

General Welfare Requirement: Safeguarding and Promoting Children's Welfare

The provider must promote the good health of the children, take necessary steps to prevent the spread of infection, and take appropriate action when they are ill.

Promoting health and hygiene

1.21 Food and Drink - Healthy Eating Policy

Policy statement for St Joseph's Pre-school

St Joseph's Pre-school regards snack and meal times as an important part of the Pre-school's day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. St Joseph's Pre-school is obligated, through the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, to promote children's health and well-being, by ensuring that any food and drink provided is healthy, balanced and nutritious¹. Within this framework there is a requirement that providers 'should' have regard to the EYFS nutrition guidance document². This means providers must take this guidance into account and should follow it unless there is good reason not to. St Joseph's Pre-school complies with this requirement.

In addition, St Joseph's Pre-school has a regulatory obligation to provide healthy, balanced and nutritious food to children and encourage healthier food choices for packed lunches. This policy assists us in this respect.

Work around healthy eating is a high priority. We promote healthy eating at snack and meal times. When we provide food we strive for this to be nutritious and endeavour to include a variety of different foods, tastes textures and colours, all of which meets the children's individual dietary needs. Thus encouraging healthy eating habits from an early age and to improve the overall nutrition of children. As well as making sure children get the benefits from different nutrients in each food. No nuts or nut products are used by the setting, and we ask that parents to not include such products in the snacks they provide for their child to avoid cross-contamination.

The child's Key Person will work alongside parents/carers to ensure children are provided with healthy, balanced and nutritious food, primarily at the setting but also at home. They play a central role in facilitating these conversations with parents/carers, helping to meet the dietary requirements of all children and supporting them in their development.

To promote healthy eating we notify parents our advice and guidance through emails and letters. We involve parents/carers in the decision we make around food provision. This enables us in our commitment to providing healthy balanced food, which in turn can influence eating habits at home. In addition, we also organise a Health week in July, where we focus on a different area of health every day, including eating healthily.

¹ Early Years Foundation Stage : Food and Drink

² Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance – guidance for group and school-based providers and childminders in England (May 2025)

All our early years staff hold a current paediatric first aid certificate. They are also aware of symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis, the differences between allergies and intolerances³ and that children can develop allergies at any time. Having completed Food Allergy Training, Early Years Version Level 2 (The Safer Food Group).

Procedures

We follow these procedures to promote healthy eating in our setting, to comply with government initiatives and for the general well-being of the children.

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we find out from parents their children's dietary needs and preferences, including any known allergies, see policy 1.18⁴.
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in her/his registration record and parents sign the record 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 and intolerances - are up-to-date. Parents sign the updated record to signify that it is correct and the information is shared with staff.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all 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 give guidance to parents in our information pack on snacks for parents to provide their child on a daily basis (see Appendix 1), and also direct them to read "[Eating Well: snacks for 1 to 5 year olds](#)" available from www.firststepsnutrition.org website.
- We also direct parents to the Foods Standards Agency's "[Early Years Choking Hazards Table](#)".
- Our guidance includes a variety of foods from the four main food groups:
 - meat, fish and protein alternatives;
 - dairy foods or dairy alternatives;
 - grains, cereals and starch vegetables; and
 - fruit and vegetables.

The Department for Education (DfE) has a [poster on the 4 food groups](#), and Public Health England has produced an [Eatwell Guide](#) which applies to children from the age of 2.

- We review the curriculum to identify where food is used and carry out risk assessments to determine any potential hazards for children with allergies and/or intolerances. We adapt or change activities to eliminate any risks identified.
- We introduce the children to different foods from a variety of cultural backgrounds when talking to them about festivals/faith days or it coincides with a topic the Pre-school is looking at. Having the children eat together encourages them to try new foods and it is good for children's sensory systems to experience flavours from around the world. It can also build appreciation for food from different cultures at an early age. In addition, incorporating traditional foods from different cultures can help children feel connected to their cultural heritage.
- All staff involved in the preparing and handling of such food will have been informed of any special dietary or food allergies/intolerances of the children attending the setting. All food served to children is prepared in a way to prevent choking⁵.
- We take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts. To avoid the risk of a

³ Allergy = immune system reaction, eg. coeliac disease; Intolerance = digestion or sensitivity problem, eg. lactose intolerance

⁴ Policy 1.18 Managing children with allergies, or who are sick or infectious (including reporting notifiable diseases)

⁵ The Food Standards Agency has 2 posters on [how to prepare food safely to avoid choking](#)

child with a known nut allergy being exposed to nuts during snack time and/or lunchtime, we ask parents not to provide packed lunches that include nuts or nut products (eg. snack bars, peanut butter, Nutella, pesto etc).

- Through discussion with parents and research reading by staff, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, and about food allergies. We take account of this information and monitor what the children eat.
- We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate.
- All foods brought from home are checked for potential allergens so that the risk of cross contamination is reduced.
- All children are reminded to wash their hands before snack time and lunchtime.
- Whilst children are eating there will always be a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate.
- At snack and lunch time, where possible staff will sit facing the children whilst they eat. This is 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 unexpected allergic reactions. It also promote mealtimes as a social occasion.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and that take account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the day.
- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting.
- We give parents who provide food for their children information about suitable containers for food.
- For children who drink milk, we provide semi-skimmed pasteurised milk. We receive this from [Coolmilk](#) who provide a free 189ml (1/3 pint) serving of milk to every child under the age of five who attends the setting for two or more hours a day.
- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the day.

Children over 12 months old need to eat regularly, with breakfast, lunch (consisting of 2 dishes), and tea (consisting of 2 dishes), plus 2 or 3 snacks every day.
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Mid morning snacks

St Joseph's Pre-school recommend that these snacks, provided by parents/carers, should include:

- fresh fruit and/or vegetables with a carbohydrate accompaniment such as wholemeal bread, crackers or bread sticks; and
- a choice of fresh milk or water is supplied to drink.

We discourage parents/carers from including confectionary, such as sweets and chocolate bars etc, for their child's snack. However, should your child have, for example, diabetes and thus need a carefully timed intake of carbohydrates, or if they have an eating disorder, then please ensure that the Lead Practitioner is made aware.

Parents are reminded to follow guidance regarding the preparation of certain foods for snacks which can cause choking incidents. This includes, but is not exclusive of, grapes, cherry tomatoes, olives and peperami.

Packed lunches

Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly food intake and, therefore, need to be balanced and nutritious. For more advice and guidance see "Eating Well: packed lunches for 1 to 5 year old" available from www.firststepsnutrition.org.

Where children choose to bring in a packed lunch rather than have a cooked meal, we ask parents/carers to provide a healthy balanced lunch, and:

- use insulated bags with freezer blocks/ice packs to keep food cool where possible. Please ensure that the bag has your child's name on;
- if a child's lunch box contains perishable foods, then please ensure there are sufficient cooling packs within the insulated sealed lunchbox/bag. If ice packs are unavailable, the '4-hour rule' can be applied. This rule allows food to be stored outside of chilled conditions for up to 4 hours, but this should only be done once during the entire storage.
Note that St Joseph's Pre-school does not have fridge space available to accommodate such items. Packed lunches can safely be kept at room temperature if there is no refrigerated area for storing food brought from home.
- We do have a microwave at the setting, but are not permitted to heat up the food for children, in case it is heated incorrectly and makes your child ill;
- inform parents of our policy on healthy eating and new parents to the pre-school;
- encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk based deserts such as plain/unsweetened yoghurt or crème fraîche where we can only provide cold food from home. We discourage sweet drinks and can provide children with water or diluted fresh fruit juice. Examples are:
 - sandwiches – small in size with children's favourite fillings (excluding peanut based fillings);
 - yoghurts or crème fraîche;
 - small portion of breadsticks, rice cakes, cheese and crackers or other savoury snacks; and
 - fresh fruit and/or vegetables – though we do discourage kiwi fruit;
 - other suggestions: dried fruit, cold meats, pasta or rice salads, raw vegetables with dips, jellies.

There are no official guidelines on exactly how much food children need, though the DfE have produced a [guide to portion sizes](#) for children aged 5 and under. Note that portions should be appropriate for a child's body size and appetite. For example, a toddler's portion size is usually roughly the size of their clenched fist. This equates to half a piece of fruit (cut appropriately) or a tablespoon of vegetables in relation to a snack.

- Ensure the food is suitable for their child's individual developmental needs and prepared in a way to prevent choking;
- discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits⁶. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent as a last resort;

⁶ Replace cakes, pastries and biscuits with fruit bread and teacakes

- provide children, bringing packed lunches, with plates, cups and cutlery; and
- ensure staff sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.

If a child arrives at St Joseph's Pre-school without a packed lunch and they are not recorded as wanting a cooked lunch, via Caterlink at St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, the family will be contacted and expected to make arrangements for a healthy packed lunch to be delivered to the Pre-school by 12pm.

To promote healthy eating, St Joseph's Pre-school will periodically send out a reminder email to parents/carers attaching this policy. We also recommend parents/carers have a look on the internet, for example www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk "[Eating well: Packed lunches for 1 to under-5 year old](#)" or North Yorkshire County Council's [Healthy Packed Lunch leaflet](#). **NB:** Appendix 1 of this policy also has suggestions.

Caterlink cooked lunches, via St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Caterlink are specialist caterers in the education sector. Healthy eating is at the very heart of their approach to food and they encourage balanced diets. Their policy is to purchase a range of seasonal produce from local and regional suppliers. They are regularly inspected by the Environmental Team at Stroud District Council and have a [food hygiene rating of 5 \(very good\)](#)⁷ at the Primary School.

To order a lunch for your child:

- parents/carers are asked to email the Lead Practitioner with their child's meal choices by 8.30am on the morning of the day they wish their child to have a hot meal.
- If the parent feels the child is able to choose independently, practitioners will guide the child to order at registration depending on any preferences or allergies.
- Once the first dinner is ordered a ParentPay account will be set up by St Joseph's Catholic Primary School's admin team.
- If your child has any dietary needs/allergies, a letter from your Doctor will need to be provided to the school's admin team along with a completed allergy form.
- School dinner prices are updated in line with inflation etc, therefore, please speak to the Pre-school team to find the current pricing.

Special diets, allergies, food intolerances and eating disorders⁸

NB: St Joseph's Pre-school requests that NO food that contains nuts or nut products is allowed for snack time or contained in packed lunches.

Special diets

The Pre-school understands that some children may have verified medical conditions requiring special diets that do not allow for the standards to be met exactly. The child's key worker liaise with the child's parents/carers to understand the nature of the child's specific needs so that nutritional requirements can be met. Written confirmation from the child's qualified health professional about the nature of their specific needs and/or from a registered dietitian on the child's dietary needs, is requested. Parents/carers are urged to be responsible in ensuring that packed lunches are as healthy as possible. If any of the foods that the setting request are not included in snacks/lunches need to be part of your child's daily diet, please inform your child's key person.

⁷ Last inspection : 20 February 2024

⁸ For example: Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake disorder ([ARFID](#))

Food allergies⁹

Food allergies can be life threatening conditions for some children and at St Joseph's Pre-school we take this very seriously. Food allergies develop when the body's immune system reacts against food proteins which it sees as invaders. It then releases chemicals to attack. Children can develop allergies at any time, particularly during the introduction of solid foods (weaning).

The practitioners refers to the DfE's list of [common food allergens](#). However, we are aware that we may also encounter children with food allergies that are not on this list. This is why we ask about if a child has any food allergies before they are admitted into our setting. All practitioners have been trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction.

If we suspect that a child has a food allergy, we will encourage parents/carers to seek advice and diagnosis from a doctor. We will have ongoing discussions with parents/carers and, where appropriate, health professionals to develop allergy action plans for managing any known food allergies and intolerances. This information will be kept up to date and shared with all staff.

Food intolerance (see footnote 9)

Food intolerance is different to food allergy and usually occurs when the body has difficulty digesting certain foods or ingredients in food. Intolerances do not involve the immune system and are not life threatening. Food intolerances cause unpleasant symptoms such as abdominal pain or discomfort, diarrhoea, bloating, constipation, red rash, itching or eczema flares.

Some common food intolerances include:

- lactose intolerance (lactose is the sugar found in animal milk, e.g. cow's milk, goat's milk and sheep's milk and can be found in foods or drinks containing animal milk, e.g. yoghurt);
- gluten intolerance or sensitivity (gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye). It is important to note that gluten intolerance is different to coeliac disease;
- intolerance to some food additives or chemicals.

Coeliac disease is a common and serious autoimmune condition that can develop at any age. Children with coeliac disease have to strictly avoid foods containing gluten, e.g. ordinary wheat flour, bread, breakfast cereals, crackers, biscuits, pastry and pasta. Many packaged and processed foods contain gluten, e.g. some processed meats and fish, sausages and soups, and these need to also be avoided. Traces of gluten may also be found in foods where gluten is not an ingredient but where there has been cross contact of gluten containing foods.

If a food intolerance is suspected, the child's key worker will work with parents/carers to keep a diary of foods eaten at the setting and at home and any symptoms experienced.

Eating disorders/selective eating

Anyone can have an eating disorder regardless of their age. Eating disorders are not all about the food itself. The way the person treats the food may make them feel more able to cope, or feel more in control, but they might not be aware of the function the behaviour is serving. There is no one cause of an eating disorder.

⁹ See 1.18 Managing children with allergies or intolerances, or who are sick or infectious

Selective eating can be worrying when it appears to impact on a child's health and growth. Many children experience stages of refusing meals or avoiding certain foods. Children often grow out of this and learn to accept a wider range of foods. We will also consider children who may experience sensory needs in relation to foods, for example, sensitivity to textures, tastes or smells, which can lead to limited preferences or aversions towards specific foods.

Practitioners can work with parents/carers on keeping a food diary which will allow both the setting and home to focus on the child's overall weekly intake, rather than their daily intake. Studies show that young children tend to eat the right balance of nutrients across the week to support healthy growth. The setting follows regular routines with regards to when the children have snacks and lunch, and this can assist in this respect.

Food for religious faiths and beliefs

Children and their families may have specific food preferences or dietary needs according to cultural or religious beliefs. Some families may exclude certain foods or only eat foods prepared or cooked in a particular way according to their religious faith.

Planning food activities

Cooking is a great experience for young children and helps to create a positive relationship with food. Some children have limited opportunities to cook or learn about food at home. We periodically plan educational and fun cooking activities for children in the setting¹⁰.

Waste and disposal

St Joseph's Pre-school will, within reason, send any uneaten packed lunch food items back home. The rationale for this is that parents/carers can also monitor what their child has consumed during the day and then raise any concerns over their child's food intake with the Pre-school.

Birthdays and other celebrations

We love to celebrate children's birthdays or other celebrations at St Joseph's Pre-school, as it is a great opportunity to celebrate the children's cultural capital as well as a 'personal, social and emotional development (PSED)' and 'understanding the world (UTW)' opportunity. With the growing focus on nutritional guidance within the EYFS and the need to check for potential allergens, we ask parents that if they would like to bring something to celebrate their child's birthday, then they may like to choose a special book they can share or a pack of stickers, as the children really enjoy crafting.

Parents are welcome to provide a treat for their own child's snack on their birthday. Staff will put a candle in it and encourage everyone to sing.

Recording of incidents

When a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, St Joseph's Pre-school will record details of where and how the child choked and parents/carers made aware. The records are 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 will be taken to address any identified concerns.

Legal Framework

- Regulation (EC) 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the hygiene of foodstuffs
- Food Safety Act 1990

¹⁰ See the DfE's information on [planning food activities with children](#) and www.foodfactoflife.org.uk website

Further guidance

- Food Standards Agency (www.food.gov.uk)
 - Safer food, better business for caterers
 - Safer food, better business for childminders
 - [Early Years Choking Hazards Table](#)
- [The Eatwell Guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Eating Well in Early Years – www.firststepsnutrition.org](#)
- www.childfeedingguide.co.uk
- [Food safety - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance: guidance for group and school-based providers and childminders in England – GOV.UK \(May 2025\)](#)
- [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework \(latest version\)](#)
- Department for Education “[Planning food activities with children](#)”
- [Food Hygiene Ratings](#)
- Department for Education Guidance “[Allergy guidance for schools](#)”
- Council for Disabled Children “[Disabled children & the Equality Act 2010: What early years providers need to know and do](#)” (latest version)
- www.arfidawarenessuk.org

Associated policies and procedures

- 1.18 Managing children with allergies or intolerances, or who are sick or infectious (including reporting notifiable diseases)
- 1.21.1 Physical, Active and Nutrition Co-ordinator (PANCo)
- 3.7 Food Hygiene

Version Number	Author	Purpose of Change	Date
1.0	K Coupe	Reviewed and page numbered	September 2014
2.0	Committee	Reviewed	October 2016
3.0	K Coupe & N Powers	Reviewed, updated – incorporate healthy eating policy - and version controlled	01 May 2019 Committee Meeting
4.0	K Coupe & N Finn-Powers	Updated to as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to include the “associate policies and procedures” section as per EY Safeguarding Audit s175/157 2023; • wording amended to reflect current practice at the setting; • removal of reference to snack rota and amendment to Appendix 1 	17 September 2023 Committee Member (S Webb)
5.0	K Coupe	Reviewed and updated in line with EYFS 2025. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new “Recording of Incidents” section included; • reference to Foods Standards Agency’s “Early Years Choking Hazards Table” – as Appendix 2 (standalone document) & hyperlink 	27 January 2025 Committee Member (H Heaven)
6.0	K Coupe and N Finn-Powers	Reviewed and updated with more information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • packed lunches; • birthdays and other celebrations; • special diets and allergies; • Caterlink; and • planning food activities. Hyperlinks included where applicable, eg	05 May 2025 Committee Member (B Wheeler)

Version Number	Author	Purpose of Change	Date
		“Early Years Choking Hazards Table”. Updated to reflect “EYFS nutrition guidance” April 2025 issued by DfE	
7.0	K Coupe	Updated to avoid “indirect discrimination” re the eating of high calorie snacks between meals for those children who need to have a carefully timed intake of carbohydrates (eg. diabetes). As per the Council for Disabled Children’s guidance for EY providers re disability duties and the Equality Act 2010	23 August 2025 Chair (A Hitchings)
8.0	K Coupe and N Finn-Powers	Reference to eating disorders such as Avoident/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID). Hyperlink to website. Associated policies list updated – reference to PANCo	4 September 2025 Committee Member (L Finn-Powers)
9.0	K Coupe, N Finn-Powers & K Niven	Reviewed and updated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in line with Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance; • more information on milk provided • Correction confirming that if a child has a diabetic episode they need carbohydrate not calories to help blood sugar levels. 	6 October 2025 Committee Member (G Ind)
10.0	N Finn-Powers	Change in wording under “Birthdays and other celebrations” to reflect change in approach at the setting.	4 March 2026 Committee Member (B Wheeler)
11.0	K Coupe & N Finn-Powers	Updated to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference to undertaking a risk assessment prior to any food activity; • details of training undertaken by EY staff with regards to allergies. • reference to www.firststepsnutrition.org and advice on snacks and packed lunches for 1 to 5 year olds • hyperlink added to www.childfeedingguide.co.uk and www.foodafactoflife.org.uk 	18 May 2026 Chair (A Hitchings)

Appendix 1: St Joseph's Pre-school – snack ideas

For ideas on what to provide your child as a snack. See also www.firststepsnutrition.org

<p>Fruit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strawberries ▪ Blueberries ▪ grapes (red or white or a mix) – cut up to avoid choking ▪ orange or Satsuma segments ▪ banana ▪ apple or pear – cut up ▪ pineapple slices ▪ melon slice – without seeds (if applicable) ▪ mango ▪ plum(s) – cut up ▪ peach or nectarine cut into segments ▪ apricot cut in half (▪ mixed fruit/seeds, eg. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - raisins and/or pumpkin seeds - dried apricots - dried bananas - dried pineapple - dried apple - dried dates - dried prunes 	<p>Vegetables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ carrot sticks ▪ cucumber sticks ▪ cherry tomatoes – cut up to avoid choking ▪ baby sweetcorn ▪ sugar snap peas ▪ mange tout ▪ peppers sticks
<p>Carbohydrates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ breadsticks ▪ cheese crackers ▪ whole wheat crackers ▪ rice cake ▪ Pumpkin seeds ▪ oat cakes ▪ Small fruit (bread) – one slice ▪ Small malt loaf (eg. Soreen) – one slice ▪ mini bagel ▪ small plain or fruit muffin 	<p>Protein</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cheese – cut into cubes ▪ cream cheese – on bread/crackers/bagel etc ▪ cheese spread (eg. Dairylea) – on bread/crackers/bagel etc. ▪ small pot of hummus

We are not saying crisps or cakes or biscuits are not allowed, but we would recommend that their intake is limited. However, if your child has a specific medical condition that requires them to eat high calorie snacks between meals, or eat a certain type of food (eg. if they have an eating disorder), or they are diabetic and need a carbohydrate snack to prevent a diabetic episode, then please ensure that your child's key person and the Lead Practitioner are made aware. *What we would ask though, is that there are no nuts as some children have nut allergies and we would recommend against kiwi fruit.* Mix and match as you wish, but for a balance we would recommend that the snack contains at least some fruit and/or vegetable.

Please also refer to the Food Standards Agency's "[Early Years Choking Hazards Table](#)".