# St. Lawrence Church of England Primary School

# E.Y.F.S. HEALTHY FOOD, NUTRITION & SAFER EATING POLICY

**SEPTEMBER 2026**

**Policy written by:** Helen Lonsdale (E.Y.F.S. Lead)

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**Approved by:** David Oludotun-Fasanya (Chair of Governors)

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**Our Approach**

At St. Lawrence Church of England Primary School, we recognise that the Early Years Foundation Stage is an important time for developing healthy eating habits and a positive relationship with food.

Our E.Y.F.S. provision aims to ensure that children experience food and mealtimes as positive, social and enjoyable experiences.

We provide children with opportunities to:

- experience a variety of healthy foods;
- develop independence at snack and lunchtime;
- drink water regularly;
- learn about healthy eating;
- develop good oral-health habits;
- explore different tastes, smells, textures and foods;
- develop food preparation and hygiene skills;
- understand where food comes from;
- make healthy choices appropriate to their age;
- develop positive attitudes towards food; and
- learn to listen to their own bodies and recognise when they are hungry or full.

We recognise that every child is an individual. Dietary requirements, allergies, medical needs, cultural and religious requirements, sensory preferences and developmental differences will be taken into account.

**Statutory and Guidance Framework**

This policy has regard to:

- Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework for Group and School-Based Providers – September 2026;
- Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance, Department for Education;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years;
- Relevant food hygiene and food safety requirements;
- Lancashire County Council Early Years guidance;
- Lancashire healthy eating and oral-health guidance;
- NHS guidance relating to healthy eating and children's oral health; and
- The Eatwell Guide.

The current E.Y.F.S. Statutory Framework requires providers, where they provide meals, snacks and drinks, to ensure these are healthy, balanced and nutritious. Providers must also ensure that drinking water is available and take reasonable steps to prevent choking.
The DfE Early Years Foundation Stage Nutrition Guidance supports early-years providers in meeting these requirements.

**E.Y.F.S. Food and Nutrition Principles**

*Our approach is based on five key principles:*

**Healthy**

We provide and promote nutritious food and drinks.

**Safe**

Children are appropriately supervised and food is prepared safely, with allergies and choking risks carefully managed.

**Positive**

Children are encouraged to explore food without pressure or shame.

**Independent**

Children are encouraged to develop age-appropriate independence at mealtimes.

**Inclusive**

Individual dietary, medical, cultural, religious, sensory and SEND needs are respected and supported.

**E.Y.F.S. Snack Provision**

Snack is an important part of the Reception routine and provides opportunities for children to develop independence, social skills and healthy eating habits.

Where snack is provided by school, we aim to offer a variety of nutritious foods, including:

- fresh fruit;
- vegetables;
- bread or other starchy foods

We will provide variety and introduce children to different tastes and textures. Children will be encouraged to explore unfamiliar foods alongside familiar foods. Snack will not routinely include foods or drinks that are high in added sugar.

**Drinking Water**

Fresh drinking water will be available to children throughout the school day.
Children will be encouraged to drink regularly, particularly:

- after physical activity;
- after outdoor play;
- during warm weather; and
- when they indicate that they are thirsty.

Children will have access to their named water bottles in accordance with the school's E.Y.F.S. arrangements. Water bottles should contain plain water unless a specific medical requirement has been agreed.

**Developing Independence**

Snack and lunchtime provide valuable opportunities for children to develop independence. Children will be encouraged, according to their individual stage of development, to:

- wash their hands;
- collect their snack;
- choose from available options;
- pour their own water;
- use cups appropriately;
- use cutlery;
- open containers where possible;
- serve themselves where appropriate;
- clear away their own plate or cup;
- wipe their place; and
- ask an adult for help when needed.

Staff will provide support where necessary but will avoid doing things for children that they are able to do themselves.

**Positive Mealtimes**

E.Y.F.S. snack and mealtimes will be calm, social and positive. Where possible, adults will sit with children and model positive eating behaviours. Staff will:

- talk positively about food;
- model good table manners;
- encourage conversation;
- give children sufficient time to eat;
- encourage children to drink water;
- support children to use appropriate cutlery; and
- encourage children to develop independence.

Children will not be rushed unnecessarily.

**Children will not be forced to eat**

We recognise that young children have different appetites and preferences. Children will not be forced, threatened or pressured to eat. Staff will encourage children to explore food through:

- looking;
- smelling;
- touching;
- talking about;
- tasting; and
- gradually becoming familiar with new foods.

Children will not be made to feel embarrassed or ashamed if they dislike a food or choose not to eat it. Staff will not use food as a reward or punishment.

**Food Exploration**

Food exploration is an important part of E.Y.F.S. learning. Children may be given opportunities to:

- taste different fruits and vegetables;
- compare flavours and textures;
- discuss favourite foods;
- prepare simple foods;
- bake;
- make simple recipes;
- grow fruit, vegetables and herbs;
- harvest food;
- smell and touch different ingredients; and
- talk about where food comes from.

These experiences support learning across the E.Y.F.S., including:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development;
- Physical Development;
- Communication and Language;
- Understanding the World; and
- Expressive Arts and Design.

**Healthy Eating Education**

Healthy eating will be taught through everyday routines, conversations and planned E.Y.F.S. learning. Children will develop an age-appropriate understanding that:

- food helps our bodies grow;
- food gives us energy to play and learn;
- our bodies need a variety of foods;
- fruit and vegetables are important;
- water is important for keeping our bodies hydrated;
- some foods should only be eaten occasionally; and
- looking after our teeth is part of looking after our bodies.

The focus will be on healthy choices and enjoyment of food, rather than calorie counting, dieting or weight.

**Oral Health**

Good oral health will form part of the E.Y.F.S. children's learning about looking after their bodies. Children will learn about:

- brushing teeth twice a day;
- using fluoride toothpaste;
- drinking water;
- limiting sugary foods and drinks;
- choosing healthy snacks; and
- visiting the dentist.

The school will avoid routinely providing sweets, chocolate or sugary drinks as part of E.Y.F.S. snack provision.

Our school participates in a supervised toothbrushing programme, this will be managed in accordance with the relevant local arrangements and guidance.

**Food Allergies**

The safety of children with food allergies is a priority. Parents/carers must inform the school of any known:

- food allergy;
- food intolerance;
- medically diagnosed dietary requirement; or
- other medical condition affecting food or drink.

Relevant information will be recorded and shared with staff who need to know. Where a child has a diagnosed allergy requiring emergency medication, staff will follow the child's individual healthcare plan and the school's allergy and anaphylaxis procedures.

Staff must know:

- which children have significant food allergies;
- what foods must be avoided;
- where emergency medication is stored;
- how to recognise an allergic reaction; and
- what action to take in an emergency.

Children must not be expected to manage their own allergies.

Emergency medication, including adrenaline auto-injectors where prescribed, must be readily accessible whenever children are eating.

**Dietary Requirements**

The school will make appropriate arrangements for children who require different food because of:

- allergies;
- food intolerances;
- medical conditions;
- SEND;
- sensory needs;
- religious beliefs; or
- cultural requirements.

Parents/carers should provide accurate and up-to-date information about their child's needs. Where a child's dietary needs are complex, the E.Y.F.S. team will work with parents/carers, the SENCO and relevant health professionals where appropriate.

**SEND and Sensory Needs**

Some children may experience difficulties with eating because of sensory or developmental differences. This may include children who:

- eat a very restricted range of foods;
- dislike particular textures;
- dislike mixed foods;
- are sensitive to smells;
- become distressed at mealtimes;
- have difficulty chewing or swallowing;
- struggle to use cutlery; or
- have an established feeding difficulty.

Staff will respond sensitively and will not force a child to eat. Where appropriate, staff will work with parents/carers and the SENCO to identify strategies that support the individual child. Where specialist advice is required, the school may work with appropriate health professionals. An individual support plan may be used where a child's needs require additional arrangements.

**Choking Prevention**

Young children are at particular risk of choking because their chewing and swallowing skills are still developing. The E.Y.F.S. requires providers to take reasonable steps to prevent choking and ensure that children are appropriately supervised when eating.
Staff will:

- ensure children are appropriately seated when eating;
- ensure children remain appropriately supervised;
- position themselves so they can see children's faces;
- discourage children from eating while walking or playing;
- ensure food is prepared appropriately;
- cut or prepare foods appropriately where required;
- follow current safer-eating guidance; and
- at least one person holding a current paediatric first aid certificate will be available at all times when children are present, in line with E.Y.F.S. requirements. Staff will receive guidance on responding to choking incidents and summoning emergency assistance.

Children will not be allowed to eat while lying down, running or engaging in physical play. Examples of foods that require particular care include whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, large berries, sausages, hard sweets, popcorn, marshmallows, whole nuts and chunks of hard fruit or vegetables. Grapes and cherry tomatoes will always be cut lengthways into quarters before being offered to children.

**Supervision During Eating**

Children must remain within the sight and hearing of an adult while eating. Staffing arrangements during snack and mealtimes will continue to meet E.Y.F.S. supervision requirements. Where possible, adults will sit facing the children. Staff will monitor children for:

- choking;
- allergic reactions;
- difficulty chewing or swallowing;
- food sharing;
- distress;
- illness; and
- other signs that a child requires assistance.

Staff should be particularly vigilant where children have known allergies, SEND or medical needs. The current E.Y.F.S. framework specifically highlights the importance of adults being able to monitor children while eating and prevent food sharing and identify unexpected allergic reactions.

**Food Sharing**

Children should not routinely share food with other children. This is particularly important because staff may not know whether another child has an allergy, intolerance or dietary restriction. Children will be taught that they should only eat food that has been provided

for them or approved by an adult. Staff will supervise appropriately to minimise the risk of accidental food sharing.

**Food Hygiene**

Food provided to E.Y.F.S. children will be prepared, stored and served safely. Staff will follow appropriate procedures for:

- handwashing;
- cleaning surfaces;
- food preparation;
- food storage;
- checking use-by dates;
- preventing cross-contamination;
- disposal of food waste; and
- cleaning equipment.

Staff involved in food preparation or handling will receive appropriate instruction and training to ensure food is prepared and served safely. Children will wash their hands before eating and after activities involving food.

**Cooking and Food Preparation**

Cooking and food preparation may be used as part of the E.Y.F.S. curriculum.
Children may have opportunities to:

- wash fruit and vegetables;
- mix ingredients;
- measure;
- knead;
- use age-appropriate utensils;
- follow simple recipes;
- taste ingredients;
- prepare simple snacks; and
- talk about healthy ingredients.

Appropriate risk assessments will be completed.

Staff will consider:

- allergies;
- choking risks;
- food hygiene;
- use of utensils;
- hot surfaces;
- food preparation areas; and
- individual children's needs.

**Food and celebrations**

Parents/carers should not send foods containing nuts or other restricted allergens where this has been identified by the school. Any food brought from home for celebrations will be subject to the school's allergy, safety and hygiene arrangements. Food may occasionally be included as part of a special event, cultural experience or celebration. Where food is provided:

- staff will check allergy and dietary information;
- food will be age-appropriate;
- appropriate hygiene procedures will be followed;
- children will be supervised; and
- sugary foods will not become a routine part of E.Y.F.S. provision.

The school will aim to ensure that celebrations are inclusive and that children are able to participate regardless of dietary requirements.

**Food Refusal and Limited Eating**

Staff recognise that some Reception children may eat very small amounts or have a limited range of preferred foods. Staff will:

- remain calm and positive;
- avoid pressure;
- encourage children to explore food;
- monitor the child's overall wellbeing;
- communicate significant concerns to parents/carers; and
- seek advice from the SENCO or relevant health professionals where appropriate.

If a child regularly eats very little, becomes distressed around food or has an increasingly restricted diet, this will be discussed with parents/carers. Staff will not attempt to diagnose feeding difficulties.

**Food and Safeguarding**

Staff will remain alert to concerns relating to food or eating which may indicate that a child requires additional support or may be experiencing neglect. Concerns may include:

- persistent hunger;
- a child regularly reporting having no food at home;
- significant changes in eating behaviour;
- taking or hiding food;
- distress around food;
- unexplained physical symptoms; or
- other concerns about the child's wellbeing.

Any safeguarding concern will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

**Staff as Role Models**

E.Y.F.S. staff are important role models for children's attitudes towards food. Adults will:

- model healthy eating;
- speak positively about different foods;
- avoid describing foods as "good" or "bad" in a way that may create anxiety;
- avoid negative comments about children's bodies or weight;
- avoid discussing dieting with children;
- model good table manners;
- encourage drinking water; and
- show enjoyment of a variety of healthy foods.

**Working with Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers are important partners in developing healthy eating habits. The E.Y.F.S. team will communicate with families about:

- snack arrangements;
- allergies;
- dietary requirements;
- children's eating patterns;
- healthy eating;
- oral health;
- water bottles;
- food-related activities; and
- any concerns about a child's eating.

Parents/carers will be encouraged to share information about changes to their child's dietary or medical needs.

## Responsibilities

E.Y.F.S. Lead

The E.Y.F.S. Lead is responsible for:

- overseeing implementation of this policy;
- ensuring staff understand E.Y.F.S. food and nutrition expectations;
- monitoring snack provision;
- ensuring allergies and dietary requirements are appropriately managed;
- working with parents/carers;
- liaising with the SENCO where appropriate; and
- reviewing the policy.

E.Y.F.S. Staff

All E.Y.F.S. staff are responsible for:

- following this policy;
- supervising children appropriately;
- following allergy and medical procedures;
- supporting healthy eating;
- promoting independence;
- following food hygiene procedures; and
- reporting concerns.

SENCO

The SENCO will support staff where a child's food or eating needs are related to SEND or require additional provision.

DSL

The DSL will be involved where concerns relating to food or eating raise safeguarding concerns.

## Monitoring

The E.Y.F.S. Lead will monitor:

- snack provision;
- children's access to water;
- children's experiences at snack and lunchtime;
- allergy arrangements;
- food hygiene;
- choking incidents;
- children's independence;
- food-related learning;
- parent communication; and
- children's individual dietary needs.

Any choking incident requiring intervention will be recorded and reviewed in accordance with the E.Y.F.S. requirements.

**E.Y.F.S. Staff – Quick Reference**

At St Lawrence we:

**PROVIDE** healthy and nutritious food.
**PROMOTE** drinking water.
**SUPERVISE** children carefully while eating.
**PREVENT** choking and food sharing.
**CHECK** allergy and dietary information.
**ENCOURAGE** independence.
**EXPLORE** new foods without pressure.
**MODEL** positive eating habits.
**SUPPORT** individual SEND and medical needs.
**TEACH** children how to look after their bodies.
**RESPECT** every child's individual relationship with food.

**Our Key Message:**

## "We help children to explore, enjoy and learn about healthy food."