

At Early Days Nursery School Ltd, we are required to positively promote the health and wellbeing of children. The content of food brought in from home needs to reflect the OFSTED and HSE requirements that nurseries need to meet minimum food and nutrition standards for children's meals.

Good nutrition in childhood can help to prevent a variety of health problems, both in the short-term and in later life. There is increasing concern that children are consuming too much fat, sugar and salt and too little fibre, fruit and vegetables. Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly food intake and therefore, need to be balanced and nutritious. Nurseries are required to encourage healthy eating habits from an early age and improve the overall nutrition of children. The short-term effects of unhealthy packed lunches and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration and behavioural problems which may have an impact on a child's learning. The longer-term effects of a poor diet in childhood can be an increased risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease and diabetes in adulthood.

Food Groups to be reflected in your child's packed lunch/snacks

Children's packed lunches should include items from the five main food groups:

- Bread, potatoes and pasta: these starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Packed lunches should include two or more portions of this food type (for example: pasta salad or sandwiches).
- Fruits and vegetables: these foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Packed lunches should include at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables/salad, or more, for example carrot or cucumber sticks, cherry tomatoes, a piece of fruit.
- Milk and dairy foods: these foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Include one portion at lunch, for example a yoghurt, fromage frais or milk.
- Meat, fish, and beans: these foods provide protein for growth. Packed lunches should include one portion of these foods.
- Drinks: Drinks need not be provided as part of your child's packed lunch. The nursery will provide your child with fresh water or milk.

Sweets, chocolate, cereal bars, toffee/salted popcorn, squash, and fizzy drinks will not provide your child with a healthy diet and should not be included in a packed lunch or snack, as well as other foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar. We reserve the right to return uneaten items such as this in lunch boxes.

Packed Lunch/Snack Containers:

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to provide packed lunch and snack containers where food items can be stored securely and appropriately until the lunchtime period and snack times. All packed lunch containers and containers included within the lunch pack must

be named/labelled. Parents and carers are advised to include an ice pack. Food products prepared and stored in ambient temperatures can have increased levels of bacteria in them, after a period of time. For health and safety reasons, the nursery does not heat or reheat any food items brought in from home. We advise parents to clean and disinfect their child's lunch/snack containers after each use.

Storage of Packed Lunches/Snacks/Tea at Early Days:

Early Days has limited space to store packed lunch boxes and bags, so these will be stored in the most convenient and appropriate place possible. In accordance with the Food Standards Agency guidelines, foods cannot be consumed that have been outside a refrigerator for more than four hours, so we ask that all items sent for afternoon snack do not need refrigeration.

In addition, due to the lack of refrigeration and based on FSA guidelines, cooked rice should not be stored at room temperature for more than two hours. Leaving cooked rice out for longer than this can lead to bacterial growth and potential food poisoning and therefore, this cannot be included in either packed lunches or snacks. Similarly, cooked meats should not be outside of refrigeration for more than two hours so sandwiches should not contain ham, corned beef, cold turkey, cold chicken, etc.

Waste and Disposal

Early Days will, within reason, send any uneaten packed lunch and snack items back home. The rationale for this is that parents and carers can then monitor what their child has consumed during the day and then raise any concerns over their child's food intake with us. Additionally, Early Days will not clean and wash storage containers, cutlery, etc that is sent in from home.

Choking Hazards for Children

Please do not provide any of the following in your child's packed lunch or snacks (we will endeavour to remove these items from packed lunches when we see them to prevent possible incidents of choking):

- Whole grapes (these should be quartered if sent in a packed lunch or as a snack)
- Whole cocktail sausages or large sausages cut into circular shapes (these should be cut into longer baton shapes)
- Hot dog sausages
- Marshmallows
- Whole cherry tomatoes (these should be quartered if sent into nursery)
- Pieces of hard raw vegetables such as carrots or apples (these should be cut into longer baton shapes)
- Whole melon balls (these should be quartered if sent into nursery)
- Any food that is overly sticky or difficult to chew
- Popcorn

Allergy Management in Food Brought in from Home

At Early Days Nursery, the safety and wellbeing of all children is our highest priority. As part of our duty of care, we operate a strict food allergy management policy to protect children who are at risk of severe or life-threatening allergic reactions (anaphylaxis).

Many allergies can be triggered by even trace amounts of allergens through contact, ingestion, or airborne exposure. As such, we require full cooperation from all parents and carers in following the food safety guidelines set out below when bringing in food from home.

Failure to follow this aspect of our policy may place children at serious risk and could result in a formal safeguarding concern.

Prohibited Food Items

The following food items **must not be brought into the nursery under any circumstances**:

- **Nuts and tree nuts** (including peanuts, almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, pistachios, walnuts, etc.)
- **Nut-based spreads** (e.g. peanut butter, Nutella, almond butter, pesto)
- **Grated cheese** (this spreads and falls and we have a life threatening dairy allergy in the nursery)
- **Sesame seeds and sesame-based products** (e.g. hummus, tahini, seeded breads)
- **Egg-based dishes** (e.g. hard-boiled eggs, egg mayo, scotch eggs)
- **Shellfish and seafood**
- **Products containing raw or undercooked egg**
- **Food labelled “may contain nuts” or “made in a facility that handles nuts”**

Please note that this list may be updated based on the individual needs of children currently attending the setting.

Additional Guidelines

- The nursery will not heat or reheat any food brought in from home for health and safety reasons.
- Parents are advised to read ingredient labels thoroughly before sending any food into the setting.

Monitoring and evaluation

The nursery will carry out regular monitoring of packed lunch provision. Where there may be concerns over a child’s food and nutritional intake and/ or the content of their packed lunches, this will be dealt with timely and sensitively by contacting parents to offer advice.

Non-Compliance to Food Brought In from Home Policy

To ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of all children in our care, Early Days Nursery has established this policy outlining acceptable food items and requirements, particularly with regard to allergens, nutritional balance, and food safety.

We expect full cooperation from parents and carers in adhering to these guidelines. Failure to comply with the policy may result in the following actions:

1. Immediate removal of prohibited items

Any food item that poses a health or allergy risk, or that does not meet safety standards (e.g. contains nuts, grated cheese, cold meats or unlabelled allergens), will be removed and not served to the child. Parents will be notified.

2. Alternate lunch arrangements

If a child's lunch, tea or snack is found to be non-compliant, parents will be contacted and asked to bring in a suitable alternative as soon as possible. Where this is not feasible, and to ensure the child is not left without a meal, a nursery-prepared lunch will be provided by our in-house chef, and a charge will be added to the parent's account at the standard meal rate.

3. Written communication

Repeated non-compliance will result in a written reminder being issued to the parent or carer, outlining the specific concerns and referring to the agreed policy.

4. Meeting with Room Manager/Nursery Manager

If the issue persists, a formal meeting will be arranged to discuss the ongoing non-compliance and its implications for the child and others in the setting.

5. Escalation and safeguarding action

Continued disregard for the policy may be considered a breach of our safeguarding and health and safety standards. In serious or repeated cases—particularly where another child's wellbeing is put at risk—this may be escalated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or result in temporary suspension of the right to bring food into the setting.

We understand that mistakes can happen and are committed to working in partnership with families. However, repeated or deliberate non-compliance will be taken seriously in line with our duty of care to all children.

In line with requirements set by the nursery's insurance provider, risk assessments are in place for Food Brought in Home. Furthermore, our insurers have stipulated that children bringing their own packed lunches are required to sit separately from other children eating nursery prepared meals.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
3rd September 2026	 Gina Chamberlain	3 rd September 2027