



St Nicolas Playgroup

Safer Eating Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures and responsibilities for ensuring a safe and healthy eating environment for all children aged 9 months to 4 years attending St Nicolas Playgroup. It reflects the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, including the updated guidance effective from September 2025, and aims to minimise risks associated with food, such as choking, allergic reactions, and foodborne illnesses. We are committed to fostering positive eating habits and ensuring every child receives appropriate and safe nutrition.

2. Choking Prevention

Minimising the risk of choking is paramount. Our procedures include:

- **Supervision:** Children will be closely observed and listened to at all times while eating and drinking. Supervising staff will sit facing the children to enable quick reactions to any signs of choking (which can be silent) or allergic reactions. Children will be supervised at all times while eating and drinking by at least two staff members.
- **Seating:** All children will be seated safely upright in a highchair or an appropriately sized low chair at a table during mealtimes and snacks. Eating will only take place in designated areas, free from distractions, and children will be discouraged from eating while lying down, running, or playing.
- **Food Preparation (Choking Hazards):**
 - Food will be prepared and served in a suitable way for each child's individual developmental needs, considering their stage of weaning and ability to chew and swallow, rather than solely their age.
 - Food will be cut into narrow batons, mashed, pureed, or finely chopped as appropriate for the child's developmental stage. **Fruit and vegetables will be prepared in a way that minimises the risk of choking. These should be cut length-ways into quarters, or into thin batons or slices, rather than chunks that could get stuck in the throat.**
 - The following foods - known to be high choking risks will be avoided or modified appropriately. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Whole nuts and seeds avoided.
 - Hard, raw vegetables (e.g., carrots, apples) grated finely or cooked until soft for weaning infants or cut onto thin batons or slices for those over 2.



- Uncut round foods (e.g., whole grapes, cherry tomatoes, olives, berries, melon balls) will always be cut lengthways into halves or quarters.
- Sausages, hot dogs, and meat sticks will be cut lengthways into strips, then into small pieces.
- Cheese will be cut into slices rather than chunks.
- Marshmallows, chewy sweets, and hard candies avoided.
- Popcorn avoided.
- Crisps, and rice cakes given to children where suitable for age and texture.
- Peels will be removed from fruits like apples, nectarines, and grapes if they present a choking risk for the child's developmental stage.
- **Staff Training:** All staff involved in supervising children during mealtimes will be trained in paediatric first aid (PFA), with a valid PFA certificate. A PFA-trained member of staff will always be present in the room when children are eating. Staff will also be familiar with how to respond to a choking incident.

3. Food Preparation

All food provided by the playgroup will be healthy, balanced, and nutritious, in line with the EYFS nutrition guidance effective from September 2025.

- **Suitability:** Food will be prepared to an appropriate consistency and texture for the age and developmental stage of the children (e.g., pureed, mashed, soft finger foods, or finely chopped).
- **Weaning:** We will work closely with parents/carers to understand each child's stage of introducing solid foods and the textures they are familiar with at home. We will support children to move on to new textures and foods at a pace right for the individual child.
- **From Scratch:** Wherever possible, food will be prepared from scratch in the setting, rather than providing pre-made foods from shops (e.g., puree pouches), to ensure control over ingredients and nutritional content.
- **Healthy Choices:** We will take steps to ensure children are given healthy snack choices and will limit processed foods high in sugar or fat to very rare occasions only, i.e. Christmas parties, teddy bears picnic etc.
- **Infant Formula:** If infant formula is prepared on-site, it will be made with freshly boiled water that has been allowed to cool, following manufacturer instructions carefully. All bottles, teats, and equipment should be sterilised and drip-dried before use. Breast milk will be labelled with the child's name and date of expression and stored appropriately.



4. Staff Involvement and Supervision at Mealtimes

Effective staff involvement and supervision are crucial for safety and positive mealtime experiences.

- **Ratios:** Appropriate adult-to-child ratios will be maintained during mealtimes to ensure adequate supervision.
- **Active Supervision:** Staff will actively supervise children, sitting with them and facing them to observe for choking, allergic reactions, or food swapping.
- **Role Modelling:** Staff will model positive eating behaviours, encourage children to chew food well, and promote a calm and enjoyable mealtime atmosphere.
- **Responsive Feeding:** Babies will be fed responsively according to their hunger and fullness cues. Children will never be forced to finish food.
- **Communication:** Staff will encourage children to communicate their needs and will listen to them during mealtimes.

5. Managing Intolerances and Allergies

We are committed to safely managing all food allergies and intolerances.

- **Information Gathering:** Before a child starts at the setting, comprehensive information regarding any special dietary requirements, preferences, food allergies, and intolerances will be gathered from parents/carers. This information will be regularly reviewed and updated.
- **Information Sharing:** This vital information will be shared with all staff involved in the preparation, handling, and serving of food, and will be easily accessible (e.g., displayed in the kitchen and serving areas, with details of children with allergies).
- **Designated Checker:** At each mealtime and snack time, a specific member of staff will be responsible for checking that the food provided meets all the requirements for each child, particularly those with allergies or intolerances.
- **Allergy Action Plans:** For children with known allergies, an individual allergy action plan will be developed in ongoing discussion with parents/carers and, where appropriate, health professionals. These plans will follow recognised guidance (e.g., British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology - BSACI).
- **Staff Awareness & Training:** All staff will receive regular training and be fully aware of:
 - The symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis.
 - The difference between food allergies and intolerances.
 - That allergies can develop at any time, especially during the introduction of solid foods.
 - How to administer prescribed medication (e.g., adrenaline auto-injectors) in an emergency.



- **Cross-Contamination Prevention:** Strict measures will be in place to prevent cross-contamination of allergens, including:
 - Dedicated preparation areas or strict cleaning protocols for surfaces and utensils.
 - Careful reading of all food labels, as ingredients can change.
 - Clear labelling of all stored food and containers.
 - A "no sharing" policy for food brought from home.
 - Thorough handwashing for all children and staff before and after meals/snacks.
- **Emergency Procedures:** Staff will know the warning signs of an allergic reaction (e.g., difficulty breathing, swollen lips/mouth, collapsing) and will immediately call 999 in the event of a serious allergic reaction or anaphylaxis. Emergency medication will be easily accessible.

6. Food Hygiene

High standards of food hygiene are maintained at all times to prevent foodborne illnesses.

- **Food Safety Management System:** All food is prepared and served according to our established Food Safety Management System (e.g., Safer Food, Better Business for Childminders/Early Years, or HACCP principles).
- **Staff Competence & Training:** All staff involved in food preparation and serving are appropriately trained in food hygiene (e.g., Level 2 Food Hygiene for Early Years) and supervised.
- **Hand Hygiene:**
 - All staff will wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling food, after using the toilet, and after any contact with bodily fluids.
 - Children will be taught and supported to wash, rinse, and dry their hands correctly before and after eating.
- **Cleaning & Sterilisation:**
 - All food preparation surfaces, utensils, and equipment will be cleaned and sanitised thoroughly before and after use, and at regular intervals as part of a cleaning schedule.
 - Baby bottles, teats, and feeding equipment will be sterilised before each use.
- **Food Storage:** Food will be stored safely at correct temperatures (e.g., refrigeration between 1°C and 4°C for perishable items) and covered to prevent contamination.
- **Temperature Control:** Food will be cooked to the correct internal temperatures and cooled rapidly if being stored for later use. Reheated food will be piping hot throughout.

“This policy comes under the umbrella of Safeguarding”



- **Waste Management:** Food waste will be disposed of promptly and hygienically in covered bins.

This policy was reviewed by:	The Manager	Signed
On:	Date: 21 August 2025	VE Evans
Date of next review:	Date: 21 August 2026	