

Bushfield Road Infant School



Food and Nutrition Policy for Early Years children aged 3 to 5

Written Autumn 2025

Next review: Autumn 2026

The policy will be reviewed annually.

Mission Statement:

At Bushfield Infant School, we provide a positive, happy and safe learning environment where all children feel valued and secure. We are committed to providing a rich and exciting curriculum, which encourages all children to meet challenges with enthusiasm and inspires them to succeed. At the heart of our school is a strong commitment to raising children's self-esteem and self-confidence, which enables them to become confident life-long learners.

The purpose of this policy is to set out a clear framework within which all children in the Early Years have access to a healthy, balanced diet and are kept safe when eating and drinking in school.

Our Policy:

At Bushfield Road Infant School we recognise that we play a crucial role in shaping children's healthy eating habits and ensuring their safety around food. We create a supportive environment where children learn to make healthy choices and develop positive relationships with food for life. The EYFS framework requires that all meals, snacks, and drinks provided must be healthy, balanced, and nutritious.

With the publishing of the new safeguarding and welfare guidance from the Department of Education in September 2025, this food and nutrition policy has been developed in accordance with these new guidelines. Bushfield Road Infant School will adhere to the new nutrition guidance and ensure all children within the EYFS remain safe.

Healthy and balanced meals

School meals offered in school limit foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat. They offer a variety of foods from the four main food groups (fruits and vegetables; starchy carbohydrates; dairy or dairy alternatives; and beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat, and other proteins) every day. The menus are planned termly and ensure varied tastes and textures and make use of seasonal produce. School meals provide appropriate portion sizes for children aged 1-5 years, which are smaller than adult portions.

If children are bringing their own packed lunches to school, then parents are encouraged to ensure that they contain a variety of foods and limit items high in sugar and fat. Fizzy drinks, sweets and chocolate bars are not to be brought in school packed lunches. As a nut free school, no nuts or foods containing nuts are to be brought into school. Small fruits such as grapes, strawberries and tomatoes should be cut appropriately. Packed lunches should be brought in an appropriate named pack up box and stored on the lunch trolleys in the hall.

School ensure fresh drinking water is available at all times through personal water bottles that children bring from home. Drinks offered in school are limited to water and milk only. No sugary or fizzy drinks are offered in School.

At snack time, children are offered a whole piece of fresh fruit to eat. Children are encouraged to try the different types of fruit on offer. Staff regularly talk about the importance of eating healthy foods through weekly PSED Jigsaw sessions.

Food allergies, intolerances and dietary needs

Food allergies can be life threatening conditions for some children and should be taken 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.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction may include:

- coughing, wheezing, breathlessness, noisy breathing or a hoarse voice
- a red raised rash (hives)
- tingly or itchy feeling in the mouth
- sneezing or an itchy, runny or blocked nose
- stomach pain
- feeling sick or vomiting
- swelling of face, lips, tongue or eyes
- difficulty swallowing
- diarrhoea
- feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- pale or floppy
- suddenly sleepy
- collapse or unconscious

These symptoms can happen on their own or they may be present in a serious reaction. A severe reaction called anaphylaxis or anaphylactic shock can occur. This is a medical emergency that can be life threatening and needs urgent treatment. You should administer the child's autoinjector if they have one and then call 999. You should use the child's second autoinjector if they have one if they haven't improved after 5 minutes. A child who is showing signs of anaphylaxis should never walk to a new location. Where necessary, they should be carried to a suitable safe location away from an allergen.

Any one or more of the following symptoms may be present:

- swelling of throat, tongue or upper airways
- difficulty swallowing
- wheezing / noisy breathing
- breathing difficulty
- persistent cough
- dizziness
- feeling faint
- sudden sleepiness
- confusion
- pale clammy skin
- loss of consciousness

It's possible to be allergic to anything, but there are 14 common allergens. These are:

- celery
- cereals containing gluten (such as wheat, barley and oats and some flours)
- crustaceans (such as prawns, crabs and lobsters)
- eggs
- fish
- lupin (such as bread made using lupin seeds)
- milk
- molluscs (such as mussels and oysters)
- mustard
- peanuts
- sesame
- soybeans
- sulphur dioxide and sulphites (sometimes found in dried fruits and fruit juices)
- tree nuts (such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts).

Children can develop allergies at any time, particularly during the introduction of solid foods (weaning). As children may be trying some foods for the first time in your care you must know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction. If you suspect that a child has a food allergy, encourage parents and/or carers to seek advice and diagnosis from a doctor.

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).
- intolerance to some food additives or chemicals.

The diagnosis of food intolerances can be challenging. If a food intolerance is suspected, the school will discuss concerns with a parents and/or carers and encourage them to seek advice from an appropriate health professional. However, it is important not to exclude foods from a child's diet without a valid reason as this can result in an unnecessarily restricted diet, which could have a negative impact on nutrition.

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. Additionally, fasting is common in many religions, although younger children tend to be exempt. It is important to be aware how this may affect children at meal and snack times and ensure where possible that

an inclusive approach is used. Compliance with these customs may vary between denominations, branches or even families.

At Bushfield School we engage in open communication with parents and/or carers to ensure that all food provided meets children's food preferences and dietary needs according to their religious faiths or beliefs. This is essential for creating an inclusive environment in your setting which can support children's wellbeing.

The school obtains detailed information about any special dietary requirements, cultural or religious needs, personal preferences, and food allergies before a child is admitted to the setting. These are discussed at home visits and details are recorded on admission forms. This information is then recorded by office staff and lists of allergies are shared with all appropriate teaching staff, support staff, lunchtime staff and kitchen staff. Individual allergy mats are produced which the children use in the school hall at lunchtimes.

An individual allergy management plan is developed with parents and healthcare professionals for each child with severe allergies. We ensure medication is stored safely and is easily accessible. School will have ongoing discussions with parents and/or carers and, where appropriate, health professionals to ensure allergy action plans are accurate. This information is kept up to date by School and shared with all staff.

All staff are trained in allergen avoidance, recognising symptoms, and emergency procedures. Kitchen staff maintain strict hygiene standards to prevent cross-contamination.

Safe food practices

The school ensures there are suitable facilities for hygienic food preparation. All staff in Early Years who are involved in food preparation and handling are competent and have received food hygiene training.

All children are supervised adequately during mealtimes. Children in the hall at lunchtime are sat appropriately to enable staff to monitor for choking hazards, prevent food sharing, and observe for allergic reactions. At least one staff member with paediatric first aid (PFA) training is present in the hall on first sitting. All Early Years lunchtime staff have had paediatric first aid (PFA) training.

In the Early Years classrooms the children have their morning snack in class. At snack time the adult sits facing children while they eat to monitor for choking hazards. A member of staff with paediatric first aid (PFA) training is always present whilst the children eat their fruit and have their milk in Nursery and Reception.

The school ensures that all food is prepared appropriately to minimize choking risks. The Early Years Food Choking Hazards poster from the Food Standards Agency is followed to ensure all food is cut appropriately to minimise the risk of choking. Fruits have stones and pips removed. Small fruits, such as grapes, strawberries and tomatoes, are cut lengthways and then into

quarters. Vegetables are sliced thinly and raw carrots are cut into batons for Nursery children. Fruit like apples and bananas are kept whole. Staff ensure sausages are cut lengthways and into small pieces and not into circles.

When a child experiences a choking incident that requires intervention, the School will record details of where and how the child choked and ensure parents and/or carers are made aware. The records should be 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 should be taken to address any identified concerns.

Certain foods should be avoided for young children such as whole nuts, seeds, raw or lightly cooked eggs (without the British Lion stamp), high-salt foods, sugary snacks, high saturated fat foods, fresh pâté, unpasteurised dairy, shark, swordfish, marlin, raw shellfish, raw jelly cubes, and slush ice drinks.

Promoting healthy eating habits

All staff act as a role model by eating healthily and joining children at mealtimes and snack times where appropriate. We actively engage children in discussions about food, healthy eating, and where food comes from through our PSED sessions and informal discussions. All staff maintain a positive and patient approach to encouraging children to try new foods.

At Bushfield we enjoy involving children in food-related activities like growing vegetables, baking and preparing food. We strive to collaborate with parents and carers to ensure consistent messaging about healthy eating at home and in the setting.

Hydration

At Bushfield we ensure fresh drinking water is readily available and accessible to all children throughout the day. We offer drinks regularly, especially in warm weather or during physical activity, as young children may not recognise thirst cues. We limit drinks to water and plain milk. We discourage sugary drinks, including diluted fruit juice and smoothies, due to their sugar content and potential for tooth decay and filling children up unnecessarily. We promote good oral health through discussions and activities around tooth brushing in Early Years.

Celebrations and Special Occasions

Many families like to celebrate their child's birthday and other special events by bringing in a cake or sweets to the setting to share. At Bushfield Infant School we encourage having an open discussion with parents if they would like to bring in something to celebrate a birthday. School suggests alternatives, such as bubbles and stickers, to sweets and cakes.

If parents would like to bring a cake then they are made aware of any food allergies in the class and are asked to only bring sealed cakes with the ingredients displayed clearly. Food that

is suitable for vegetarians is also encouraged. Any food shared in the setting is checked for potential allergens. If sweets are sent in then they are sent home with the children rather than eaten in school. No lollipops or hard boiled sweets are shared.

Communication with parents and/or carers about these practices is key to ensuring they are informed and involved in supporting healthy eating habits at School.

This Food and Nutrition Policy will be available for parents and has been endorsed by the Governing Body of the school, who will review it at periodic intervals.



Early years food choking hazards

Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)

Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	Advice
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Cheese	Advice
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
Nuts and seeds	Advice
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
Bread	Advice
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Snacks and other foods	Advice
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/> It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/> and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>