BIGGIN HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL & PRESCHOOL

Healthy Eating, Packed Lunch & Snacks Policy

Parent-friendly guidance • 2026

Our aim is simple: to help children enjoy food, develop healthy habits and have the energy they need to learn, play and grow. We will work with families in a positive, respectful and non-judgemental way.

1. Why healthy eating matters

Good nutrition supports children's growth, development, learning and wellbeing. Early childhood is an important time for children to experience a wide range of tastes, textures and foods and to build positive relationships with eating.

For children in the preschool/EYFS age range, our food provision follows the Department for Education's current Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance. For school-aged children, we promote the principles of the Eatwell Guide and the Department for Education's school food guidance. The school food standards apply to food provided by relevant state-funded schools; packed lunches brought from home are not themselves subject to those standards.

2. Our approach

- We promote a balanced diet rather than labelling individual foods as "good" or "bad".
- We encourage children to try a variety of foods without pressure to eat or finish everything.
- We provide and encourage free access to fresh drinking water.
- We teach children about food, hygiene, where food comes from and how food can help our bodies.
- We respect medical, allergy, cultural, religious and dietary requirements and work with families to make appropriate arrangements.
- We aim to make healthy choices practical and affordable for families.

3. What makes a balanced lunch

A lunch does not need to contain every food group in exact proportions. What matters is the overall pattern of eating across the day and week. A simple lunchbox can include:

4. Foods and drinks we ask families to limit

Foods high in saturated fat, salt and/or free sugars are best kept for less often and in small amounts. We ask that they are not the everyday basis of a child's lunch or snack.

5. Drinks

Fresh drinking water will be available throughout the day. Children should be encouraged to drink water regularly.

6. Snacks

Our preschool snack offer is planned to be varied, nutritious and appropriate for young children. Where families provide an alternative snack, we ask that it follows the same principles.

7. Packed lunch food safety

Because young children are more vulnerable to foodborne illness, food safety is just as important as nutrition.

8. Choking safety

Please prepare food in a way that is safe for your child's age and stage of development. The risk of choking is particularly important in the early years.

9. Allergies, intolerances and special diets

Parents and carers must tell us about allergies, intolerances, medical dietary requirements and any other relevant dietary needs before their child attends, and update us if circumstances change.

10. Food sharing and celebrations

Children must not swap or share food from lunchboxes because we need to manage allergies, dietary requirements and food-safety risks.

For birthdays and celebrations, the school/preschool may provide its own suitable approach. Families should not send food into the setting for sharing without prior agreement from staff.

11. Positive mealtimes

- We aim for mealtimes and snack times to be calm, social and enjoyable.
- Children will be encouraged to listen to their hunger and fullness cues.
- Staff will avoid pressuring children to eat, finish food or try a particular food.
- We will use positive language about food and avoid shaming children or families.
- Children will be supported to develop independence, such as opening containers, pouring water and making simple choices where appropriate.

12. Working with parents and carers

We recognise that families have different routines, budgets, cultures and preferences. Our aim is to support, not judge.

If we have concerns about the nutritional quality or safety of a child's lunch or snack, a member of staff will speak privately with the parent/carer and offer practical suggestions. Where a medical or dietary need affects the guidance, we will work with the family to agree an appropriate approach.

Lunchbox examples

Try combinations such as: wholemeal sandwich + cucumber sticks + fruit + plain yoghurt; pasta salad + tomato/cucumber + fruit; or wrap with chicken/hummus + vegetable sticks + fruit.

4a. Practical examples of foods to limit

- Confectionery and sweets
- Chocolate bars and chocolate-coated snacks
- Cakes, biscuits, pastries and sweet baked goods
- Sugary or fizzy drinks, squash and energy drinks
- Highly processed snack foods that are high in salt, sugar or saturated fat
- Chocolate spread and similar sweet spreads as regular sandwich fillings

We do not ask families to remove every food marked red on a traffic-light label. Traffic-light labels are a tool for comparing products; they are not a rule that every red item must be excluded. Our focus is on the overall balance of the child's diet.

5a. Drinks — at a glance

- For preschool/EYFS children, our setting will provide fresh tap water and plain milk where milk is provided.
- Juice, smoothies, squash, fizzy drinks and other sugary drinks should not be sent into preschool.
- Children under 5 should not be given rice drinks.
- For school-aged children bringing a packed lunch, water is our preferred drink. If families choose to provide juice, this should be limited and should not replace water; for young children, water and milk are the preferred everyday drinks.

This approach reflects current early-years advice that water and plain milk should be the main drinks for young children, and that sugary drinks can contribute to tooth decay.

6a. Snack ideas

- Fresh fruit or vegetables, prepared safely and cut appropriately
- Plain or lower-sugar yoghurt/dairy foods where suitable
- Wholegrain bread, pitta or similar starchy foods
- Lower-salt options such as plain rice cakes where appropriate

- Other nutritious foods that fit the child's dietary requirements

Dried fruit is not recommended as an everyday between-meal snack because it can stick to teeth. If used, it is better included as part of a meal.

7a. Packed lunch food-safety checklist

- Use a clean, insulated lunch bag or box.
- Use a suitable frozen ice pack/freezer block to keep chilled foods cold until lunchtime.
- Follow storage instructions and use-by dates on food packaging.
- Keep perishable foods, such as meat, fish, eggs and dairy products, properly chilled.
- Food should be prepared hygienically and hands washed before preparing lunch.
- Please do not send food that is damaged, spoiled or past its use-by date.
- The setting will follow its own food-safety procedures for receiving, storing, supervising and disposing of food.

An ice pack helps to keep a lunch cold, but it does not make unsafe food safe. Families should follow the manufacturer's storage instructions and use suitable chilled foods only.

8a. Choking-safety checklist

- Cut grapes and similar round foods lengthways into quarters.
- Cut sausages lengthways into thin strips rather than serving them as whole rounds.
- Avoid whole nuts for young children and follow the setting's nut-free arrangements.
- Remove stones, pips, bones and hard skins where necessary.
- Cut hard foods such as raw vegetables into suitable thin strips or small pieces.
- Children will be supervised while eating and encouraged to sit calmly while eating.

If you are unsure whether a food is suitable, please ask a member of staff before sending it in.

9a. Allergies, intolerances and special diets

- We will keep dietary information up to date and make sure relevant staff know about individual requirements.
- Food provided by the setting will be checked against children's dietary requirements.
- Where a medical diet is required, we will work with parents/carers and relevant professionals as appropriate.
- Our preschool is a nut-free setting. Please do not bring peanuts, tree nuts or foods containing nuts onto the premises. Families should also check ingredient labels carefully.

13. A simple lunchbox checklist

	Quick check
✓	A child-sized portion of a starchy food
✓	Fruit and/or vegetables
✓	A protein food
✓	A dairy food or suitable calcium-fortified alternative, where appropriate
✓	Water as the main drink
✓	An ice pack/freezer block for chilled food
✓	Food prepared safely and cut appropriately
×	No sweets, confectionery or sugary/fizzy drinks as everyday lunchbox items
×	No nuts or nut-containing foods at preschool
×	No sharing or swapping food

14. Guidance used to develop this policy

- Department for Education — Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance (2025, updated May 2025).

- Department for Education — Help for Early Years Providers: nutrition and food safety.
- Office for Health Improvement and Disparities — The Eatwell Guide.
- Food Standards Agency — food safety, chilling, allergens and choking guidance.
- NHS — healthier snacks and lunchbox guidance.
- Department for Education — School Food Standards and practical guidance (current 2026 guidance).

This policy should be read alongside the setting's allergy/medical needs, food safety, safeguarding and first aid procedures. Guidance will be reviewed when national advice changes.