DUCKS
KINDERGARTEN & INFANTS' SCHOOL

**DUCKS FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY**

**Introduction and Aims**

This policy has been developed in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements and with regard to the Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance. It recognises that good nutrition is fundamental to children's health, development, and learning outcomes.

Our primary aim is to provide nutritious, balanced meals and snacks, supporting children's optimal growth and development. We are committed to creating positive mealtime experiences, not only supporting children's physical development, but also promoting lifelong healthy eating habits through enjoyable, social dining experiences.

The safety and wellbeing of all children remain paramount during all aspects of food preparation, serving, and consumption, with robust procedures in place to protect every child in our care. We work collaboratively with parents and carers as partners to meet each child's individual dietary needs.

We view food experiences as valuable opportunities for holistic learning and development, incorporating nutrition education naturally into our curriculum.

**Staff Supervision and Safety Requirements**

All staff members, where possible, sit facing pupils whilst they eat, ensuring continuous visual supervision and the ability to respond immediately to any situation that may arise, particularly choking or any unexpected allergic reaction incident or food sharing. Babies and young children are seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair while eating.

**First Aid Requirements**

When Early Years children are eating, a member of staff holding a current Full Paediatric First Aid qualification is always present. This essential safety requirement applies to all meal and snack times without exception.

**Pre-Admission Requirements**

**Essential Information**

Before any child joins DUCKS, we obtain information about their dietary requirements, which may stem from cultural, religious, or personal family preferences that are integral to their identity and wellbeing. Critical to child safety, we collect details regarding any food intolerances or allergies. Where appropriate, we will carry out a risk assessment. The information about dietary requirements and the risk assessments (as applicable) are shared with all staff involved in the preparing and handling of food.

**Weaning and Foot Texture Information**

Staff engage in ongoing, detailed discussions with parents on their child's current stage in introducing solid foods, recognising that this is a highly individual journey, and one which varies significantly from child to child. We strive to develop a clear and sensitive understanding of each child's familiarity and comfort with specific food textures, recognising that individual progress may vary and that some children may advance or require additional support outside typical developmental milestones. We explicitly recognise that assumptions must never be made based on age alone, as children develop at their own pace and may have unique circumstances affecting their food journey. Through regular updates from parents, as children progress through different food stages, we maintain current knowledge of each child's capabilities and comfort levels.

## Meal and Snack Provision

**Nutritional Standards**

As per, What to feed around 6 months - Start for Life - NHS babies under 12 months do not need snacks. If we think they're hungry in between meals, we offer extra milk feeds instead. To begin with they will still be getting most of their energy and nutrients from breast milk or first infant formula. Kindergarten staff take into account the following in their decisions: "*Breast milk or first infant formula should be their main drink during the first year. Remember your baby's tummy is tiny and fills up quickly – so offer milk feeds after solids*".

**Meal Scheduling**

Meals and snacks are thoughtfully provided at regular intervals throughout the day, with careful attention to children's natural rhythms and nutritional needs. Portion sizes are carefully calibrated to be age-appropriate while allowing children the opportunity to request additional servings, supporting their natural ability to self-regulate their intake. Our mealtimes are deliberately designed to be relaxed, calm occasions, encouraging shared conversation and social interaction, creating positive associations with food and eating that will benefit children throughout their lives. During mealtimes children will be encouraged to use manners, converse and the correct use of cutlery.

**Food Quality and Variety**

In meal planning for children aged over 1 years old we follow the SFS while taking into account the EYFS nutrition guidance, especially: School food standards practical guide - GOV.UK.

All food served is carefully selected to meet the nutritional requirements necessary for growing children during these critical developmental years mindful of NHS guidance regarding Foods to avoid giving babies and young children. Menus are thoughtfully designed; we prioritise fresh, wholesome ingredients wherever possible, recognising that quality nutrition forms the foundation for optimal physical and cognitive development. Throughout all aspects of food preparation, we adhere strictly to relevant health and safety guidelines, maintaining the highest standards to protect the wellbeing of every child in our care.

## Responsibility and Monitoring

All staff are aware of who is responsible for checking that the food being provided meets all the requirements for each child.

### Daily Checks Include

The relevant member of staff ensures that food textures are appropriate for each child's current developmental stage and comfort level, avoiding both foods that are too advanced and those that may not provide appropriate challenge for developing oral motor skills. Additionally, they check that portion sizes are suitable for each child's age, developmental stage, and appetite patterns, supporting healthy growth while respecting individual differences in nutritional needs.

### Record Keeping

For children under the age of three, and for others, where agreed with parents we maintain detailed daily records of each child's food intake, capturing not only what was offered and consumed, but also noting preferences, refusals, and any mealtime observations that may indicate emerging needs or concerns. This information enables parents to understand their child's nutritional intake and eating development while maintaining consistency between home and school approaches.

All adverse reactions, concerns and choking incidents are thoroughly documented, including the specific foods involved, symptoms observed, timing, and actions taken, creating a comprehensive record that supports both immediate care and long-term health management.

We prioritise regular, meaningful communication with parents about their child's eating patterns, sharing both successes and any areas where additional support might be beneficial.

## Allergy and Special Dietary Management

### Allergy Management

Clear labelling and physical separation of allergenic foods is maintained throughout our food preparation, storage, and serving processes, with dedicated equipment and preparation areas used where necessary to prevent cross-contamination.

All staff are trained to recognise anaphylaxis symptoms and respond to anaphylactic emergencies and administer epinephrine, including when and how to seek emergency medical assistance. Emergency medication prescribed for individual children is kept readily available in designated locations, easily accessible by staff.

**Special Diets**

We are committed to accommodating medical and dietary needs and, as far as reasonably possible, respecting religious and cultural practices, recognising that food is often central to family identity and wellbeing. For every child with specific dietary needs, we provide suitable alternative options that are equally nutritious, ensuring no child feels excluded or different during mealtimes.

**Breastfeeding Support**

**Supportive Environment**

We provide refrigerated storage for expressed breastmilk, with all containers clearly labelled with the child's name and date to ensure safety and proper rotation. We fully recognise and actively promote breastmilk as the ideal nutrition source for infants, supporting families in their feeding choices and helping to maintain breastfeeding relationships even when children are in our care.

**Drinks Provision**

**Healthy Drink Options**

Water and whole milk serve as our primary drink offerings, recognising these as the healthiest options for supporting both dental health and overall physical development in young children. Fresh drinking water is always available and accessible to children. Where formula feeding is required, parents provide first infant formula, in line with recommended guidance; we do not provide or promote the use of follow-on formulas.

We actively encourage the use of open cups from twelve months of age onwards, supporting the development of proper drinking skills, and work with families to discontinue bottle use by one year of age in line with dental health recommendations. We do not use cups with valves (unless it is specifically provided by parents) and we work with parents to discontinue their use on an ongoing basis understanding the negative impact on teeth.

**Formula Preparation**

Staff who make up formula follow: How to make up a feed - Start for Life - NHS ensuring the safety and nutritional quality of every bottle we prepare. Individual bottles are prepared on demand and clearly labelled with the child's name. The remaining contents of prepared bottles are not stored. Our staff follow NHS guidance to ensure correct safe hygiene: Bottle hygiene and equipment sterilisation. Our dedicated preparation area is maintained to the highest hygiene standards, with regular cleaning and sanitisation protocols that exceed basic requirements.

**Child Involvement and Independence - Active Participation**

We provide opportunities for children to serve themselves cold food, participate in clearing activities, and support self-feeding skills appropriate to their developmental stage. This helps children develop independence and understand mealtime routines while receiving guidance as needed.

Food exploration activities are thoughtfully incorporated into our broader learning programme, using cooking and food preparation as natural opportunities to develop fine motor skills, mathematical concepts, scientific understanding, and cultural awareness.

**Choice and Autonomy**

Children are empowered to decide which foods they will eat from the healthy options provided, supporting their developing autonomy while ensuring all available choices are nutritionally beneficial. Children's individual preferences are respected and accommodated where possible, while gentle encouragement is provided to try new foods and expand dietary variety.

**Parent Partnership - Communication**

Weekly menus are available to parents through DUCKS weekly newsletter and are on display. The Dietary and Allergen menu is available on the DUCKS website. Ready access to the menus enables parents to make informed decisions about complementary meals and snacks provided at home.

**Food Safety**

All aspects of food preparation, storage, and serving are conducted in strict accordance with current food safety regulations, with regular monitoring and documentation to ensure consistent compliance. Temperature monitoring of refrigeration and cooking equipment is conducted regularly and systematically, with records maintained to demonstrate ongoing food safety management. All staff involved in food handling receive comprehensive training in food hygiene principles, with regular refresher training provided to ensure knowledge remains current with evolving best practices. Throughout all food-related activities, we maintain a clean and hygienic eating environment that supports both health and the enjoyment of mealtimes. All Early Years staff hold a Level 2 qualification in Food Hygiene.

Children under 12 months will not be given honey as it can occasionally contain bacteria.

**Choking Prevention**

Age-appropriate food textures and sizes are carefully provided for each child, taking into account not only chronological age, but also individual developmental readiness and familiarity with different food types.

Children can choke on any food. To minimise the risk of choking we prepare food in the following way for babies and young children:

- remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving
- cut small round foods (like grapes, strawberries and cherry tomatoes) lengthways and into quarters
- cut large fruits (like melon) and hard fruit or vegetables (like raw apple and carrot) into slices/batons/finger food instead of small chunks
- do not offer raisins as a snack to children under 12 months (they can be chopped up as part of a meal)
- soften hard fruit and vegetables (like raw apple and carrot) and remove the skins when first given to babies from around 6 months
- cut sausages into thin strips rather than chunks and remove the skins (sausages should be avoided due to their high salt content)
- remove bones from meat or fish
- cut cheese into strips rather than chunks
- consider wholemeal or toasted bread as white bread can form a doughy ball in the throat, and cut all types of bread into strips for very young children

**Monitoring and Evaluation - Regular Review**

This policy undergoes comprehensive review as required by changes in regulations, guidance, best practice recommendations, or specific needs identified within the school community.

Our commitment to continuous improvement is demonstrated through our willingness to adapt practices based on monitoring pupils, feedback from parents, emerging research, best practice developments, and the evolving needs of our school community.

Immediate updates are provided to all relevant staff members, with additional training sessions arranged as needed, to ensure smooth implementation of new requirements.

**This policy demonstrates our commitment to providing the highest standards of nutrition and food safety for all children in our care, while supporting overall development and wellbeing.**

**Related Policies and Guidance**

DUCKS Breast Feeding Policy

DUCKS Medication Policy

Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition - GOV.UK

Benefits of breastfeeding - NHS

Help for early years providers: Food safety

Weaning - Best Start in Life - NHS

What to feed around 6 months - Start for Life - NHS

Bottle hygiene and equipment sterilisation

How to make up a feed - Start for Life - NHS

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| **Policy Owner:** | Head of DUCKS |
| **Last Reviewed:** | May 2026 |
| **Date of Next Review:** | Academic Year 2027-28 |