

# Mealtime & Dietary Policy



## Policy

Mealtimes are an important part of the nursery day. Monkey Puzzle Day Nursery promotes healthy eating and is committed to offering children nutritionally balanced meals which meet individual needs and dietary requirements.

The term 'meals' within this policy is inclusive of all food, drinks, formula and bottles provided to the child.

As an early years provision we value children's learning and development across all aspects of the curriculum and learning about food ignites interests and development within many areas such as Health and Self-care and physical development. At Monkey Puzzle we feel that it is essential that good nutrition and learning opportunities around food is embedded in all aspects of food provision and learning over the day and there is consistency in approach across the whole day.

## Procedure

- For children aged under two years feeding routines will be recorded including any weaning menus.
- All Staff and children must wash their hands before every mealtime.
- Staff must ensure that understand the content of meals through the use of the *dietary sign off form* and effective communication with the kitchen staff.
- Appropriate dietary place cards must be used and displayed prior to food being served.
- Mealtimes will reflect social dining and therefore should be utilised to promote social experiences.
- Practitioners must be seated at an allocated table during mealtimes.
- Staff must be deployed effectively to ensure that children are supervised at all times to minimise risk of harm (i.e., risk of choking, allergy management). Children must always be within sight and sound during mealtimes.
- Wherever possible children should be encouraged to self-serve with appropriate utensils.
- Children must be provided with fresh drinking water during every mealtime.
- Children over two must be provided with all cutlery (Fork, knife & spoon) during mealtimes to enhance independent feeding. Children under two must be provided with appropriate cutlery dependent on the stage of development.
- Setting must risk assess which appropriate PPE should be worn at mealtimes.
- Children will be given time to eat at their own pace and not rushed.
- All staff that prepare and handle food (including serving) are competent to do so and receive training in food hygiene.
- All staff supporting mealtimes must be aware of the children's dietary requirements and care plan information.
- On occasions where children refuse to eat the main menu a fruit alternative will be offered. If a child refuses to eat any food throughout the day staff will liaise with parents for the best course of action.

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- Child specific meals catering for dietary requirements will be labelled with the child's name, dietary requirement and the alternative provided.
- When staff are serving and cutting children's food appropriate risk assessments must be made to ensure that all food which is served is age and stage appropriate. *Please refer to Maintaining Food Standards Policy*

## Safer eating

- Babies and young children should be seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair while eating. Where possible there should be a designated eating space where distractions are minimised.
- Children must always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff whilst eating. Choking can be completely silent, therefore, it is important for providers to be alert to when a child may be starting to choke. Where possible, providers should sit facing children whilst they eat, so they can make sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking and so they can prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.
- When a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, providers should record details of where and how the child choked and ensure parents and/or carers are made aware. The records should be reviewed periodically to identify if there are trends or common features of incidents that could be addressed to reduce the risk of choking. Appropriate action should be taken to address any identified concerns. (*EYFS September 2025*)

## Drinks

- Fresh drinking water will available and accessible at all times.

## Dietary Requirements

- Individual dietary requirements will be respected. We will gather information from parents regarding their children's dietary needs including any special dietary requirements, preferences and food allergies that a child has and any special health requirements before a child is admitted to the nursery. Such information is recorded in the child's registration records which parents will sign to confirm that it is correct. Where appropriate we will carry out a risk assessment in the case of allergies and work alongside parents to put into place an individual care plan for their child.
- Daily a dietary requirements form must be completed.
- We provide alternatives for specific dietary requirements and medical needs.
- A list of all children's dietary requirements will be displayed in the kitchen and available in all children's rooms.
- Care plans must be always accessible.

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- All children will be provided with place mats detailing the child's name and details of their allergy and specific actions to follow (emergency procedures, administering allergy management medication).
- The nursery must operate using a traffic light system
- Red coding will be used for food allergy and intolerances an allergy can be a life threatening reaction. A intolerance could make the child feel ill or affect their long-term health. If parents suspect either of these conditions, they should have it confirmed by a medical practitioner detail of which must be provided to the nursery.
- Yellow coding will be used for dietary preferences. Some religions have specific dietary requirements that do not allow certain foods to be consumed. If it is agreed that we can meet the children's needs within the nursery, then it is our duty to ensure that we do not compromise the family's culture or beliefs. We will also include any children who are vegetarians and vegans in this category along with other parental preferences.
- Green coding will be used for children who have no dietary restrictions.

Red is allocated to children with allergies or Intolerances
Yellow- Specific diets or religious preferences (I.e. Vegan)
Green indicates no restrictions in a child's dietary needs

## Responsibility for checking

Once the food is prepared the chef must sign off the daily dietary form. Then the manager, deputy manager or appointed senior member of the team will check the food and sign it off as 'supervisor'. Next a suitably trained member of staff within the room must check the food and sign off for the final time. This is to further enhance the steps of the procedure. Once a child with an allergy has been served their food, they must continue to be supervised throughout the mealtime by a suitably qualified member of staff.

## Dietary Errors/Reactions

If a child has a reaction or requires any treatment to prevent or treat an allergic reaction then this MUST be given by a trained first aider or person trained to administer the medication.

**In an emergency always call the ambulance before the parents. The care plan must be followed.**

## Food from outside

We discourage food to be brought into nursery from home. We need to be able to trace all food to point of source and be fully aware of all of the ingredients in our foods. Staff are not permitted to bring any of their own food into the rooms.

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## Further guidance

- Safer Food Better Business (Food Standards Agency)  
<https://food.gov.uk/business-guidance/safer-food-better-business-sfbb>

## Linked Policies

Bottle Feeding Policy

Maintaining Food Standards Policy

Managing Covid-19 Policy