Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School
"Nurturing curiosity and inspiring imagination"



2026-27

Safer Eating and Feeding Policy

DOCUMENT STATUS

Produced By	Version	Date	Action
Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School	1	09.11.26	Approved by Teaching and Learning Committee

L

Legislation

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers
- DfE Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance
- DfE guidance for early years providers on food allergies and intolerances
- Food Standards Agency guidance on food safety and choking hazards
- Relevant health and safety requirements
- Data protection legislation

Approval
Headteacher

Review Frequency
Annual

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School

Safer Eating and Feeding Policy

1. Purpose

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School is committed to ensuring that all children are able to eat and drink in a safe, supportive, inclusive and positive environment.

We recognise that eating and feeding can present particular risks for young children, including choking, allergic reactions, food intolerance and other medical or developmental needs.

The nursery will take all reasonable steps to minimise these risks while ensuring that children are supported to develop positive relationships with food, eating and independence.

The policy applies to children's meals, snacks, drinks, celebrations, cooking and food-related activities.

---

2. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- keep children safe when eating and drinking;
- reduce the risk of choking and allergic reactions;
- ensure food and drinks are prepared and served safely;
- ensure children are appropriately supervised when eating;
- identify and meet individual dietary, medical and feeding needs;
- support children with SEND and additional feeding needs;
- promote children's independence and confidence during eating;
- promote positive social experiences around food;
- ensure staff understand their responsibilities;
- ensure parents/carers and relevant professionals are involved where individual support is required; and
- ensure concerns and incidents are recorded, reported and reviewed appropriately.

The DfE guidance states that food should be prepared appropriately to minimise choking risk and that providers must take children's allergies and intolerances seriously.

---

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher

The headteacher will:

- ensure appropriate systems are in place to support safer eating and feeding;
- ensure staff have appropriate training;
- ensure appropriate risk assessments and individual plans are in place;
- ensure incidents and concerns are appropriately investigated;
- ensure the policy is reviewed regularly.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL will:

- consider whether concerns relating to eating or feeding may constitute a safeguarding concern;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- liaise with parents/carers and relevant agencies where appropriate;
- ensure concerns about possible neglect, abuse or unsafe treatment are appropriately escalated.

Staff

All staff involved in eating or feeding children are responsible for:

- following this policy;
- knowing the individual needs of the children they support;
- checking food and drink before it is given to a child;
- following individual eating, feeding and healthcare plans;
- supervising children appropriately;
- recognising signs of choking or an allergic reaction;
- responding appropriately to emergencies;
- reporting and recording concerns and incidents;
- maintaining appropriate hygiene; and
- promoting children's independence while ensuring their safety.

---

4. Supervision During Eating

Children must always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff and be seated while eating.

There must always be a member of staff in the room with a valid paediatric first aid certificate when children are eating.

Where possible, staff should sit facing children whilst they eat so that they can ensure they are eating in a way to prevent choking. This also enable adults to prevent food sharing and be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions.

Staff will:

- remain attentive during eating times;
- avoid unnecessary distractions;
- monitor children for signs of choking or distress;
- discourage children from walking or running while eating;
- discourage food sharing;
- ensure children remain appropriately seated;
- monitor children with known allergies particularly carefully; and
- follow individual risk assessments and feeding plans.

---

5. Safe Seating and Positioning

Children should be appropriately seated when eating.

Depending on the child's age and individual needs, this may include:

- an appropriately sized chair;
- specialist seating;
- supportive seating recommended by an occupational therapist or physiotherapist; or
- other equipment identified within an individual plan.

Children with physical disabilities or complex SEND may require specific positioning to eat and drink safely.

Where specialist positioning is required, staff must follow advice from the relevant health professional and the child's individual eating/feeding plan.

Staff must not improvise specialist feeding or positioning arrangements without appropriate professional advice.

---

6. Preparing Food to Reduce Choking Risk (see Food Handling and Preparation Policy)

Food must be prepared in a way that reduces the risk of choking.

Staff responsible for preparing or serving food must understand the foods that present a choking risk and how these should be prepared.

Consideration must be given to:

- the child's age;
- developmental stage;
- ability to chew and swallow;
- size, shape and texture of food;
- individual medical needs;
- individual feeding advice; and
- any recommendations from health professionals.

The DfE advises that food should be prepared appropriately to prevent choking and provides specific early years food safety and choking resources.

---

7. Children with Additional or Complex Feeding Needs

Some children may require additional support because of:

- SEND;
- developmental delay;
- physical disability;
- oral motor difficulties;
- chewing or swallowing difficulties;
- sensory processing differences;
- neurological conditions;
- medical conditions;
- allergies or intolerances;
- modified food textures;
- specialist equipment; or
- tube feeding.

Where a child has specific eating or feeding needs, the nursery will work with:

- parents/carers;
- the child's health professionals;
- speech and language therapists;
- occupational therapists;
- dietitians;
- paediatricians;

- physiotherapists; and
- other relevant professionals.

An Individual Eating and Feeding Plan and/or risk assessment will be developed where required.

Staff must follow the agreed plan and must not make changes to food texture, positioning, equipment or feeding arrangements without appropriate advice.

---

8. Tube Feeding

Where a child requires tube feeding, the nursery will follow the child's individual healthcare/feeding plan and relevant professional advice.

The plan will identify, where applicable:

- the type of tube;
- feeding method;
- equipment required;
- prescribed feed;
- timing and quantities;
- positioning;
- staff responsibilities;
- signs of potential problems;
- emergency arrangements;
- medication requirements;
- recording requirements; and
- circumstances requiring medical advice.

Only staff who have received appropriate training from the children’s nursing team and have been assessed as competent will undertake tube feeding.

Any concerns, complications or unexpected changes must be reported immediately in accordance with the child's individual plan and the nursery's medical and safeguarding procedures.

---

9. Allergies and Intolerances

Staff at Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School take food allergies and intolerances seriously.

Before a child starts nursery, parents/carers will be asked to provide information about:

- food allergies;

- intolerances;
- dietary requirements;
- medical conditions;
- cultural or religious dietary requirements; and
- any foods that need to be avoided.

This information will be shared with relevant staff.

The DfE expects early years providers to understand each child's dietary requirements and how to manage known allergies and intolerances.

Where appropriate, an Allergy Action Plan/Individual Healthcare Plan will be developed.

Staff must know:

- which children have allergies;
- which foods must be avoided;
- how to access the child's plan;
- the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction;
- where emergency medication is stored; and
- what action to take in an emergency.

---

10. Preventing Cross-Contact

Staff will take reasonable steps to prevent children being exposed to allergens.

This includes consideration of:

- preparation;
- storage;
- serving;
- utensils;
- surfaces;
- food brought from home;
- cooking activities;
- messy play;
- playdough;
- celebrations; and
- food used within curriculum activities.

The DfE nutrition guidance specifically highlights the need to consider cross-contact and food used in activities such as playdough and craft.

---

11. Food Sharing

Food provided is suitable for all children. Children must not share food unless this is an activity that has been specifically planned and risk assessed by staff.

Staff must be particularly vigilant where children have known allergies.

Parents/carers will be informed of the potential risks associated with children bringing food from home for sharing.

Items of food sent in from home, e.g. for a child's birthday, are not consumed on school premises. This food would be handed to parents at the end of the session.

---

12. Drinks

Children will have appropriate access to drinks throughout the day.

Drinks must:

- be appropriate for the child's age and developmental needs;
- be clearly identifiable where required;
- comply with individual dietary/medical requirements; and
- be provided in an appropriate cup, bottle or specialist drinking equipment.

Children requiring specialist drinking equipment or support will have this identified in their individual plan.

---

13. Promoting Independence

Safe eating should also support children's development and independence.

Staff will encourage children, according to their individual ability, to:

- choose between appropriate foods;
- use cups and cutlery;
- develop self-feeding skills;
- communicate preferences;
- recognise when they have had enough;
- participate in preparing food safely;
- develop appropriate table manners;
- interact socially with other children; and
- gradually take greater responsibility for their eating.

For children with SEND, independence will be considered at the child's individual developmental level.

---

14. Supporting Children Who Are Reluctant to Eat

Staff will provide a calm and positive approach to eating.

Children will not be:

- forced to eat;
- threatened or punished for refusing food;
- made to feel ashamed about their food choices; or
- pressured to finish food.

Staff will observe patterns of eating and share concerns with parents/carers and relevant professionals where appropriate.

Where eating difficulties are persistent or may indicate an underlying medical, developmental, sensory or emotional need, the nursery will consider whether further professional advice is required.

---

15. Mealtimes as Positive Experiences

Mealtimes and snacks provide opportunities to develop:

- communication;
- social interaction;
- independence;
- fine motor skills;
- self-care;
- vocabulary;
- turn-taking;
- relationships; and
- positive attitudes towards food.

Staff will model positive behaviour and provide a calm, welcoming environment.

---

16. Food Hygiene

All food will be prepared, stored and served in accordance with appropriate food hygiene requirements.

Staff will follow procedures relating to:

- handwashing;

- cleaning;
- food storage;
- temperature control;
- food preparation;
- safe handling;
- allergen information;
- cleaning equipment; and
- disposal of food.

Staff who handle food will receive appropriate food hygiene and allergy awareness training.

---

17. Choking

All staff must understand that choking can be silent and must remain alert to children who may be choking.

Staff must know the nursery's emergency procedure for choking and maintain appropriate paediatric first aid knowledge.

Following a choking incident requiring intervention:

- the child will receive appropriate first aid/emergency medical attention;
- parents/carers will be informed;
- the incident will be recorded;
- the child's individual risk assessment/feeding plan will be reviewed where appropriate;
- the DSL and headteacher will be informed where required; and
- appropriate learning and preventative action will be identified.

Current early years guidance expects providers to record details of choking incidents requiring intervention and inform parents/carers.

---

18. Allergic Reaction

If a child shows signs of an allergic reaction:

1. Staff will follow the child's Allergy Action Plan/Individual Healthcare Plan;
2. Emergency medication will be administered in accordance with the child's plan and staff training;
3. Emergency medical assistance will be sought where required;
4. Parents/carers will be informed;

5. The incident will be recorded; and
6. The child's plan and risk assessment will be reviewed.

Where a child experiences a serious allergic reaction, the nursery will ensure that appropriate follow-up and review take place.

---

19. Safeguarding

Safe eating and feeding is part of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.

Any concern that a child:

- is not receiving appropriate food;
- is being deliberately deprived of food;
- is being forced or inappropriately pressured to eat;
- is being fed in an unsafe manner;
- is experiencing unexplained injuries associated with feeding;
- has an unmet medical or feeding need;
- is not receiving food in accordance with an agreed medical plan; or
- may be experiencing neglect or abuse associated with eating or feeding

must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The Safe Eating and Feeding Policy does not replace the school's safeguarding procedures.

---

20. Children with SEND

Staff at Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School recognise that children with SEND may experience additional barriers to safe and independent eating.

These may include:

- physical difficulties;
- sensory differences;
- communication difficulties;
- difficulties recognising or communicating hunger, thirst or discomfort;
- difficulties chewing or swallowing;
- dependence on adults for feeding;
- specialist seating or equipment;
- restricted diets; and

- medical or nutritional needs.

Staff will make reasonable adjustments to ensure children can participate safely and meaningfully in eating experiences.

Individual plans will be reviewed regularly and updated when children's needs change.

---

21. Working with Parents and Professionals

Parents/carers are important partners in supporting safe eating and feeding.

The nursery will:

- obtain relevant information before a child starts;
- communicate regularly with parents/carers;
- share concerns promptly;
- involve parents/carers in individual plans;
- seek professional advice where appropriate; and
- review arrangements when children's needs change.

Where professional advice conflicts with existing nursery arrangements, the headteacher will seek clarification from the relevant professionals before changes are made.

---

22. Staff Training

Staff will receive appropriate information and training relevant to their responsibilities.

This may include:

- paediatric first aid;
- choking awareness and response;
- food hygiene;
- allergy awareness;
- administration of emergency medication;
- specialist feeding;
- tube feeding;
- positioning;
- SEND-related feeding needs; and
- individual child-specific training.

Staff undertaking specialist feeding must be appropriately trained and competent.

Training and competency records will be maintained.

---

23. Recording and Reporting

The nursery will maintain appropriate records relating to:

- individual feeding plans;
- allergy action plans;
- healthcare plans;
- risk assessments;
- staff training;
- choking incidents;
- allergic reactions;
- feeding concerns;
- professional advice; and
- reviews of individual arrangements.

Records will be stored securely and shared appropriately in accordance with data protection and safeguarding requirements.

---

24. Review of Individual Arrangements

Individual eating and feeding arrangements will be reviewed:

- at least annually;
- when the child's needs change;
- following a significant incident;
- following professional advice;
- following a choking incident;
- following an allergic reaction; or
- when staff identify that current arrangements are no longer effective.

---

25. Monitoring and Review of the Policy

The headteacher will monitor implementation of this policy and ensure that:

- staff understand their responsibilities;
- training remains current;
- individual plans are reviewed;

- incidents are appropriately recorded;
- parents/carers are informed appropriately;
- practice is monitored; and
- the policy remains consistent with current EYFS requirements and guidance.

The policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance or the needs of children attending Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School.

Related Policies and Documents

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Medical Needs Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Food Hygiene procedures
- Food Handling and Preparation Policy
- Allergy/Anaphylaxis procedures
- SEND Policy
- Equality and Accessibility Policy
- Individual Healthcare Plans
- Individual Eating and Feeding Plans
- Eating and Feeding Risk Assessments
- Choking Incident Record
- Food Standards Agency early years food choking hazards
- Staff Code of Conduct