Packed Lunch and Meals Policy

Policy Statement:

The aim of the policy is to ensure that all food and drinks brought from home, consumed at nursery provide children with healthy and nutritious food. All food served in the nursery is governed by legislation. This policy helps promote healthy eating, prevent choking and ensure food remains safe to eat throughout the day.
We strictly regulate packed lunches to protect individuals with severe allergies and prevent exposure. Your cooperation ensures a safe environment for everyone.

General Rules

- Packed lunches must be provided in a named insulated lunch bag with an ice pack to keep food at a safe temperature.
- As we do not have refrigeration facilities for packed lunches, parents should avoid high-risk perishable foods unless properly packed.
- Any leftover food will be sent home at the end of the day so parents can monitor what has been eaten.
- If your child is attending 8am-6pm, and you are dropping your child off between 8am-9am, **tea MUST be brought in at 3pm, so it is not stored out of the fridge all day.**

Special diets and allergies

We operate a strict NO-NUT policy to protect children with severe allergies. Parents must check labels and packaging carefully before packing lunch items

• At The Orchard Nursery we recognise that some pupils may require special diets for medical, ethical or religious reasons that do not allow for standards to be met exactly. For example, a diabetic child may need to bring an emergency sweet snack to nursery. In these cases, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring the food from home is specific for the child's needs and a plan will be put in place to support this.
• We do not allow the swapping of food items between children as there is potential for an adverse reaction (e.g., Nut allergy)

Healthy Eating Guidelines

To support healthy eating habits, parents must include:

✅ A healthy main item, such as a sandwich, wrap, pitta bread or pasta salad.

✅ A Meat, fish option or other source of non-dairy protein (e.g., chicken, turkey, ham, beef, pork, tuna)

✅ A portion of fruit and/or vegetables (e.g., sliced cucumber, cherry tomatoes, apple slices).

✅ A dairy item, such as yogurt, fromage frais or cheese. A spoon from home should be provided for yogurts.

✅ A healthy snack, such as rice cakes or breadsticks.

The following items are not allowed due to health and safety reasons:

❌ Nuts or nut-based products (to protect children with allergies).

❌ Sweets, chocolate bars, fizzy drinks, or energy drinks. sweets (alternatives include small cakes, shortbreads and flapjack or plain biscuits)

❌ Snacks such as crisps (alternatives include savoury crackers, breadsticks, rice cakes)

❌ Highly perishable foods (e.g., fresh cream, seafood, or items that spoil quickly without refrigeration).

❌ No Sweet fillings in sandwiches etc

❌ No raisins as a snack to children under 12 months – although these can be chopped up as part of a meal

❌ No Egg

❌ No Popcorn of any kind, marshmallows, jelly cubes or chewing gum (due to choking)

❌ Lunch Boxes should not regularly include items that are high in fat or salt. For example: cooked sausages, sausage rolls, chipolatas, corned meat, individual meat pies.

❌ The remains of the previous day's take-away or left-over meals

❌ Any food items that require heating up

❌ Drink of any kind in a carton or bottle. Nursery will provide milk or water.

Food Safety & Storage

PLEASE ENSURE THAT FOOD IS CUT UP CORRECTLY E.G. GRAPES, BLUEBERRIES, STRAWBERRIES AND CHERRY TOMATOES SHOULD BE CUT INTO HALVES, LENGTH WAYS OR QUARTERS.

- Lunches will be stored in a designated area, out of direct sunlight, but not in a fridge.
- Ice packs are required to keep foods safe.
- Staff will monitor packed lunches to ensure food safety and may contact parents if concerns arise.

Parents who are providing packed meals for their children MUST provide the meals or snacks in separate containers for each snack/meal for the day.

1) Breakfast – Cereal only (No chocolate of any kind) Milk will be provided by the nursery.
2) Mid-morning snack – Fruit only. If grapes are provided these must be already cut up.
3) Lunch – Must be in an insulated lunch box with an ice pack.
4) Tea – A starchy food, such as bread, pitta, wrap. One portion of fruit or vegetable. If your child is attending 8am-6pm, and you are dropping your child off between 8am-9am, **tea MUST be brought in at 3pm, so it is not stored out of the fridge all day.**

Each item above MUST be provided in separate containers, and MUST be clearly labelled with the child's name on. It MUST also state which meal it is for. It MUST also be placed in an insulated bag with a freezer block.



Monitoring

- To promote healthy eating, nursery staff will regularly monitor the content of packed lunches.
- Parents and carers who do not adhere to the packed lunch policy will receive a leaflet in their child's packed lunch box informing them of the policy.
- If a child regularly brings in packed lunches that do not conform to this policy, the nursery will contact the parents/carers to discuss this, and will be asked to provide an alternative.
- If an ice pack is missing and food is deemed unsafe, staff may request a replacement meal or discuss alternative arrangements.
- If your child is attending 8am-6pm, tea MUST be brought in at 3pm.
- If a child arrives at nursery without packed meals for their session, we will contact the parent and ask for the meals to be brought in. If the parent is unable, we will provide nursery meals/snacks for the day and a charge will be added to their invoice. This must be paid immediately.

Further guidance

https://www.nhs.uk/change4life

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/

Signed on behalf of the nursery.....Emma Middleton.....Date:… August 2026 …….