



The Mead Infant and Nursery School

Food and Nutrition Policy

School name: The Mead Infant and Nursery School

Level of ratification: Headteacher

Reviewed Autumn 1 2025

Status & review cycle: every 2 years

Next review date: Autumn 1 2027

1. Introduction

At The Mead Infant and Nursery School, we recognise the importance of a healthy, balanced diet in supporting children's growth, development, and readiness to learn. This policy outlines our approach to food and nutrition for children in Nursery and Reception, including school meals and packed lunches. It is informed by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework and School Food Standards.

2. Aims

- To ensure all children receive a healthy, balanced, and nutritious diet during their time in school.
- To support children in developing healthy eating habits for life.
- To promote positive attitudes towards food, mealtimes, and healthy choices.
- To work in partnership with families to encourage consistency between home and school.
- To respect and cater for children's medical, cultural, and dietary needs.

3. Provision of Food and Drink

- Children have access to fresh drinking water throughout the day.
- A daily snack of fruit, vegetables, or milk is provided free of charge as part of the school fruit and vegetable scheme. Milk is provided for Nursery children through the Milk scheme.
- Staff encourage children to try new foods in a positive and supportive environment.

4. School Dinners

Our school dinners are provided in line with the School Food Standards and ensure a varied, balanced diet, including:

- A portion of fruit and/or vegetables every day.
- An emphasis on wholegrains, fibre, and reduced sugar.
- Inclusion of protein sources such as meat, fish, eggs, beans, and pulses.

Special dietary requirements (medical, cultural, or ethical) are respected, with individual arrangements made in consultation with parents and carers. Lunchtimes are a valued part of the school day, where staff model good eating habits and support social skills.

5. Packed Lunches

Parents and carers who provide packed lunches are encouraged to follow our healthy eating guidance which includes support regarding food preparation to avoid choking hazards, a healthy packed lunch guide and also portion advice (see appendix 1, 2 and 3)

Parents are advised to include:

- At least one portion of fruit and one portion of vegetables.
- A carbohydrate (e.g., bread, rice, pasta).

A source of protein (e.g., lean meat, fish, eggs, beans, pulses).

- Dairy food (e.g., cheese, yogurt).

Parents are advised to avoid:

- Sweets, chocolate bars, or fizzy drinks.
- High-sugar snacks such as cakes or pastries (occasional treats permitted on special occasions).

Parents must not include

- **Nuts and nut products including anything containing nuts, including peanut butter and Nutella, sesame seeds, pesto and hummus – to ensure the safety of children with allergies.**

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6. Allergies, Cultural and Dietary Needs

The school is a nut-free environment. This includes foods such as pesto, sesame seeds and hummus.

Staff work closely with families and health professionals to ensure that children with allergies, intolerances, or medical conditions are kept safe and their dietary needs are met.

The school respects and accommodates cultural and religious practices, such as vegetarian, vegan, halal, kosher, or avoidance of certain foods during religious festivals.

The School supports children with sensory or SEND needs by meeting their dietary requirements appropriately

Any food allergies, cultural or dietary needs are noted on Arbor and all staff including lunch staff are aware of any dietary needs or allergies. These needs are communicated via a dietary needs sheet which is kept in each classroom.

No child is ever made to feel different because of their dietary needs.

7. Learning About Food

Food and nutrition are embedded within the EYFS curriculum through cooking activities, gardening, stories, role play, and discussions about healthy lifestyles. Children are encouraged to develop independence, for example, pouring drinks, serving food, and making choices. Celebrations may include food, but we encourage healthy options and alternatives where possible, including recognition of cultural food traditions.

8. Partnership with Parents and Carers

- We value open communication with families about children's eating habits, preferences, and needs.
- Information and guidance on healthy eating are shared through newsletters, workshops, and leaflets.

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/>



The Mead Infant and Nursery School Healthy Packed Lunch Guide

To help every child stay healthy, happy, and ready to learn, please follow our packed lunch guidance.

✓ Please Include:

- **Fruit and Vegetables** – apple slices, grapes (cut lengthways), cucumber sticks, carrot sticks, berries.
- **Starchy Foods** – sandwiches, wraps, pitta bread, pasta, rice, couscous, breadsticks.
- **Protein Foods** – lean meat, chicken, tuna, boiled egg, hummus, beans, lentils.
- **Dairy or Alternatives** – cheese, plain or low-sugar yogurt, milk-based pudding.
- **Drinks** – water or plain milk.

✗ Please Avoid:

- Sweets, chocolate bars, fizzy or energy drinks.
- Cakes, pastries, high-sugar snacks (except for special occasions).
- Crisps and savoury snacks more than once a week.
- Nuts and nut products (including peanut butter, Nutella, nutty cereal bars) – **we are a nut-free school.**
- Sugary yogurts or desserts – choose plain or low-sugar instead.
- Whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, or round foods – always cut lengthways.

✗ Not included:

- Nuts and nut products including anything containing nuts, including peanut butter and Nutella, sesame seeds, pesto and hummus – to ensure the safety of children with allergies.

🌍 Cultural and Dietary Needs

We respect all families' preferences. Please let us know if your child requires: - Vegetarian, vegan, or pescatarian food. - Halal or kosher food. - Avoidance of certain foods during festivals.

⚠ Safety and Hygiene

- Label the outside of your child's lunchbox with their name.
- Use an insulated bag and ice pack for perishable foods.
- We cannot refrigerate or reheat food from home.

🤝 Support with Eating and Dietary Needs

If your child has any difficulties with eating, feeding, or dietary requirements, please speak to a member of staff. We will work with you to support your child's needs and ensure mealtimes are positive and inclusive.

Together we can help children enjoy healthy, safe, and balanced meals every day.

Portion sizes for children aged 5 and under



Food group	Portion size
A variety of fruit and vegetables (at least 5 portions each day)	
Cooked and raw	40g
Carbohydrates (4 portions each day)	
Cooked rice, pasta and potatoes	80g
Bread	25g
Average sized potato	1
Dairy and alternatives (3 portions each day)	
Milk	150ml
Cheese (sliced or grated)	15g
Cottage cheese	30g
Plain yoghurt	60g
Protein (2 portions each day)	
Baked beans	55g
Egg	55g
Meat, fish and poultry	40g
Most pulses and hummus	40g

Safer Eating at The Mead

Your role is vital. **Close supervision, calm encouragement, and quick action** help keep children safe during mealtimes.

- Children **must always be within sight and hearing** of an adult while eating.
- Whilst children are eating there should always be a member of staff in the room with a **valid paediatric first aid certificate**

Supervision

- Choking can be silent – do not rely on noise or coughing.
- Where possible, **sit facing the children** so you can see how they are eating.
- Stay alert at all times – avoid distractions.

If a Child Chokes

- Act immediately and follow your school's choking/first aid procedures.
- Stay calm and get help if needed.
- Never leave other children unsupervised.

After an Incident

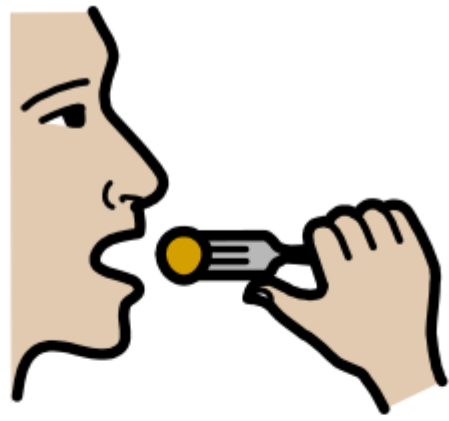
- Any choking incident that needs intervention must be recorded:
 - What happened
 - Where it happened
 - What food was involved
- Ensure parents/carers are informed.
- Records are reviewed to spot patterns and reduce future risks.

Safe Eating Practices

- Encourage children to:
 - Sit down while eating
 - Take small bites
 - Chew food properly
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- Discourage:
 - Talking with food in their mouth
 - Rushing food
 - Walking around while eating
- Do not allow food sharing – this reduces choking and allergy risks.

Food Safety & Health

- Food should be prepared in a way that reduces choking risk.
- Be extra vigilant with higher-risk foods (e.g. hard, round, sticky foods).
- Be aware of children with allergies and watch for unexpected reactions.
- Fresh drinking water must always be available.



Eat safely



Sit down



Small bites



No sharing



Chew your food



Keep calm



Quiet voices



Ask an adult for help



Tell a grown up if something is wrong



Ask a grown up for help