Lunchbox Policy for Parents and Carers

Applies to: All children who bring food or drink from home.

1. Purpose and essential requirements

We want every lunchbox to be healthy, safe and suitable for young children. Families must follow this policy so that we can meet children's allergy, medical, cultural and dietary needs.

A child at the setting has severe allergies to mustard and nuts. We therefore operate a strict mustard-free and nut-free policy. All food, drinks, containers and celebration food brought into the setting must:

- contain no mustard, mustard powder, mustard seeds, mustard oil or products containing mustard;
- contain no peanuts, tree nuts or products containing nuts;
- be suitable for the child's age and development;
- be hygienically and securely packed;
- be fully cooked at home if cooking is required, including meat, poultry, fish, eggs, rice, pasta, vegetables and celebration food. The setting will not cook raw or partly cooked food;
- be cooled safely before transport and kept cold when necessary, using an ice pack or suitable cool bag;
- not require reheating unless agreed in advance. If reheating is agreed, food must be fully cooked, packed separately in a clearly labelled microwave-safe container and reheated only by the setting as agreed;
- be fully cooked and provided in a clean, secure and clearly labelled food flask or Thermos if warm food is supplied.

All lunchboxes, containers and bottles must be clean, secure and clearly labelled with the child's name. Each child must bring a named, reusable, leak-proof bottle containing water only, unless an alternative has been agreed.

Children must not share food or drinks.

We will store lunchboxes safely and follow our hygiene and allergy procedures. If food appears unsafe, spoiled, undercooked or unsuitable, or does not meet this policy, we will keep it away from children and may return it home or dispose of it safely. Parents and carers will be informed.

2. Suitable lunchbox contents

Lunchboxes should include suitable portions of a variety of:

- starchy foods, such as bread, wraps, pasta, rice or potatoes;
- fruit or vegetables, prepared safely;
- protein foods, such as eggs, meat, fish, beans, lentils, hummus or tofu;
- dairy foods or suitable fortified alternatives;
- water in a named, leak-proof bottle.

Please provide portions appropriate to your child's age and appetite and avoid packing more food than they are likely to eat.

Please do not include:

- mustard-based products, peanuts, tree nuts or products containing nuts;
- raw or partly cooked food requiring cooking at the setting;
- food requiring reheating unless agreed in advance;
- sweets, chocolate, confectionery, fizzy drinks, energy drinks, squash, juice, crisps or other salty snacks;
- cakes, biscuits and pastries as everyday foods;
- foods high in sugar, salt or saturated fat;
- foods containing caffeine;
- food that is unsafe or unsuitable for young children.

3. Choking prevention and mealtimes

Food must be prepared safely for the child's age and development. Families should:

- cut grapes and cherry tomatoes lengthways into quarters;
- cut sausages lengthways into thin strips;
- cut hard fruit and vegetables into manageable pieces;
- remove stones, pips, bones and hard skins;
- avoid whole nuts, hard sweets and large pieces of firm food;
- ensure food is fully cooked where cooking is required.

Children will eat in a calm, supervised environment. They must sit down while eating and must not eat while walking, running or playing. Staff will ensure children wash their hands, support them to open containers, check food where necessary, encourage them

positively and never force them to eat. Staff will watch for choking or allergic reactions and prevent children from sharing food or drinks.

4. Allergies, dietary requirements and cross-contamination

Parents and carers must provide written information about all allergies, intolerances, medical, religious, cultural and other dietary requirements before the child starts, and tell us immediately about any changes.

For the child with severe mustard and nut allergies, the information must include the allergy action plan and details of prescribed emergency medication.

To reduce exposure, the setting will:

- clean tables and eating areas before and after meals;
- use clean utensils and equipment
- supervise children during mealtimes;
- follow each child's allergy action plan;
- ensure relevant staff know about severe allergies;
- store lunchboxes safely;
- maintain a mustard-free and nut-free environment as far as reasonably possible.

Parents and carers must provide clean containers and bottles and must not use containers that have held mustard, nuts or peanuts unless they have been thoroughly washed.

5. Allergic reactions and emergency procedures

Parents and carers must provide prescribed emergency medication. It must be clearly labelled, in date and accessible at all times.

If staff believe a child is having an allergic reaction, they will:

1. follow the child's individual allergy action plan;
2. give prescribed emergency medication without delay, where authorised and needed;
3. call 999, request an ambulance and state that the child is having a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis;
4. contact the parent or carer as soon as possible;
5. record and report the incident according to the setting's procedures.

6. Birthdays and celebrations

Please speak to us before bringing celebration food. All celebration food must:

- be mustard-free and nut-free;
- have clear ingredient and allergen information;
- be fully cooked before arriving;
- be transported and stored safely;
- meet this policy.

We will not distribute food if we cannot confirm its ingredients or preparation, or if there is a risk of mustard, nut or peanut contamination. Homemade, takeaway or restaurant food will not be accepted unless agreed in advance and its ingredients can be confirmed.

7. Sustainability

Families are encouraged to use reusable lunchboxes, bottles and containers, avoid unnecessary packaging, provide suitable portions and use a suitable reusable food flask for warm food. Uneaten food will normally be returned home.

8. Responsibilities

Parents and carers

Parents and carers are responsible for:

- providing safe, suitable, clearly labelled and appropriately portioned food and drink;
- ensuring all food is mustard-free and nut-free
- cooking, cooling, storing, packing and transporting food safely;
- keeping food cold when necessary;
- providing suitable containers for agreed reheating or warm food;
- preventing cross-contamination;
- providing a clean, named, reusable, leak-proof bottle containing water only, unless an alternative is agreed;
- informing the setting of all dietary requirements and any changes;
- providing and maintaining prescribed emergency medication;
- replacing food and drinks when necessary;
- following this policy.

The setting

The setting is responsible for:

- providing a safe, calm and supervised eating environment;
- following allergy action plans and hygiene procedures;
- maintaining a mustard-free and nut-free environment as far as reasonably possible;
- checking food where necessary;
- preventing children from sharing food;
- ensuring relevant staff know about severe allergies;
- storing lunchboxes safely;
- discussing concerns with parents and carers;
- recording and responding appropriately to incidents;
- not cooking raw or partly cooked food brought from home.

9. Support and review

Please speak confidentially with the setting if you need help with lunchboxes or dietary requirements. No child will be judged or embarrassed because of the food they bring.

We will review this policy annually, or sooner if guidance, legislation or children's needs change. We will review it immediately after an allergic reaction, near miss, concern about mustard, nut or peanut exposure, food-safety concern, choking incident or concern about undercooked food.

Policy statement

We are committed to working with families to ensure that lunchboxes are safe, healthy and suitable and that lunchtime is positive and inclusive for every child.

The safety of all children is our priority.

Thank you for your cooperation.