supportive eating environment.

If a child has a medically prescribed diet, we request written confirmation from a health professional. We work closely with parents, carers, dietitians, and specialist teachers within IDS to ensure we have clear, up-to-date information about suitable foods, exclusions, any supplements, and special measures required. This information is shared with all relevant staff to ensure safe and consistent care.

Food from Home

We recognise that families provide food from home. We work in close partnership with parents and carers to ensure that any food brought in is both safe and appropriate for each child.

To support this, we have a clear food and nutrition guidance in place, which we share with families to help them understand our commitment to promoting healthy, balanced, and nutritious food choices. This guidance also helps parents make informed decisions when preparing packed lunches. We encourage all home-provided food to reflect the healthy options we offer within the setting, so that children receive consistent messages about nutrition and develop positive eating habits.

To maintain safety, all food brought from home is carefully checked for potential allergens to reduce the risk of cross-contamination. We also ensure that all food served is prepared in a way that minimises the risk of choking, following guidance from the Food Standards Agency.

We work closely with parents and carers to share best practices for packing lunches and sending food from home. This includes tips on keeping food fresh and safe throughout the day.

We encourage families to:

- Choose foods that are suitable for their child's developmental stage and prepared in a way that reduces choking risks.
- Use insulated, sealed lunch bags for perishable items, and where ice packs are not available, follow the '4-hour rule'—allowing food to be kept out of refrigeration for up to 4 hours, but only once.
- Clearly label lunch bags with the child's name and list the contents.
- Pack foods that can be safely stored at room temperature if refrigeration is not available.

While we are not required to refrigerate or reheat food brought from home, we do follow the latest

guidance from the Food Standards Agency to support safe food handling. This includes advice on managing risks such as Listeria and using food safety procedures designed for small settings like ours.

Celebrations and Special Events

We know that birthdays and special occasions are important milestones for children and their families. Many families enjoy marking these moments by bringing in cakes or sweets to share.

While we appreciate the joy these celebrations bring, we also want to ensure that children continue to receive consistent messages about healthy eating. To support this, our food and nutrition policy includes gentle guidance for families around celebration foods. We encourage healthier alternatives such as fruit platters or fun, non-food treats like bubbles, stickers, or story time choices.

Any food brought into share is carefully checked for allergens to keep all children safe. We value open and ongoing communication with our families and work in partnership to create a positive and inclusive approach to celebrations that supports each child's wellbeing and reflects our shared commitment to healthy, happy experiences.

Food poisoning

We take our duty to safeguard children's health seriously. In the event of a food poisoning incident affecting two or more children in our care, we are required to notify Ofsted as soon as reasonably practicable and always within 14 days of the incident. We ensure that all relevant staff are aware of this responsibility and that clear procedures are in place to support timely and accurate reporting.

Monitoring and Review

We are committed to maintaining high standards in food safety and nutrition. To support this, we carry out regular audits of our food practices to ensure they remain safe, healthy, and in line with current guidance.

Allergy action plans and incident logs are reviewed each term to help us identify any patterns and make improvements where needed. Staff training in food hygiene and allergy awareness is refreshed annually, or sooner if required to keep everyone confident and up to date.

We also value the voices of our families and children, and we actively seek their feedback to help shape our approach and ensure mealtimes are safe, inclusive, and enjoyable for all.

Staff training

We ensure all staff are fully equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to keep children safe and healthy. This includes completing mandatory training in Paediatric First Aid, Food Hygiene (Level 2 or above), Allergy Awareness, and Nutrition and Menu Planning.

New team members receive thorough induction training, which includes our safer eating protocols, so they feel confident in supporting children's dietary needs from day one. Ongoing training and refreshers are provided to keep everyone up to date with best practice and current guidance.

Appendix 1





Food Standards Agency
food.gov.uk

Early years choking hazards food safety advice

For babies and young children, food can be a choking hazard, especially when they do not chew their food well or they try to swallow it whole.

Choking can happen with any foods, but 'firm foods', bones and small round foods that can easily get stuck in the throat present a higher risk. Therefore, care givers should follow these five essential steps:

1. Make sure food is **suitably prepared and served** for babies and children under 5 years old. For suitable foods, see https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/ Introduce babies to solid foods from around 6 months of age.
2. **Think about size, shape and texture of food**. Cut food into narrow batons, avoid round shapes and firm foods. Firm fruit & vegetables can be softened by cooking.
3. Ensure that babies and young children are **alert and seated safely upright** in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair whilst eating.
4. **Babies and young children should be supervised at all times** while eating. You will be able to identify the early signs of choking and prevent harm.
5. **Encourage babies and young children to chew food well.** Teach children how to chew and swallow food properly, and ensure they take their time during meals. This will reduce their risk of choking.

Care givers and parents should be familiar with how to respond to a choking incident in line with guidance on first aid for children:

How to stop a child from choking: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/

How to resuscitate a child: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/

https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2021/09/Early-Years-Choking-Hazards-Poster_FINAL-21-Sept-2021.pdf

Appendix 2

Early years food choking hazards

Food Standards Agency
food.gov.uk

Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

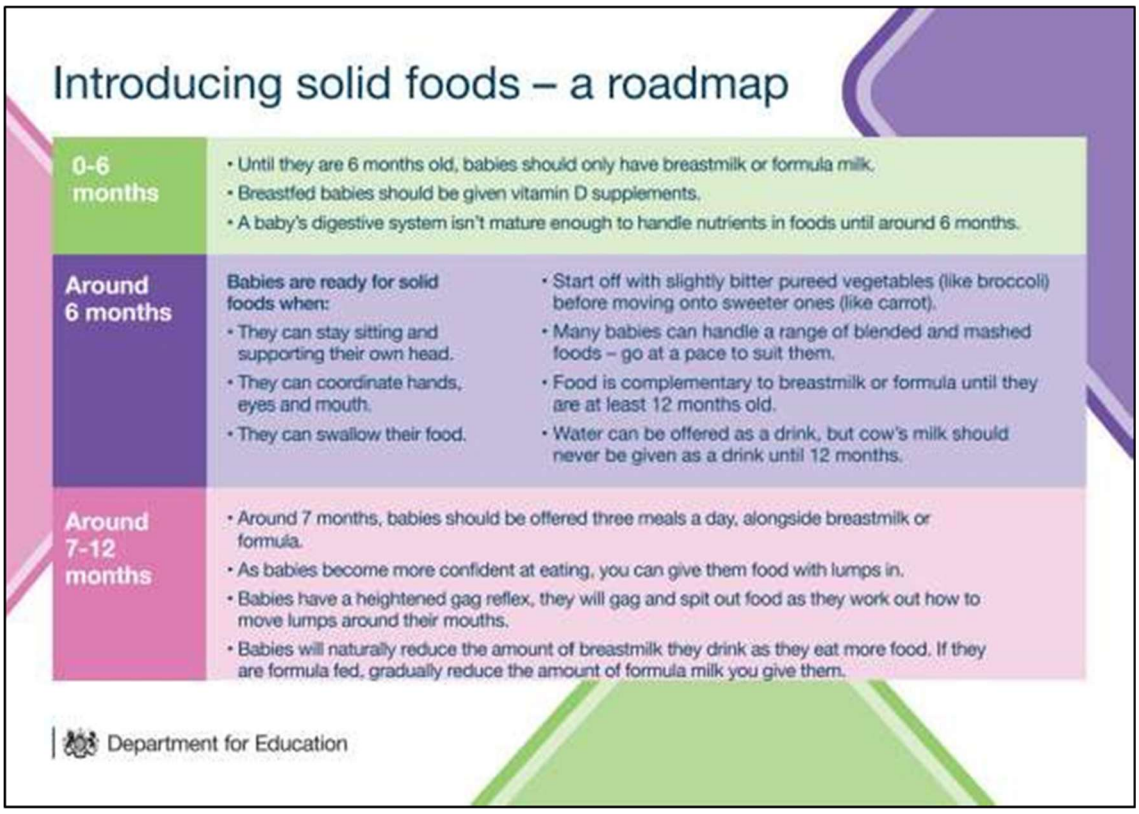
Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	**Advice**
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Cheese	**Advice**
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
Nuts and seeds	**Advice**
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
Bread	**Advice**
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Snacks and other foods	**Advice**
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/

It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/

and How to resuscitate a child: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/

Appendix 3





https://assets.ctfassets.net/dvmeh832nmjc/MuuWPvuZgkl3sPAwbnodW/b597f2654c4fdd22efaeb10f0df26b95/introducing_solid_foods.pdf