



Food, Nutrition & Safer Eating Policy

In line with the EYFS Nutrition Guidance – April 2025

At Willow Childcare we are committed to promoting healthy eating habits and ensuring that all children receive a nutritious and balanced meal while in our care whilst also ensuring that healthy eating is part of our curriculum. In accordance with the updated Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) nutrition guidance released in April 2025, we ask parents and carers to provide a healthy packed lunch.

We develop our policy in partnership with children and give children choices wherever possible, such as at snack time. Preschool staff recently completed a Fussy Eating course which was then discussed as a group at a team meeting to help us evaluate meal times. Following this training we ensure lunchtimes are a calm and positive part of our day. While we never pressure children to eat, we gently encourage them to try a range of foods and celebrate healthy choices.

What We Provide

Packed Lunch Expectations

We will check all packed lunches at the start of lunchtime. We kindly ask that packed lunches include:

- **A portion of starchy food** (e.g. bread, pasta, rice, or wraps).
- **At least one portion of fruit or vegetables.**
- **A source of protein** (e.g. meat, eggs, beans, lentils, or fish).
- **A dairy item** (e.g. cheese, yoghurt or a suitable alternative).

We ask that the following items are avoided:

- Confectionery such as sweets, chocolate bars or cakes.
- Sugary fizzy drinks or high-sugar squash – water is the best drink for children with food.
- Foods high in salt or saturated fat (e.g. crisps, sausage rolls) should be limited.
- Marshmallows, popcorn, boiled sweets and jelly cubes (all of which are choking hazards).

Food Safety and Storage

Please note that we **do not have the facilities to reheat or refrigerate food**. To keep packed lunches safe and fresh:

- Use an **insulated lunch bag or box**, clearly labelled with your child's name.
- Include **ice packs** to keep perishable items cool.
- If sending a warm meal, please use a **child-friendly food flask** designed to retain heat.

Allergies and Dietary Needs

To ensure the safety of all children:

- Please do not include any food items containing **nuts**, as we are a **nut-free setting**.
- Inform us of any **dietary needs or allergies** your child has (this information is requested on a child's registration form however we must be notified of any changes to your child's dietary needs or allergies. This also includes cultural preferences.
- You will be asked to complete an allergen/intolerance questionnaire if your child has an allergen or intolerance



Food, Nutrition & Safer Eating Policy

Mealtimes

Mealtimes are a calm and social part of our day. We are a packed lunch setting and this in itself can introduce children to a new range of foods that they see other children and staff are enjoying. Staff sit with children during lunchtime to model eating, behaviour and to support with opening containers etc. We provide gentle encouragement for children to try new foods in a pressure-free way. Staff supervising mealtimes have all completed 12 hour paediatric first aid training.

Celebrations

As a setting we value children's birthdays and hold birthday parties to celebrate these special occasions. Families are welcome to bring in a birthday cake or to celebrate by bringing in a non-edible option such as bubbles or stickers. If you do choose to bring in a cake or sweet treat – we ask that you double check dietary requirements with us before providing any cakes or sweet treats.

If we are celebrating a child's birthday with a sweet treat, we will ensure that we do not plan any sweet baking activities during the same week.

Cooking and learning about Food

Cooking and learning about food is a key part of our curriculum. We teach children about both healthy and fatty foods and encourage them to make good choices.

We grow healthy fruit and vegetables at an allotment at Edwalton School and in our own garden. We also make our own compost from fruit peelings teaching children about sustainability.

When cooking with children we make sure we are cooking with a range of different foods and will not cook sweet treats during the same week as a sweet treat has been brought in by a parent.

Food safety and Hygiene

We ensure that all staff complete food hygiene and allergy training and are made aware of children's individual dietary needs which are also recorded on both the register and in the kitchen. All epi pens are clearly labelled and stored in the medication cabinet – we take them with us during outdoor play.

Sustainability

We grow our own fruit and vegetables and use this for both snacks and for learning about different fruit and vegetables. We also make our own compost using fruit peelings.



Food, Nutrition & Safer Eating Policy

Safer Eating at Preschool & Kids Club

We help children enjoy food in a safe, relaxed environment, supporting their independence at a level appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Our Responsibilities:

1. To Keep Children Safe While Eating

Preschool (Younger Children):

- Children are **closely supervised at all times**, with staff sitting with them during meals.
- Children are encouraged to **sit calmly, take small bites, and chew carefully**.
- Staff provide regular reminders and support throughout mealtimes.

Kids Club (Older Children):

- Children are still **supervised at all times**, but encouraged to take more responsibility.
- Children are expected to **sit while eating and follow safe eating rules independently**.
- Staff continue to monitor and remind children where needed.

All Children:

- No child is allowed to **walk, run, play, or lie down while eating**.

2. To Prepare Food Safely

All staff preparing, serving and supervising meal times have Food Hygiene Training.

To reduce the risk of choking:

Snacks are **prepared by staff** to ensure safety.

- Grapes, cherry tomatoes etc. are **cut into quarters lengthways**.
- Hard foods are **cut, grated, or cooked appropriately**.

Packed Lunches from home:

- Children bring packed lunches, but must still follow safer eating guidance.
- Staff will **intervene if food is not prepared safely** (e.g. whole grapes).

We do not allow high-risk foods such as whole nuts, popcorn, or hard sweets in any part of the setting. Hot drinks are **never accessible to children**.

3. To Support Independence

- Children are encouraged to **feed themselves and use cutlery**.
- Preschool staff provide **hands-on support**.
- Kids club children are encouraged to be **more independent**, with staff guidance as needed.
- Ensuring Fresh water is **always available** and making sure children use **age-appropriate cups or bottles**.



Food, Nutrition & Safer Eating Policy

4. To Support and Accommodate Children with Allergies & Dietary Needs

- All allergies and dietary needs are **clearly recorded and shared with staff**.
- Food is always checked to ensure it is **safe for each child**.

In Case of Emergencies

- Staff are trained in **paediatric first aid**, including choking response.
- A qualified first aider is **always present**.

Families can support us by:

- Preparing food safely (e.g. **cutting grapes lengthways**).
- Avoiding **high-risk foods**.
- Informing us of any **allergies or dietary needs**.

By working together, we can ensure all children eat safely while building confidence and independence as they grow.



Healthy Lunches at Preschool and Kid's Club

Please include:



- A starchy food (bread, pasta, rice, wraps)
 - Fruit or veg
 - Protein (meat, eggs, beans, fish)
- A dairy item (cheese, yoghurt, or alternative)



Please avoid:



- Sweets, chocolate bars & cakes
- Fizzy or high-sugar drinks (water is best)
- Crisps & pastry snacks (limit these)
- Marshmallows, popcorn, boiled sweets, jelly cubes (choking hazards)



Important: We cannot reheat food. If you'd like your child to have a warm meal, it must come in a *child-safe, heat-conserving food flask*.



No Nuts: We are a completely *nut-free* setting. This includes peanuts, peanut butter, chocolate spreads containing nuts, and any other nut products.

