

WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL, HEDGEHOGS NURSERY & SUNBEAMS CLUB



Feeding & Weaning Policy EYFS

(Including Weaning and Bottle Feeding)



**Updated: July 2025
Review Date: July 2026**

Hedgehogs & Squirrels

At Woodlands Primary School, Hedgehogs Nursery and Sunbeams Club (the school), we are committed to providing safe, hygienic, and nurturing bottle-feeding and weaning practices that support the health, development, and routines of each child, as appropriate. Our bottle-feeding and weaning policy is designed to promote consistency between nursery and home, for our youngest learners, or those with an additional need, while ensuring every child's individual feeding needs are met with care and sensitivity.

Aims of the Policy

- To ensure all babies and toddlers receive appropriate nutrition in a safe and hygienic environment.
- To work in close partnership with parents and carers, respecting their feeding choices and routines.
- To follow safe preparation, storage, and feeding guidelines in line with NHS and Food Standards Agency recommendations.

Parent Responsibilities

- Parents are required to supply their child's formula (not ready made) or expressed breast milk each day in clearly labelled bottles or containers.
- Bottles of expressed milk must be labelled with the child's name.
- Any formula powder or breast milk provided must be ready to store or serve and must not be past its recommended use-by-time or date.
- If preferred, parents may provide labelled, unopened formula powder, which nursery staff will store on site, and prepare fresh each day as needed. They will label with date of opening.

Nursery Responsibilities

- Bottles of expressed breast milk will be stored in a dedicated fridge upon arrival and will be used within the recommended time frame that day.
- Staff will prepare formula feeds using hot water (above 70°C) if powdered milk is provided, following NHS guidelines.
- Staff will reheat bottles using a bottle warmer or warm water. **Microwaves are never used** for reheating milk, due to uneven heating and scalding risks. A probe will be used to test the temperature of breastmilk.
- Before feeding, staff will test the milk temperature on the inside of their wrist to ensure it is safe (body temperature).
- Each baby will be held by a key person or familiar staff member during bottle feeds to promote bonding and safety.
- Staff will never prop bottles when feeding or leave a child unattended while feeding.
- Tins to be opened and used within 28 days.

Hygiene and Cleaning

- All feeding equipment (bottles, teats, etc.) to be supplied by parents/carers. They must be sterilised at home before being brought on site for use.
- Bottles used in Hedgehogs will be put in the children's bags after they have been used and will be returned to parents for cleaning and sterilising.
- Staff will wash hands before and after handling bottles and feeding babies.
- Any unused milk remaining after a feed will be discarded, **milk is not stored for later use.**

Feeding Routines and Record-Keeping

- We will follow each child's individual feeding schedule, as agreed with parents.
- Any changes to feeding routines or preferences must be shared with staff promptly.
- A daily record will be kept of the time and amount of milk consumed and shared with parents at the end of the day.
- We respect each child's pace and developmental readiness to transition from bottle to cup and will support this process when the child and family are ready.

Transitioning to Cups

- From 12 months of age, or sooner if parents request it, we support children in gradually moving from bottle feeding to using an open-top cup or free-flow beaker.
- This transition will be done gently and in collaboration with parents.
- Water will be offered throughout the day and with meals in cups provided by families.

Allergies and Special Requirements

- Any allergies, intolerances, or dietary requirements must be clearly communicated to staff and documented in the child's care plan.
- Staff will take all necessary precautions to avoid cross-contamination and ensure safe feeding practices.

If parents have any concerns or would like to review their child's feeding plan, they must speak to their child's key person or the Hedgehogs Room Leader. They are there to support parents and their babies every step of the way.

Weaning for Nursery Room (Ages 9 Months to 2 Years)

In Hedgehogs, we aim to support both the child and their parents through the weaning process. By maintaining strong communication and responding to each child's individual needs, we help children develop a healthy relationship with food and build the foundation for a balanced diet.

Weaning Guidelines

Weaning should begin when the child is developmentally ready, and careful consideration must be given to any known or potential allergies. Our approach to weaning follows current NHS guidance, which can be found at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/solid-foods-weaning/>

We work closely with parents throughout the process to ensure the best nutritional outcomes and a positive experience for each child.

Staff Training

- All staff involved in feeding babies are required to have a Level 1 Food Safety qualification.
- Staff preparing food must and will hold a Level 2 Food Safety qualification.

Signs a Baby Is Ready to Start Weaning

In partnership with parents, we look for the following signs to determine a baby's readiness for weaning:

- The baby is around 6 months old.
- They can sit upright and hold their head steady.
- They are able to coordinate their eyes, hands, and mouth.
- They can swallow food (not push it out with their tongue).
- They may chew on their fists.
- They may wake at night when they previously slept through.
- They may begin to demand more milk feeds.

Initially, babies will not eat three meals a day. By 8–9 months of age, they typically move toward three meals daily, and by 12 months, this becomes consistent.

Our Approach to Weaning

If the child is being weaned when attending Hedgehogs, we will -

- Supervise all feeding and remain with the baby in case of choking.
- Allow babies to explore their food through touch and play.
- Encourage self-feeding when the baby shows interest (baby-led weaning), where appropriate and agreed with parents.
- Spoon-feed only when the baby opens their mouth, showing they are ready.
- Start with a few teaspoons of food once a day.
- Ensure hot food is cooled and tested before serving.
- Maintain a clear system of communication with parents to share information about new foods introduced.
- Avoid introducing any potential allergens at nursery until they have been safely tried at home.
- Introduce new foods gradually, one at a time, while monitoring closely for allergic reactions.

Stages of Weaning

Stage 1:

Is to begin with pureed or mashed fruits and vegetables such as sweet potato, carrot, apple, and pear, all soft-cooked and cooled before serving; baby rice or cereal mixed with the baby's usual milk may be provided if required. Then with parental consent, we gradually add:

- Soft-cooked meat (chicken, fish)
- Pasta, noodles, toast, and rice
- Mashed hard-boiled eggs
- Full-fat dairy products, such as yogurt and custard

Stage 2:

Finger foods that encourage babies to chew, such as banana slices and soft toast are introduced and there is a transition from purees to more mashed textures.

Stage 3:

When the child is ready, they will move on to full meals - these will either be provided by school or brought from home. Meals will be cut into small, manageable pieces, or prepared as required i.e., blended with some lumps, mashed or just cut up.

- Baby-led weaning: We understand some families prefer baby-led weaning.
- Babies may have finger foods when they are developmentally ready, as agreed with parents.
- All food is freshly prepared and blended to the appropriate weaning stage.

- Parents are welcome to supply sealed jars or pouches of baby food. These can be reheated in line with the manufacturer's guidance.
- We strictly adhere to all allergy and dietary requirements.

Drinks and Cups

- From 6 months, a cup with a lid can be introduced and offer sips of water with meals. Parents/carers will provide drinking cups with lids if required
- From 12 months, we will begin introducing open-top cups.
- Under 12 months boiled, cooled water will be given.
- Over 12 months, tap water will be provided.

Key Allergens

We will not introduce the following foods until they have been successfully tried at home:

- Cow's milk
- Eggs
- Wheat and gluten
- Nuts and peanuts (and products containing them)
- Seeds
- Celery
- Fish or shellfish

Feeding in the Hedgehogs and Squirrels Rooms

At Woodlands Primary School, Hedgehogs Nursery and Sunbeams Club (the school), we are committed to supporting the nutritional needs and routines of every child in our care. We understand that mealtimes are an important part of a child's development, and we aim to make feeding a calm, safe, and positive experience.

Aims

- To ensure that all children receive appropriate, balanced, and nutritious meals and snacks.
- To follow individual feeding routines in partnership with parents.
- To create a relaxed, supportive mealtime environment that promotes healthy eating habits.
- To maintain high standards of hygiene and safety during food preparation and feeding.

Partnership with Parents

- We work closely with parents to understand each child's feeding routine, preferences, allergies, and dietary needs.
- Parents are asked to inform the school of any changes to their child's diet or feeding habits.
- A daily record of what the child has eaten will be shared with parents, including the amount consumed and any reactions or concerns.

Mealtimes and Routines

- Children will be offered meals during the day along with healthy snacks and water throughout the day.
- We follow each child's home routine as closely as possible, particularly for younger children transitioning from milk feeds to solids.
- Mealtimes are unhurried and enjoyable, allowing children to explore food at their own pace.
- Staff will sit with the children during meals to offer support, model good eating habits, and encourage social interaction.
- Staff supporting feeding will hold a paediatric first aid qualification

Feeding Methods

- Children will be fed according to their developmental stage. This includes spoon-feeding, self-feeding with hands, or using utensils, as appropriate.
- We encourage independence and support children in learning to feed themselves when they show readiness.
- Finger foods are introduced gradually and safely in line with the child's developmental stage.
- Children will always be supervised when eating to reduce the risk of choking.
- Bottle feeding and the transition to cups will be supported in partnership with families.

Food Provision

- All meals and snacks are prepared with fresh, age-appropriate ingredients and follow a balanced, healthy diet.
- Food is prepared to suit each child's stage of weaning or dietary needs (e.g., mashed, chopped, or whole foods).
- We avoid added salt and sugar in all meals prepared in school.
- Food is cooled and tested before being given to a child.
- Children with food allergies or intolerances are given separate meals, and staff follow strict procedures to prevent cross-contamination.
- When food needs to be reheated, we ensure it's heated to a safe internal temperature, typically above 75°C, for at least 30 seconds, to eliminate harmful bacteria. Food should be reheated thoroughly, not just warmed on the surface, and only once.

Hygiene and Safety

- Paediatric first aid qualified adults are present at meal/snack times.
- All staff involved in feeding children hold appropriate food hygiene qualifications.
- Staff wash their hands before and after handling food and feeding children.
- Tables and highchairs are cleaned and sanitised before and after use.
- Children's hands and faces are wiped before and after meals.
- Utensils, cups, and bowls are cleaned and sterilised in line with hygiene standards.
- When food needs to be reheated, we ensure it's heated to a safe internal temperature, typically above 75°C, for at least 30 seconds, to eliminate harmful bacteria. Food should be reheated thoroughly, not just warmed on the surface, and only once.

Allergies and Dietary Requirements

- We work in partnership with parents to manage any food allergies, intolerances, or cultural and religious dietary requirements.
- A care plan will be developed for any child with allergies, and staff will be fully briefed.
- All allergens are clearly labelled, and separate utensils and preparation areas are used when necessary.