



School Food – Policy for Packed Lunches (brought in from home)

This policy has been drawn up in line with other Durham County schools following guidance from the Local authority and includes updated information from DFE Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance 2025

Date reviewed: _____ September 2025 _____ (date)

Next Review: _____ September 2026 _____

Headteacher _____

Signed on behalf of the governing body _____

Name of signatory _____ Sarah Golightly _____

Role of signatory _____ Chair of governors _____



School Food – Policy for Packed Lunches (brought in from home)

Introduction

At Oxhill Nursery School, we prioritise the wellbeing, health, and development of every child. This Packed Lunch Policy is designed to ensure that packed lunches brought from home provide nutritious, balanced, and safe food that supports children's growth, learning, and holistic development in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) nutrition guidance.

Aims

- To promote healthy eating habits in children.
- To ensure all packed lunches meet the nutritional needs of young children aged 2 to 4 years.
- To minimise the risk of allergies and choking incidents.
- To support parents and carers as partners in providing healthy food for their children.
- To align with the school's vision of nurturing capable, healthy, and happy children.

Guidance for Packed Lunch Contents

Parents and carers are encouraged to provide packed lunches that:

- Include a variety of foods from the main food groups: fruits, vegetables, starchy foods (like bread, rice, pasta), protein (meat, fish, eggs, beans), and dairy.
- Contain at least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables or salad every day.
- Include healthy snacks such as yoghurt, cheese, or unsalted crackers.
- Avoid sugary drinks and sweets. Water or milk are recommended drinks.
- Minimise foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fats.
- Include foods that are age-appropriate and prepared to reduce choking risks (e.g., cut into small, manageable pieces).
- Respect any medical, cultural, or religious dietary needs and preferences.

Food Safety and Allergies

- Parents must inform the school of any food allergies, intolerances, or special dietary requirements their child has.
- Staff will share allergy information with all relevant personnel to ensure safety.
- Children must always be supervised while eating; staff will be alert to any signs of choking.

- Children will be seated safely while eating, ideally in a designated area with minimal distractions.
- The school follows the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) guidance and NHS advice on food allergies and anaphylaxis.

Storage and Handling

- Packed lunches should be brought in appropriate containers that keep food fresh and safe.
- The school are unable to provide refrigerated storage, so parents should ensure perishable items are packed with ice packs to maintain freshness. The school cannot take legal responsibility for foods prepared at home and then brought into school.
- Staff will encourage children to wash their hands before eating.

Role of Parents and Carers

- Parents and carers are partners in promoting healthy eating and are encouraged to follow this guidance when preparing packed lunches.
- The school will provide information and support about healthy packed lunches through newsletters, meetings, and workshops.
- Parents should regularly review and update the school about any changes in their child's dietary needs.

Safer Eating and Choking Prevention

Staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate must sit at the table, facing the children as they eat, to ensure they are closely supervised.

Children should be seated safely in an appropriately sized chair or highchair in a designated eating area with minimal distractions.

Children must be within sight and hearing of staff at all times during mealtimes.

To minimise the risk of choking, parents and carers are strongly advised to prepare packed lunch foods in a way that is safe for young children.

This includes:

- Cutting round foods such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, sausages, blueberries, raspberries and carrots into long quarters rather than small round pieces, which can block the airway (see Appendix 1).
- Avoiding hard, small, or sticky foods that are known choking hazards unless they are appropriately prepared.
- Ensuring foods are soft enough for the child's developmental stage and chewing ability.

- Staff will be alert to signs of choking and will follow established procedures if a choking incident occurs. Any choking incidents will be recorded, and parents/carers will be informed immediately.
- The school follows guidance from the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) and NHS advice on food allergies, intolerances, and anaphylaxis management.
- Ongoing communication with parents and carers will support the safe introduction of new foods and textures in line with each child's development.

Dining Facilities for Pupils Bringing Packed Lunch

The school will provide an appropriate area where children can eat their packed lunches.

Waste and Disposal

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

Implementation

This packed lunch policy fits within a wider context of promoting a whole school approach to food and healthy eating. Children's packed lunches should be based on the '**Eatwell Guide**' model which shows items in the 4 main food groups; (Food Standards Agency). (See Appendix 2)

Bread, Rice, Potatoes, Pasta

These starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Packed lunches should include 2 or more portions.

Fruit and Vegetables

These foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Lunches should include at least 1 portion of fruit and 1 portion of vegetables/salad, or more.

Milk and Dairy Foods

These foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Include 1 portion at lunch.

Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans

These foods provide protein for growth. Packed lunches should include 1 portion of these foods.

Foods and Drinks High in Fat and/or Sugar - It is important not to fill up on too many foods that are high in fat and/or sugar at the expense of other more nutritious foods. Limiting high fat and sugar foods will help protect young people from becoming overweight as well as helping prevent tooth decay, heart disease, stroke and diabetes. This is why sweets, chocolate, crisps, cereal bars, fruit bars, toffee/salted popcorn, squash and fizzy drinks are no

longer available in schools. **Please support the school by not including these items in a packed lunch.**

Drinks

Any drinks provided in lunch boxes should only include either plain water, milk (semi-skimmed), unsweetened fresh fruit juice, diluted fresh fruit juice, fruit or dairy based smoothies.

***Please note that we are very happy to provide fresh drinking water every day.

To ensure consistency and to keep packed lunches in line with food standards for school meals, packed lunches should NOT contain the following:

- Fizzy/sugary drinks in cartons, bottles or cans
- Chocolate-coated products/sweets/confectionary
- Cereal bars, fruit bars
- Hazelnut/Chocolate spread as a filling for sandwiches (contains nuts)
- Chewing gum
- Crisps or any packet savoury snacks high in salt and fat (crisps can be included once per week)

Items below are NOT to be included in a school packed lunch for children under 5 due to the risk of choking.

- Popcorn – all varieties
- Marshmallows
- Jelly cubes
- Whole nuts
- Ice cubes

OFSTED are required to report on how the school promotes the personal development and well-being of all pupils – this may include food provision including packed lunches brought into school. The Local Authority will work with the school to review packed lunch provision and will provide advice and support to members of the school community.

Monitoring and Review

- Staff will monitor the contents of packed lunches and provide gentle guidance to parents if improvements are needed.
- This policy will be reviewed annually and updated in line with the latest EYFS nutrition guidance and school priorities.

Appendix 1

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/>

Appendix 2

