

Food and Drink Policy 2025

Policy Statement

At The Den, we are dedicated to promoting the health, safety, and well-being of all children in our care, in compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers (effective from 1 September 2025) for Reception-aged children (4–5 years, until 31 August following their fifth birthday). This policy ensures that snacks and drinks provided during before and after-school sessions are healthy, balanced, and nutritious, while addressing individual dietary needs, allergies, and safety risks such as choking. For older children (Year 1 and above, 6+ years), who are not covered by EYFS, we apply consistent standards as best practice to ensure safety and simplicity across our mixed-age setting.

This policy complies with Section 3 of the EYFS framework (paragraphs 3.62–3.72 on Food and Drink and Safer Eating) and has regard to the Department for Education's (DfE) *Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance* and *Food safety - Help for early years providers* guidance. We aim to foster healthy eating habits, involve parents/carers, and ensure staff are trained in food safety and allergy management. If children bring packed snacks, we store and supervise them appropriately, encouraging alignment with our healthy eating principles.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff, volunteers, and visitors involved in preparing, handling, or supervising food and drink.
- Parents/carers of children attending the club, from Reception (4–5 years) to older school-age children (years 1-6).
- Food and drink provision during before and after-school sessions, typically snacks rather than full meals.
- Reception-aged children under the EYFS framework, with consistent standards extended to older children for operational consistency.

Responsibilities

- **Club Owner/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Oversees policy implementation, ensures EYFS compliance for Reception children, reviews allergy action plans, and notifies Ofsted of food poisoning incidents affecting two or more Reception children.
- **Session Manager: Responsible for the children and their dietary needs for that session (checking all labelling each time as products can change their ingredients)**
- **All Staff:** Prepare, serve, and supervise snacks; verify dietary information; monitor for allergies and choking; maintain hygiene; and record incidents.
- **Parents/Carers:** Provide up-to-date dietary information (e.g., allergies, preferences), inform us of changes, and support healthy snack choices for packed items.
- **All Involved:** Create a positive, inclusive mealtime environment, respecting cultural/religious preferences and encouraging healthy eating.

Procedures

1. Providing Healthy, Balanced, and Nutritious Snacks and Drinks

- **For Reception Children (EYFS 3.62):** Snacks provided are healthy, balanced, and nutritious, following *Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance*. Examples include fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, protein, breads and crackers, yogurts. We avoid high-sugar, high-salt, or processed foods (e.g., sweets, crisps, fizzy drinks).
- **For Older Children:** We extend the same healthy snack standards to children in Year 1 and above to maintain consistency and promote healthy eating across all ages. Sample snacks align with Public Health England's *Eatwell Guide* for balance.
- **Packed Snacks:** Parents/carers may provide packed snacks for any child. We encourage healthy options (e.g., fruit, sandwiches) via our parent handbook and discussions. Packed snacks are checked against dietary records to ensure safety (e.g., no nuts if allergies are present).
- **Fresh Drinking Water (EYFS 3.62):** Fresh tap water is available and accessible at all times for all children via children's own water bottles (refills offered at entry to setting) and setting cups if bottle not provided. Staff encourage hydration, especially after physical activities, and assist younger children in accessing water.
- **Drinks to Avoid:** We provide only water and plain milk (if offered). Fruit juice, squash, flavoured milk, or fizzy drinks are not provided to any child to prevent tooth decay and promote healthy habits.
- **Menu planning:** We plan menus in advance, involving children in the planning. We follow the lead of the school lunches menu so that children get a varied food experience during a day and food is not replicated.

2. Meeting Individual Dietary Requirements

- We collect detailed dietary information (e.g., allergies, intolerances, cultural/religious preferences like halal or vegetarian) via registration forms before a child joins. This is recorded, shared with staff, and reviewed yearly or when changes occur.
- **Implementation:** At snack times, the onsite manager staff member verifies that snacks (provided or packed) meet each child's dietary requirements. Records are kept in a secure, accessible file, with a discreet allergy chart for staff to check in with.
- We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child or make a child feel singled out because of their diet or allergy.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.

3. Managing Allergies and Anaphylaxis

- We develop individual allergy action plans with parents/carers. Plans are updated regularly and shared with staff.
- We follow the Food Standards Agency guidelines on Allergens (<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/allergen-guidance-for-food-businesses>)
- **Training:** All staff are trained to recognise allergy symptoms (e.g., hives, swelling) and anaphylaxis (e.g., difficulty breathing) and to distinguish between allergies and intolerances. Training includes administering epinephrine auto-injectors (if prescribed) and is refreshed every two years (or annually if needed), per EYFS Annex C.
- **Prevention:** We prevent cross-contamination by using separate utensils, labelled storage. No food sharing is allowed. Staff check snacks against dietary records.
- **Emergency Response:** If an allergic reaction occurs, staff follow the child's allergy action plan, administer epinephrine if needed, call 999, and notify parents/carers. Incidents are recorded and reviewed.
- **Reference:** NHS guidance on food allergies (www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-allergy/) and anaphylaxis (www.nhs.uk/conditions/anaphylaxis/).

4. Introducing Solid Foods

- Reception children (4–5 years) are beyond weaning, but there may be children who have difficulty with texture of larger pieces of food. We consult parents/carers on the child's stage, textures, and needs, preparing age-appropriate snacks (e.g., soft fruits). We reference NHS *Weaning - Start for Life* guidance (www.nhs.uk/start-for-life/baby/weaning/).

5. Preventing Choking

- **For Reception Children (EYFS 3.67–3.69)** and applied to all children in the setting:
 - **Preparation:** Snacks are cut appropriately to minimize choking risks (e.g., grapes/cherry tomatoes quartered lengthwise, carrots/apples in thin sticks, cheese in strips). We avoid high-risk foods like whole nuts (not given to under-5s), popcorn, marshmallows, hard sweets, or large chunks.
 - **Environment:** Children eat in a designated, distraction-minimized area with age-appropriate seating.
 - **Supervision:** Children are within sight and hearing of staff at all times. A staff member with a full paediatric first aid certificate (per EYFS Annex A) is present in the room during snacks.
- **Training:** Staff are trained in paediatric first aid, including choking response (e.g., back blows, chest thrusts for younger children). Training is documented per Annex C.
- **Incidents:** Choking incidents requiring intervention are recorded, shared with parents/carers, and reviewed to improve practices.

6. Food Hygiene and Preparation

- We maintain a hygienic food preparation area with sinks, refrigeration, and clean utensils. Staff handling food hold a Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate.
- **Procedures:** Handwashing, clean surfaces, proper storage (e.g., refrigeration for perishable snacks), and expiry date checks are mandatory. We are registered as a food business with the local authority.
- We have a yearly, unannounced inspection from The Food Standards Agency, and have always received a level 5 rating.
- Children do not have access to the kitchen. All food and drink is stored appropriately.
- Adults do not carry hot drinks through the play area(s) and do not place hot drinks within reach of children.
- The onsite manager is the person responsible for food preparation understands the principles of Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) as it applies to their business. This is set out in Safer Food Better Business. The basis for this is risk assessment as it applies to the purchase, storage, preparation and serving of food to prevent growth of bacteria and food contamination.
- The person responsible for food preparation and serving carries out daily opening and closing checks on the kitchen to ensure standards are met consistently (see Safer Food Better Business).
- All surfaces are clean and non-porous.
- There are separate facilities for hand-washing and for washing up.
- **Reference:** DfE *Food safety - Help for early years providers* guidance ([education.gov.uk/help-for-early-years-providers/safeguarding-and-welfare/food-safety](https://www.gov.uk/help-for-early-years-providers/safeguarding-and-welfare/food-safety)).

7. Food Poisoning and Incidents

- Food poisoning affecting two or more children is notified to Ofsted within 14 days. We cooperate with investigations and implement recommendations.
- **Recording:** All incidents (e.g., allergic reactions, choking) are logged, reviewed, and used to improve practices.

8. Staff Training and Competency

- All staff receive induction training on this policy, covering food hygiene, allergy management, choking prevention, and paediatric first aid (full course for at least one staff member per session).
- Training is refreshed every two years (or annually if needed), documented per EYFS Annex C.
- Staffing ratios ensure adequate supervision (e.g., 1:8 for Reception children, adjusted for mixed-age groups), with extra staff during snack times if needed.

9. Parent/Carer Involvement

- This policy is shared with parents/carers at registration, available on our website.

- We discuss dietary needs during enrollment and request updates as needed.
- Parents are informed of snack menus.

10. Risk Assessments and Monitoring

- Risk assessments cover snack times, addressing allergies, choking, hygiene, and supervision.
- Incidents are recorded and reviewed to improve practices.
- Compliance is monitored through staff meetings, parent feedback, Food Hygiene and Ofsted inspections.

Related Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Assessment
- COSHH
- EYFS

This policy ensures a safe, inclusive, and healthy snack time environment for all children, meeting EYFS requirements for Reception-aged children and extending best practices to older children.