

Smallville Nursery

Packed Lunch Policy

April 2026

To be revised April 2027

Smallville Nursery Packed Lunch Policy 2026

At Smallville Nursery, we are committed to promoting the health and wellbeing of every child in our care. We work in partnership with parents and carers to share information about what constitutes a healthy packed lunch and the balance of food groups that should be provided. Our aim is to support children in developing positive attitudes towards food and to encourage lifelong healthy eating habits. By working together, we can ensure that every child benefits from a nutritionally balanced diet that supports their growth, learning, and happiness.

Legal Framework

This policy is underpinned by the statutory requirements of the *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, 2024)* and aligns with the *Childcare Act 2006*, *Children and Families Act 2014*, *Food Safety Act 1990*, *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974*, and the *Equality Act 2010*. It also reflects guidance from Ofsted on promoting children's health, wellbeing, and personal development through healthy eating practices.

Rationale

Good nutrition is essential for children's healthy development, concentration, and long-term wellbeing. As an Early Years setting, we play an important role in shaping children's eating habits and helping them make positive food choices from an early age. Research shows that a well-balanced diet in childhood supports healthy growth and learning, while poor nutrition can lead to a range of short-term and long-term health problems.

In the short term, an unbalanced diet can cause poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration, and behavioural difficulties. Over time, these poor eating habits can increase the risk of more serious health conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain cancers. Since packed lunches account for roughly one-third of a child's weekly food intake, it is vital that they are nutritious and well-balanced. Ofsted also recognises the importance of food provision as part of a child's personal development and wellbeing, and this policy reflects our commitment to meeting those standards.

Aims

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the contents of packed lunches brought into Smallville Nursery meet appropriate nutritional standards and support our shared goal of fostering healthy eating habits. We aim to encourage children to make positive food choices, to develop an awareness of the importance of a balanced diet, and to help parents feel supported in providing nutritious options. Working together, we can promote consistency between home and nursery so that children grow up understanding the value of healthy eating for both their immediate and future wellbeing.

Packed Lunch Expectations

At Smallville Nursery, we promote a balanced and varied approach to healthy eating through the "Always, sometimes, never" system.

Packed lunches should **always** include a selection of foods from the main food groups. Each lunch should contain at least one portion of:

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- Fruit and one portion of vegetables, such as carrot sticks, cucumber, halved grapes, apple slices, or cherry tomatoes cut lengthways to prevent choking.
- A source of protein each day, such as meat, fish, eggs, lentils, beans, hummus, or falafel.
- A starchy food, such as bread, wraps, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles, or potatoes, should be included
- A dairy item such as milk, cheese, yoghurt, fromage frais, or custard.

Healthy snack items like pretzels, crackers, cheese cubes, and vegetable sticks with dips are also encouraged. Water and milk are provided daily for all children.

Packed lunches may **sometimes** include:

- A small meat product such as a sausage roll, an individual pie, or corned meat.

These should, however, be limited and balanced with plenty of fruit, vegetables, and other nutritious foods.

Packed lunches should **never** include:

- Confectionery such as chocolate bars, chocolate-coated biscuits, or sweets
- Fizzy or sugary drinks, even those labelled as “sugar-free” or “no added sugar.”
- Takeaway foods such as burgers, chips, and kebabs are not suitable for nursery meals and will be sent home
- Foods containing nuts or nut products are strictly prohibited due to allergy risks
- Avoid sending any whole, uncut round foods like grapes, blueberries, or cherry tomatoes that could pose a choking hazard.
- Chewing gum, toffee, and salted popcorn are also not permitted.

Special Diets and Allergies

Smallville Nursery operates a strict **no-nut** policy to protect children with allergies. We understand that some children may have verified medical conditions requiring special diets. In such cases, parents must inform their child’s key person so that appropriate arrangements can be made. We ask that parents still ensure that special dietary packed lunches remain as healthy and balanced as possible. To safeguard all children, food swapping is not allowed under any circumstances.

Packed Lunch Facilities

All children eat together during lunchtime to encourage social development, good manners, and a sense of inclusion. Fresh drinking water and cold milk are available to all children throughout the day. As fridge space is limited, we ask parents to provide packed lunches in insulated lunch bags with an icepack to help keep food fresh. Children are only allowed to eat the food provided by their own parents or carers.

Mealtime Procedure

Lunchtimes at Smallville Nursery are carefully structured to provide a relaxed and enjoyable experience for all children. We encourage a calm atmosphere where children have sufficient time to eat. Children are encouraged to open their own lunch boxes, serve themselves onto plates, and tidy away afterwards, promoting independence and self-help skills.

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Children are regularly reminded to have a drink during lunch and can freely access water throughout the day.

Parent and Carer Responsibilities

Parents and carers play a key role in supporting our healthy eating policy. We ask that all packed lunches are provided in secure, clearly labelled containers and that the contents follow the guidance outlined above. Parents should ensure that foods are safe, healthy, and free from allergens or choking hazards. Because we do not have refrigerated storage, insulated lunch bags with icepacks are recommended. By working with us, parents help to ensure that their child receives the nourishment they need for learning, play, and growth.

Waste and Disposal

To help parents monitor their child's eating habits, any uneaten food will be returned home at the end of the day wherever practical. This allows parents to see what their child has eaten and to discuss any concerns about appetite or preferences with their child's key person.