

Parkside Playgroup

27. Food and Drink Policy Statement

Our setting is a suitable, clean, and safe place for children to be cared for, where they can grow and learn. We meet all statutory requirements for food safety and fulfil the criteria for meeting the relevant Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding and Welfare requirements.

We regard snack and mealtimes as an important part of our day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. We promote healthy eating at snack and mealtimes. We aim to encourage parents/carers to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs.

We recognise that we have a corporate responsibility and duty of care for those who work in and receive a service from our provision, but individual employees and service users also have responsibility for ensuring their own safety as well as that of others. Risk assessment is the key means through which this is achieved.

Procedures

We follow these procedures to promote healthy eating in our setting.

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we ask their parents about their dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies. (See the Managing Children who are Sick, Infectious or with Allergies Policy.)
- We take guidance from the food standard agency with regard to our responsibilities around allergens
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in the Registration Form and parents sign the form to signify that it is correct.
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs – including any allergies - are up to date. Parents sign the updated record to signify that it is correct.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all our staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.
- We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences, as well as their parents' wishes.
- We ask parents/carers to provide nutritious food for all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.
- We take care not to allow food containing nuts or nut products to be brought into the setting and we are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.
- Through discussion with parents and research reading, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, as well as about food allergies. We take account of this information when children are consuming their food and drinks.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and adults participate. This is also an invaluable time to introduce and build knowledge and understanding of the names and types of food that keep us healthy, where food comes from, new foods and new vocabulary.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.

- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. The children have their own named water bottles and we inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for more water at any time during the day.
- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in our setting.
- We give parents who provide food for their children information about suitable containers for food.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- For children who drink milk, we provide semi-skimmed milk.

Packed lunches

Where children have packed lunches, staff promote healthy eating, ensuring that parents are given advice and information about what is appropriate content for a child's lunch box. Parents are also advised to take measures to ensure children's lunch box contents remain cool i.e. ice packs, as the setting may not have facilities for refrigerated storage.

For children who bring their own food, we encourage them to bring low sugar foods which meet the oral health guidelines, see:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Nutrition%20Matters%20for%20the%20early%20years%2000118.pdf> or

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658870/Early_years_menus_part_1_guidance.pdf

Where we cannot provide cooked meals and children are required to bring packed lunches, we:

- ensure perishable contents of packed lunches are refrigerated or contain an ice pack to keep food cool;
- inform parents of our policy on healthy eating;
- inform parents of whether we have facilities to microwave cooked food brought from home;
- encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk based deserts, such as low sugar yoghurt or crème fraîche, where we can only provide cold food from home. We discourage sweet drinks and can provide children with water or milk;
- encourage parents to consider the risk of choking in the foods provided in lunch boxes. We check lunchboxes and ensure risky foods are cut up or removed to minimise this risk.
- discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent as a last resort and charge for a healthy meal to be provided;
- provide children bringing packed lunches with plates, cups and cutlery; and
- ensure that adults sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.

Choking resources

How we reduce the risk of choking

- Food preparation:
 - we remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving
 - we cut small round foods, like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, lengthways and into quarters
 - cut large fruits like melon, and hard fruit or vegetables like raw apple and carrot into slices instead of small chunks
 - do not give whole seeds to children under five years old

- do not give popcorn as a snack
- do not give children marshmallows or jelly cubes from a packet either to eat or as part of messy play activities
- do not give children hard sweets

Supervision

Children are seated safely in an appropriately sized low chair while eating with an adult seated within close proximity. Children are never left alone while they are eating, and staff are familiar with paediatric first aid advice for children who are choking.

Legal references

- Regulation (EC) 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the hygiene of foodstuffs.
- Food Information Regulations 2014
- The Childcare Act 2006

Further guidance

Safer Food Better Business for Caterers (Food Standards Agency)

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-for-caterers>

[Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

[Food safety advice for children age 5 and under](#)

[Food and drinks to avoid](#)

[Safe weaning](#)

[How to prepare infant formula bottles](#)

[Allergies](#)

[Hygiene](#)

[Early Years choking hazards poster \(foundationyears.org.uk\)](#)

[Early Years choking hazards table \(foundationyears.org.uk\)](#)

[Child Accident Prevention Trust - choking avoidance poster](#)

[Choking hazards in the home and how to avoid them \(rospa.com\)](#)

This policy was adopted at a meeting of	Parkside Playgroup
Held on	Sept 2024
Date to be reviewed	Sept 2025
Signed on behalf of the provider	
Name of signatory	Brenda Henrick
Role of signatory	Chairperson